



DIOCESE OF BUFFALO
OFFICE OF WORSHIP

Reminders for the Season of Lent Addenda

Since January 10, 2021 when the Office of Worship released the “Reminders for the Season of Lent” there has arisen the need for a few additional clarifications in regard to COVID-19.

Saint Blaise and the Blessing of Throats

As the *ordo* states, in part: In memory of St. Blaise, the Blessing of Throats may be given by a priest, deacon, or lay minister who follows the rites and prayers designated for a lay minister. During Mass, the blessing follows the homily and Universal Prayer, or, *for pastoral reasons, it may take the place of the final blessing of the Mass.*

A priest or deacon may give the blessing to all by extending his hands, without crossed candles [or holding them in the left hand while blessing with the right], over the people while saying the prayer of blessing. (A lay minister always says the prayer without making the sign of the cross. See BB, nos. 1622-1655 for the complete rite.)

The formula of blessing is: *“Through the intercession of Saint Blaise, bishop and martyr, may God deliver you from every disease of the throat and from every other illness: [In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.]”*

Due to COVID, it is recommended that the priest impart this blessing, taking the place of the final blessing, to reduce the amount of close contact and “verbal closeness” with individuals. This is out of concern for the individual imparting the blessing and the one receiving it. However, if a person requests an individual blessing, that may be fulfilled (and both minister and recipient should wear masks). This may be done on the feast of Saint Blaise or the nearest Sunday.

Ash Wednesday

Ash Wednesday will be celebrated on February 17, 2021. On Ash Wednesday, the beginning of Lent, which is observed everywhere as a fast day, ashes are distributed.” (General Instruction of the Roman Missal, nos. 27-29)

Ashes are blessed and imposed after the homily. These ashes are of branches of the olive tree, or, according to custom, of the palm tree or other trees, which have been blessed the previous year.

Apart from Mass, a liturgy of the Word precedes the rite of blessing, concluding with general intercessions, the Lord's Prayer, a concluding prayer, a blessing, and a hymn (see Book of Blessings, nos. 1656-1678).

The ordinary minister for the blessing of ashes is a priest or deacon. Others (e.g., extraordinary ministers of holy communion) may assist with the imposition of ashes where there is genuine need, especially for the sick and shut-ins. One of the following formulas is used: *"Repent, and believe in the Gospel."* or *"Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return."*

COVID-19 Protocol for Ashes

As stated on January 10, 2021, due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, ashes *should not* be imposed on a person's forehead in the usual manner. Instead, the European custom of sprinkling ashes on the crown of a person's head should be employed.

As of January 12, 2021, this was further clarified and affirmed by a note published by the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments:

- 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.*
- The priest then puts on a face mask, cleanses his hands, 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.

Advance notice and catechesis that this is allowable by the ritual should be communicated to parishioners before Ash Wednesday.

The note given by the Congregation for Divine Worship precludes any other modifications to the method of imparting ashes, for instance, the use of cotton balls or Q-tips or similar devices and makes normative for this year the practice of sprinkling a small amount on the crown of the head.

Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA)

The Rite of Election will occur on the First Sunday of Lent, February 21, 2021, at 3:00 PM at Saint Joseph Cathedral.

Please contact the Cathedral at (716) 854-5855 or stjcathedral@buffalodiocese.org with the number and names of catechumens and parish team members who will be attending **no later than February 10, 2021**, as this will be a ticketed event to manage capacity requirements and restrictions.

Palm Sunday

The “Second Form: The Solemn Entrance” (see *Roman Missal* “Palm Sunday of the Lord’s Passion” no. 12 and following) should be used in place of the “First Form: The Procession” in the following way:

- The entrance of the Lord is celebrated inside the church.
- The faithful, holding branches in their hands, gather inside the church itself.
- The priest and ministers and a representative group (4-5 people) may go to a suitable place in the church outside the sanctuary, where the greater part of the faithful can see the rite.
- When the priest approaches the appointed place, the antiphon *Hosanna* or another appropriate chant is sung.
- The blessing of branches and the proclamation of the Gospel of the Lord’s entrance into Jerusalem take place as in *Roman Missal* “Palm Sunday of the Passion of the Lord” nos. 5-7.
- After the Gospel, the priest processes solemnly with the ministers and the representative group of the faithful through the church to the sanctuary, while an appropriate chant is sung.
- Arriving at the altar, the priest venerates it. He then goes to the chair and, omitting the Introductory Rites of the Mass and the Kyrie (Lord, have mercy), he says the Collect of the Mass, and then continues Mass in the usual way.

Please Note: The distribution of palms to the congregation should be done prior to Mass by ushers or other ministers of hospitality who don masks and gloves. Palms left behind in the pews after Mass should be set aside and disposed of properly.

Palms should not simply be made available on tables in church vestibules, given the likelihood that they would be handled by many individuals coming and going.

Of course, the “Third Form: The Simple Entrance” remains an option.

Easter Duty

After they have been initiated into the Most Holy Eucharist, all the faithful are bound by the obligation of receiving Communion at least once a year. This precept must be fulfilled during the Easter season, *unless for a good reason it is fulfilled at another time during the year.*

Since the dispensation from the obligation to attend Mass remains (for the foreseeable future) in place, Easter Duty, while admirable for those who may fulfill it, is also dispensed.

Once the dispensation from the obligation to attend Mass is lifted, the importance of Easter Duty, along with regular attendance at Mass, will be a part of ongoing catechesis and evangelization.

Please note that further instruction may be forthcoming from Rome regarding Holy Week, and as such, the diocese will provide guidance for Holy Week at a later date.