

Ash Wednesday 2021 *(Revised Jan 12)*

Archdiocese of Cincinnati

While observing the existing guidance already in place relative to worship in a time of public health concern, the blessing and distribution of ashes to the faithful on Ash Wednesday takes place in the following way (per instruction from the Holy See on Jan 12, 2021):

The Priest says the prayer for blessing the ashes. He sprinkles the ashes with holy water, without saying anything. Then he addresses all those present and only once says the formula as it appears in the Roman Missal, applying it to all in general: "Repent, and believe in the Gospel", or "Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return."

The Priest then cleanses his hands, puts on a face mask and distributes the ashes to those who come to him or, if appropriate, he goes to those who are standing in their places. **The Priest takes the ashes and sprinkles them on the head of each one without saying anything.**

Notes:

- The wearing of ashes, while customary and laudable, is not an obligation of the faithful, so anyone who is fearful of becoming sick should not come forward, or even come to Mass on Ash Wednesday.
- Masks must be worn by everyone, including the ministers, during the distribution of ashes.
- As needed, the deacon or lay ministers may join the priest in imposing ashes on the faithful.
- Ministers should sanitize their hands before the distribution of ashes.
- It will be important for pastors and parish leaders to communicate this change in practice in the weeks prior to Ash Wednesday, and even before the liturgy itself.
- Ashes may not be self-imposed: they are always given by a minister.
- If additional liturgies are needed to accommodate the faithful in light of reduced capacity in the church, the *Roman Missal* gives the option that the blessing and distribution of ashes may take place outside of Mass. (cf. *Book of Blessings*, ch. 52) Note that if such a liturgy is led by a lay minister, ashes already blessed by a priest or deacon are used.

Contact the Office for Divine Worship & Sacraments with questions or concerns.

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