



I: The celebration of the Feast of Saint Blaise on February 3, 2021 and the Blessing of Throats:

“Through the intercession of Saint Blaise, bishop and martyr ...”

The Blessing of Throats may take place: (1) during Mass after the Universal Prayer, (2) as part of a brief celebration of the Word of God, (3) or during the celebration of Morning or Evening Prayer following the Gospel Canticle.

However, given the COVID-19 pandemic, it seems a valid pastoral reason for blessing the entire gathered assembly with hands extended over the congregation (rather than violating social distancing in blessing individually with candles).

Pastoral Notes:

- In the *ORDO* (for February 3rd), there is a brief paragraph on the manner in which the “Blessing of Throats” may take place outside of Mass.
- The *ORDO* likewise gives some specifics for the “Blessing of Throats” at Morning Prayer or Evening Prayer.
- Catechizing the faithful is very important - that due to the COVID-19 pandemic a general blessing of the entire assembly is what needs to be done - helping them understand that, just because things have been done a certain way, that there are other valid options.
- Since Deacons or “deputed” Ecclesial Lay Ministers may be involved in some of the celebrations for the “Blessing of Throats”, the *Book of Blessings* [BB] contains The Rite of Blessing of Throats:

I. Within Mass #1630 BB

II. Within a Celebration of the Word of God #1636 BB

II: The celebration of Ash Wednesday on February 17, 2021 and the Distribution of Blessed Ashes:

“Repent, and believe in the gospel ...”

NB: *The Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments (CDWDS) released a note laying out the procedures bishops, priests and deacons around the world are to follow for the Distribution of Ashes at the start of Lent.*

Introduction:

The health situation caused by the Covid-19 pandemic continues to force changes on daily life, which are also reflected in the Church’s sphere. Ahead of the beginning of Lent, on Wednesday, February 17th, the Vatican’s **Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments** has published a note detailing how Catholic bishops, priests and deacons are to distribute ashes.

Instructions:

After blessing the ashes and sprinkling them with holy water in silence, the priest addresses those present, reciting once the formula found in the Roman Missal: [1] “Repent, and believe in the Gospel” or [2] “Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return”.

- At that point, the note continues, the priest “cleanses his hands, puts on a face mask, and distributes ashes to those who come to him or, if appropriate, he goes to those who are standing in their places”
- He then sprinkles the ashes on each person’s head “without saying anything”

Pastoral Notes:

NB: *Parishes should not follow the usual practice of imposing ashes by thumb on the foreheads of parishioners.*

- Parishioners should be reminded that their own internal disposition and intention to repent and start over is the best fruit of Ash Wednesday, and that the ashes are an external sign of that internal reality
- They should be reminded that receiving ashes is not required. They can still enter into Lent with a repentant heart even if they decide that receiving ashes is not the right thing for them this year
- The blessing and distribution of ashes to the faithful on Ash Wednesday (February 17, 2021) can take place in the usual way, following the guidance already in place relative to worship in a time of public health concern
- Masks must be worn by everyone, including the ministers, during the distribution of ashes
- As needed, the deacon or “deputed” lay ministers may join the priest in imposing ashes on the faithful
- All ministers should sanitize their hands before and after the distribution of ashes.
- Ashes may not be self-imposed: a minister always distributes them
- The **ORDO** (for February 17th) mentions the “Order for the Blessing and Distribution of Ashes” section in the *Book of Blessings* [BB]
- Specifically, [BB] #1656 - which could be done in the context of the Liturgy of the Word -- noting that only a priest or a deacon may bless the ashes
- Blessed Ashes may only be “imposed” by an appropriate minister and “self-imposition” is never an option. In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as in keeping with the guidelines and protocols already in place, the Blessed Ashes may not be provided for parishioners to take home to family members or to others



[A Sample Bulletin Catechesis/Announcement](#) (by *Eliot Kapitan from the Diocese of Springfield in Illinois*):

[Here is a “Bulletin Short” to help the preparation for giving and receiving ashes this year. It can be part of the liturgical catechesis for moving ashes from forehead to top of the head.]

A SAME YET DIFFERENT ASH WEDNESDAY IN 2021 ...

We have had a year filled with different ways of living and praying. There are fewer people in church. No water in the font. Less singing. No coffee and doughnuts on the way home. Yet we still pray. Instead of distributing ashes as a cross on the forehead -- unsafe in this time of the COVID 19 pandemic -- we can still receive them by sprinkling on the top of the head (permitted by our Catholic Church's ritual rules respecting an ancient liturgical practice). We may look a little cleaner. Regardless, we can still repent -- and believe in the Gospel! We will still bear ashes home to begin our Lenten disciplines and practices. Come to Ash Wednesday, 17 February at: [fill in times, etc.].



Catholic Diocese of Saginaw