

**LAY YOUR BURDENS DOWN...
ON THE MOUNTAIN OF GOD'S MERCY**

**A suggested parish Lenten initiative linking into the
Year of Mercy**

Parishes across the diocese are invited to join in the following diocesan wide initiative for Lent as appropriate to the local parish.



For the parish bulletin/notice board

**This Lent Lay Your Burdens Down...
on the Mountain of God's Mercy**

In this Jubilee Year of Mercy we invite each parishioner to make Lent a time to welcome once more the mercy of God into your life.

We all carry our own burdens – perhaps the burden of illness, of breakdown in relationships, of economic stress, the burden of our own sinful actions...Our faith tells us that we don't have to carry these burdens alone, God walks each step with us in mercy and love.

This Lent a base stone has been placed in a specially prepared space in our church, together with smaller stones. In your own time during this holy season we invite you to take a stone from this space, or indeed from another place such as your garden, and carry it with you for a while – an hour, a day, a week...As you do so, pray and reflect on where in your life you are in need of God's mercy. Whenever you are ready, place the stone into the Lenten space in the Church, as a sign that you are ready to welcome God's mercy into your life and that you are willing to share this mercy with others.

You may well find yourself taking more than one stone in the season. Over the weeks of Lent may the growing mountain of stones remind us of the steadfastness of God's mercy and love As Pope Francis says to us: "Let us be renewed by God's Mercy, let us enable the power of his love to transform our lives too."

As a sign of this shared Lenten journey, a base stone representing each parish will be brought to the Chrism Mass in the Cathedral on Monday, March 21st at 7:30.

What the liturgy group/parish might do in the parish:

- Advertise the Lenten initiative in the parish bulletin and on a notice board.
- From Ash Wednesday, place a base stone with the name of the parish somewhere in the church building, for example where the Easter garden will eventually be, at the

foot of a cross, in a Lenten space...Place a basket of stones in the space for people to take one and the explanation from the parish bulletin on a card. Smaller stones might be placed around the base stone to indicate where they return the stones to.

- During the season the Prayer of the Faithful might include a prayer for an outpouring of God's mercy into the burdens of people.
- The stone can be used during the parish Celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation in Lent. (Faith Development Services will be offering a template of such a celebration.)
- Chrism Mass: A parish representative (nominated by the parish) will be invited to carry and place the parish base stone in the opening procession. *This stone has been provided by the diocese for use specifically at this liturgy (it can also be the stone used in one of the parish churches during Lent if that suits the local parish).*

Parishes might like to include the following quotes from scripture and from Pope Francis into the Lenten space/ parish bulletin progressively over the weeks.

SCRIPTURE QUOTES FROM ASH WEDNESDAY AND THE SUNDAYS OF LENT:

Ash Wednesday:

Have mercy on me, God, in your kindness,
In your compassion blot out my offence. (Psalm 50)

First Sunday of Lent:

He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High
And abides in the shade of the Almighty
Says to the Lord: 'My refuge,
My stronghold, my God in whom I trust. (Psalm 90)

Second Sunday of Lent:

Hope in him, hold firm and take heart.
Hope in the Lord! (Psalm 26)

Third Sunday of Lent:

It is the Lord who forgives all your guilt,
Who heals every one of your ills,
Who redeems your life from the grave,
Who crowns you with love and compassion. (Psalm 102)

Fourth Sunday of Lent:

Glorify the Lord with me.



Together let us praise his name.
I sought the Lord and he answered me;
From all my terrors he set me free. (Psalm 33)

Fifth Sunday of Lent:

Now, now – it is the Lord who speaks –
Come back to me with all your heart,
For I am all tenderness and compassion. (Joel 2 – Gospel
acclamation verse)



QUOTES FROM POPE FRANCIS

What a beautiful truth of faith this is for our lives: the mercy of God! God's love for us is so great, so deep; it is an unfailing love, one which always takes us by the hand and supports us, lifts us up and leads us on."

We are all sinners, but God heals us with an abundance of grace, mercy and tenderness.

I think we too are the people who, on the one hand, want to listen to Jesus, but on the other hand, at times, like to find a stick to beat others with, to condemn others. And Jesus has this message for us: mercy. I think — and I say it with humility — that this is the Lord's most powerful message: mercy.

Jesus' attitude is striking: we do not hear the words of scorn, we do not hear words of condemnation, but only words of love, of mercy, which are an invitation to conversation. "Neither do I condemn you; go, and do not sin again." Ah! Brothers and Sisters, God's face is the face of a merciful father who is always patient. Have you thought about God's patience, the patience He has with each one of us? That is His mercy. He always has patience, patience with us, He understands us, He waits for us, He does not tire of forgiving us if we are able to return to Him with a contrite heart. "Great is God's mercy," says the Psalm.

A little mercy makes the world less cold and more just. We need to understand properly this mercy of God, this merciful Father who is so patient. ... Let us remember the Prophet Isaiah who says that even if our sins were scarlet, God's love would make them white as snow. This mercy is beautiful.

Let us be renewed by God's mercy, let us be loved by Jesus, let us enable the power of his love to transform our lives too; and let us become agents of this mercy, channels through which God can water the earth, protect all creation and make justice and peace flourish.

I am always struck when I reread the parable of the merciful Father. ... The Father, with patience, love, hope and mercy, had never for a second stopped thinking about [his wayward son], and as soon as he sees him still far off, he runs out to meet him and embraces him with tenderness, the tenderness of God, without a word of reproach. ... God

is always waiting for us, He never grows tired. Jesus shows us this merciful patience of God so that we can regain confidence and hope — always!