



**+ ASH WEDNESDAY +**  
February 22  
*(Day of Fast and Abstinence)*

**Mass with Distribution of Ashes | 8:00am • 5:00pm**  
**Prayer Service with Distribution of Ashes | 12:00 noon • 7:00pm**

**Distribution of Blessed Ashes this Year...**  
**Throughout the Universal Church**

Ashes, as a Jewish sign of penitence, were accepted by Christians. They are derived from burning palms from the previous year.

This outward symbol of private or public sorrow, sadness, or penance, is a proof of humility, a remembrance of our mortality, that we are made of dust and will return to dust. The custom of imposing ashes, is a symbolic act signifying human mortality and total human dependence on the graciousness and mercy of God. In the early Christian era ashes were imposed on public penitents, sprinkled on their penitential clothes.

The distribution of ashes gained popularity as many of the penitential practices once reserved for serious public sinners became standard for all the faithful. It was not until 1091, when Pope Urban II ordered the imposition of ashes on the heads of all the faithful, that the reception of ashes became mandatory and the Wednesday preceding the First Sunday of Lent became known as Ash Wednesday.

In order to maintain unity in practice with the Universal Church, we will be following the practices set forth by the Roman Congregation of Divine Worship and Discipline of the Sacraments. From the Congregation of Divine Worship (1988):

*"On the Wednesday before the first Sunday of Lent, the faithful receive the ashes, thus entering into the time established for the purification of their souls. This sign of penance, a traditionally biblical one, has been preserved among the Church's customs until the present day. It signifies the human condition of the sinner, who seeks to express his guilt before the Lord in an exterior manner, and by so doing express his interior conversion, led on by the confident hope that the Lord will be merciful. This same sign marks the beginning of the way of conversion, which is developed through the celebration of the sacraments of penance during the days before Easter."*

In many English speaking countries the custom has been to place ashes on the forehead and not the crown of the head. In Italy and other European Countries the ashes are place on the crown of the head.



**Prayer, Fasting,  
and Almsgiving**

**LENTEN GUIDELINES**

- Everyone 14 years of age or over is bound to abstain from meat on Ash Wednesday and all the Fridays of Lent.
- All from the age of 18 years up to the beginning of their 60th year are bound to fast on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday.
- On these two days of fast and abstinence, only one full meatless meal is allowed. Two other meatless meals, sufficient to maintain strength, may be taken according to each one's needs, but together they should not equal another full meal. Eating between meals is not permitted on these two days, but liquids, including milk and fruit juices are allowed. When health or ability to work would be seriously affected, the law does not oblige.
- Lent is the principal season of penance in the Church year. All of the faithful are strongly urged to develop and follow a program of voluntary self-denial (in addition to following the Lenten regulations).
- All Catholics are encouraged to support generously the charitable works of the whole Church, pray and perform works of charity and mercy. .
- Those who are sick, pregnant, or nursing, or whose health would adversely be affected by fasting or abstinence, should not consider themselves bound by these norms.
- To disregard completely the law of fast and abstinence is seriously sinful.