

L E N T

SEASONAL RESOURCES FROM THE EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF CONNECTICUT

Ash Wednesday marks the beginning of the Lenten season, the 40 days of preparation for Easter. Coming in the middle of the week as an occasion of worship, this day is seldom observed by children. Yet children need a sense of forgiveness as much as any adult.

The following service can be used in the afternoon on Ash Wednesday or the Sunday prior or after. Instead of the traditional symbols of ashes, we use tears as a symbol expressions of forgiveness and repentance appropriate for children.

As the children enter, play a tape of appropriate music for the season. At the front of the room place a cross. (appropriate place to use the cross you might use to “flower the cross” at Easter) On a table just inside the room set out colored (shades of purple for the season) construction paper cut into the shape of tears of all sizes. Ask the children to select paper “tears,” attach them to ribbons of color, and fasten the tear streamers to the arms of the cross at varying levels. The slight fluttering streamers remind us of our own tears.

Sing together “Kum Ba Yah” and read Psalm 142:6 (paraphrased below) antiphonally with the children repeating each line.

*I call to the Lord for help
I plead with God,
I tell God all my troubles
When I am ready to give up
God knows what I should do.*

Ask the group to sit quietly and think of the last time they cried. Ask: Were you hurt physically? Did someone hurt your feelings? Did you lose something you wanted? Were you frightened? Did you dread something? Have you ever cried because of something you did wrong?

Tears are a way of saying “I’m sorry.” Every one of us has done things for which we are sorry. None of us is as

strong or as brave as we would like to be. God knows this and always forgives us.

Be silent for a moment while the children think about tears they have cried. Reassure them that when we bring our tears to God, God forgives us and helps us. In the Old Testament, the prophet Jeremiah looked at the sorrows of the people and cried to God: “Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there?” Jeremiah 8:22

Tell the children that “balm” is a lotion used for healing or relieving pain.

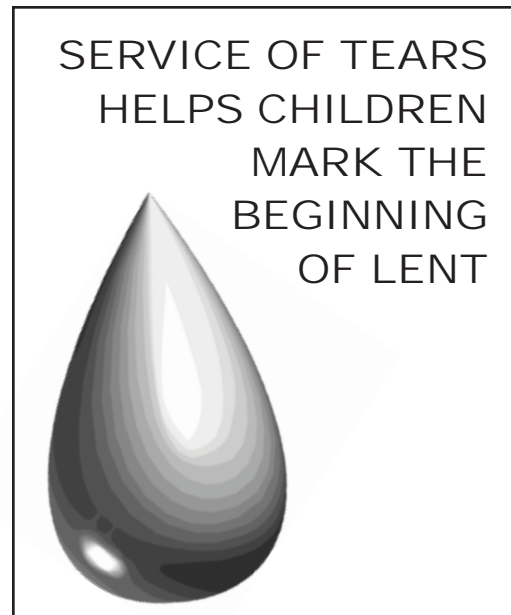
Bring out a bowl of hand lotion. Ask the children to come one at a time, holding out their hands, palms down. Draw a cross on their hands with lotion.

Close by telling the group that today marks a new beginning of faith. Say, “Go now in peace surrounded by the forgiveness and love of God.”

Take the idea of “tears” and use it in your parish.

During Lent you might take this “Tear” concept and use in the wider worship during the prayers of the people or just in the church as a visual to pray with:

Place a cross near the place where the prayers of the people are read. Have purple tears (with hangers) made of heavy weight paper in the back of the church with pens. Ask parishioners to place names of those they would like to have the community pray for on a tear. Have the tears collected prior to the prayers of the people and as the names are read have them hung on the cross. Keep adding through Lent. Or... Place a cross in a chapel with a basket of tears near it. Let people add petitions, concerns, etc. at any time.



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