



Liturgy by Rev. Sarah Are | A Sanctified Art LLC | sanctifiedart.org

INTRODUCTION:

The beginning of Lent brings a new invitation—an invitation into a deeper life of faith, an invitation to renewed spirituality, and an invitation into deeper awareness of God and self. This worship service is designed to carve out space for personal reflection and intention setting at the start, knowing that the more honest we are with our hopes for this season, the more meaningful this season can become. This service was written to be used by individuals and families at home, and can also be used by small groups meeting over zoom.

SUPPLIES NEEDED:

- A candle & lighter
- A Bible & pen (colored pencils can make the Doodle Page more fun)
- The printout of the Ash Wednesday Doodle Page (one for each participant)
- Ashes & oil—Use the printout of the palm. Traditionally, the ashes for Ash Wednesday are made by burning the palms from the previous year's Palm Sunday service. Find a safe place to burn. Take the printout of the palm branch and read the Palm Sunday story from Mark 11:1-11. Carefully burn the paper palm branch until you have ashes. Put the ashes in a small bowl and drizzle with enough oil (olive oil, vegetable oil, canola oil all work well) until it forms a thick paste. Use this during the ashes portion of the service.

SET THE SPACE:

The year 2020 taught us just how much our space matters. Many of us realized just how holy our sanctuaries are for us when we were unable to physically gather within them. However, this season has also reminded us that God does not reside in any one place, for God is everywhere—and God promises to draw near to us wherever we may be. And so, as you begin, we invite you to mark your space so that your soul knows; *this is holy ground*.

To mark your sacred space, you are invited to light a candle. Perhaps find a pillow on the floor to sit on, or settle yourself in a favorite chair. Brew some tea, turn on some music that moves your spirit. Gather your supplies (*listed above*). Most importantly, turn your phone off so you can truly be present.

TIPS FOR FAMILIES:

- Invite your children to have a hands-on role by letting them collect the needed supplies from around the house and help them light the candle.
- Before you begin the worship service, invite your children to create a special place for you all to sit and reflect.

CENTERING

Take a few deep breaths in and out. Repeat to yourself, or to one another:

I am here (We are here). God is here.

This space is holy ground.

OPENING PRAYER

Now that the space is set, begin with prayer. Read the following words as an opening prayer. To make this a more active prayer, circle or underline (or discuss with others) any phrases that particularly move you or stand out to you.

Creator God,

There is a rumbling in us that won't let go.

It stirs in me/us like the wind stirs leaves—inviting me/us to move, drawing me/us forth.

When I am/we are quiet, I/we know that rumble is the Holy Spirit,
dancing love awake in me/us.

So I am/we are here.

And I am/we are still.

And I am/we are quiet.

And on this first day of Lent, I am/we are asking you to draw near.

As I/we hear your scripture read aloud, open the door for me/us to move.

Invite me/us in. Rumble me/us awake.

Gratefully I/we pray. Amen.

READ & REFLECT—Beginning with Honesty

READ Genesis 3:19b

“From dust you came, and to dust you shall return.”

(For more in depth study and reflection, read Isaiah 58:1-12 & Matthew 6:1-21)

REFLECT

- This verse—spoken to us when we receive the imposition of ashes on our foreheads on Ash Wednesday—reminds us of our humanity. So in full honesty, make a list of 5-10 challenges you are struggling with, recognizing that life is messy and life is complicated. Name anything that is hard or heavy in this moment. Write them down on the doodle page. Challenge yourself to think of the core emotions underlying each challenge. For example, instead of simply saying, “I’m busy,” perhaps you might confess: “I overcommit myself because I worry that others will think I’m selfish if I say no.” Name your challenges and your confessions, offering them to God.
- Take a moment to look over your list. Ask God for forgiveness for the things you can control. Ask God for grace for the things you cannot.

TIPS FOR FAMILIES:

Print enough doodle pages for each of your children to have one. Help them write their challenges, if needed. When you are finished, display them in a visible place for the season of Lent. If it is difficult for them to think of challenges in their life, invite them to reflect on problems they see in the world that they hope will change.

POEM—“Invited” by Sarah Are

Our God is intimately aware of our humanity and the many ways we fall short or get stuck in the weeds of our own problems. Having confessed and written down some of the challenges that weigh heavily on you, read the following poem as a reminder of God's grace.

I like to imagine that each year,
God invites me to a party.
God drops me a note that says,
"No gifts, casual dress. Come just as you are."

I like to imagine that I am brave enough to go.
I like to imagine that I decide that I am worth it.
This was no pity invite,
There was no obligatory postage.
God wants me there.

So I get myself together,
Smudged glasses, sensitive ego, wrinkled shirt, and all.
I ring the doorbell a few minutes late on account of the fact that
I lost my keys twice trying to get out the door,
And almost turn back to hide in my car,
Afraid that I might embarrass myself over appetizers or small talk.
But then God answers the door,
And God says, "You're here!"
And I smile, because I am.

And with every step past that threshold,
I know that God is cheering me on.
It's the pride of a parent watching their child take their first step.
If I freeze, God is not disappointed.
If I fall, God is not mad.
But if I trust the invitation,
If I move closer,
I know, God celebrates.

Friends, you've got mail.
It's an invitation to dust off your shoes,
To go deeper,
To trust that you're worth it,
To lose your keys and your faith,
And then find them both, along with your worth.
You are invited.
We are invited.
Again & again & Again.
This invitation is for you.

RESPOND

WATCH

If you have access to the internet, watch one or both of these videos:

"A Pep Talk from Kid President to You" <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l-gQLqv9f4o>

Created by Kid President and Brad Montague.

Published by SoulPancake.

"The Present" <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wjqiu5FgsYc>

"The Present" is a thesis short film from the Institute of Animation, Visual Effects and Digital Postproductions at the Filmakademie Baden-Wuerttemberg in Ludwigsburg, Germany.

WRITE

Having read scripture and poetry and named the challenges you are facing (and watched these invitational videos, if able), write down 5-10 hopes you have for this Lenten season on the doodle page.

As you write, consider these written hopes to be intentions that you are setting for the six weeks ahead. These are not intended to be aimless wishes on stars, but instead, thoughtful intentions for your 'one while and precious life.'

(allusion to poem, 'The Summer Day' by Mary Oliver)

ASHES

When you are ready, lift our small bowl of ashes. Take a deep breath. Use a finger to dip in the ashes & oil mixture and make the sign of the cross on your forehead (or the back of your hand). Say again the scripture from earlier in the service:

"From dust you came, and to dust you shall return." (Genesis 3)

CLOSING PRAYER & BENEDICTION

Pray the following words. To make this an active prayer, circle or underline (or discuss) any phrases that particularly move you or stand out to you.

God of open doors,
Open arms,
And open conversations,
We know
Deep in our souls
That you are forever inviting us in.
Again & Again,
You invite us to take another step closer,
Another step deeper,
Another step further,
In this journey of faith.
So with your invitation in our hands,
We pray for strength and wisdom.
Show us the next right step in this journey.
We are here.
You are here.
This is holy ground.
May this holy Lenten journey begin
Once again.
Gratefully we pray.
Amen.