



CATHOLIC ARCHDIOCESE OF JOHANNESBURG TIKOLOHO E KATHOLIKE EA ISIFUNDABHISHOBHI SASE

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03 February 2021

Feast of St. Blaise & St. Ansgar

Dear Monsignor/ Rev Father

Re: ASH WEDNESDAY – 17 February 2021

Ash Wednesday is not a holy day of obligation and no one is obliged to receive ashes, the symbol of the ashes is very important to many Catholics. The ashes are, for many people, a reminder that Lent is a time for “dying to the old self and rising to the new.” The forty days of Lent are meant to be a special time of spiritual renewal that lead us to the new life of Easter Sunday. However, in the time of the pandemic, the imposition of ashes in the usual manner is not possible.

Due to the current state of the pandemic, this year the Archdiocese of Johannesburg will administer ashes to the faithful by sprinkling the blessed ashes on the top of the head of the recipient rather than tracing a cross on the person’s forehead. This method, rooted in our scriptural tradition, will allow for ashes to be given easily without making physical contact.

In the Archdiocese of Johannesburg this year, it is **not permitted to impose ashes on the forehead of a member of the faithful with the thumb of the hand, even if that hand is gloved**. Hands and gloves would be considered “contaminated” after each imposition of the ashes if physical contact were made. Both the minister and the person receiving ashes should wear masks. Those receiving ashes should be asked to bow slightly to facilitate the sprinkling. Once all have received ashes, the ministers should first clean their hands of the ashes with soap and water, and thereafter sanitize their hands.

Please find attached the guidance recently issued by the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Sacraments, with the *title Note on Ash Wednesday: Distribution of Ashes in Time of Pandemic*

Yours Sincerely

Annastacia Mphuthi
H.O.D for Liturgy Dept.



Fr Paul Beukes OMI
Vicar General
Catholic Archdiocese of Johannesburg

Anglice

Prot. N. 17/21

NOTE ON ASH WEDNESDAY
Distribution of Ashes in Time of Pandemic

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.

From the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, 12 January 2021.

Robert Card. Sarah
Prefect

✠ Arthur Roche
Archbishop Secretary