



### **Ash Wednesday**

Lent begins with Ash Wednesday. Traditionally Christians would rub ashes on their forehead as a way of showing they were sorry for their sins. The ashes were made from the palm crosses from the previous year's Palm Sunday celebrations and symbolise the death and resurrection of Christ.

Lent is a time when Christians prepare for Easter by giving up something special for 40 days. Traditionally Christians would fast, or give up food, as a way of remembering the 40 days that Jesus spent alone in the desert. These days people give up all sorts of things – sugar, coffee, social media - the main point is to help us concentrate on God and prepare our hearts and minds for the events of Easter.

#### **Fun fact:**

If you count the days from Ash Wednesday to Holy Saturday, you will discover that this adds up to 46 days - 6 days too many! This is because the 6 Sundays are not included in the calculations. Lent is a serious time but Sundays are always a day of celebration in the Christian church and so they're not included in the 40 days of Lent.

### **Ash Wednesday at Home**

Ash Wednesday can be tricky with children. Here are some ideas around the key themes of being 'sorry', being cleansed and having hope in Jesus.

It pays to make your ashes in advance. You can do this by burning strips on paper in a metal tin like a cake tin or a baking tray. Kia tūpato (be careful)

Talk about Ash Wednesday being the first day of Lent which is a time of thinking about God and focusing more on Him instead of the 'stuff' around us. Ash Wednesday is a day when we can say sorry to God and think about our lives.

Talk about what it means to say sorry and why we might want to do that, especially to people we love. How does saying sorry help?

Next encourage the children to think of things they might want to say sorry to God for and give them time to do this privately.

Using ashes mixed with oil, a large cross shape made of card or paper, a bowl of water, a candle, paper hearts

Say the words in italics and ask the children to join in the bold type words. As they say their line, encourage them to dip their finger in the ash mixture and make the sign of the cross or a finger print on the large cross shape.



*Thank you Lord that you love us and hear us when we pray  
We are sorry for things we have done that have hurt you and others.*

*We have not loved you or others as much as we could*

**Lord, we are sorry**

*We have not helped others as Jesus helped us*

**Lord, we are sorry**

*We have been impatient*

**Lord, we are sorry**

*We have been angry*

**Lord, we are sorry**

*We have been jealous of others*

**Lord, we are sorry**

*We have told lies*

**Lord, we are sorry**

*We have forgotten to pray*

**Lord, we are sorry**

Anyone who wants to can add to this whatever comes to mind.

(Light a candle)

*Hear us and help us, Lord*

*Work through us so that we can share your goodness and love in the world*

*Show us the joy and new life that Jesus brings.*



(Take a heart and exchange it with someone else)  
*Thank you Lord for loving us*  
**Help us to love one another.**

Based on an idea from [flamecreativekids.blogspot.com](http://flamecreativekids.blogspot.com)