



+ ASH WEDNESDAY +
February 17
(Day of Fast and Abstinence)

Prayer Service with Distribution of Ashes | 6:30am • 12:05pm • 6:30pm

Mass with Distribution of Ashes | 8:00am • 5:00pm

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.

Due to the restrictions of Covid19, we are not imposing ashes on the forehead this year. For any person-to-person contact must be avoided. Rather, for the time being, we are returning to the more ancient custom of sprinkling ashes on the crown of head.