



February 17, 2021

**Ash Wednesday to look different this year
Changes made for safety**

For Christians, Ash Wednesday marks the beginning of the 40-day Season of Lent. For Catholics, it is a season of penance, reflection, and fasting in preparation for Christ's resurrection on Easter Sunday, through which Christians attain redemption. In years past, ashes were placed on the foreheads of believers as a reminder that life on Earth ends, but there is eternal life for those who believe in Jesus Christ.

This year, to be as safe as possible during the COVID pandemic, the Vatican notified Bishops around the world that ashes should be administered differently than what many countries, including the United States, have done in the past.

The priest will say a prayer to bless the ashes and sprinkle them with holy water. Then he will address all those present and only once say the traditional words: "Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return," or "Repent, and believe in the Gospel." The priest will then cleanse his hands, put on a face mask and distribute the ashes to those who come forward. Instead of placing ashes on the forehead of individuals, the priest, deacon or minister will sprinkle ashes on the crown of the head of each one without speaking.

Ash Wednesday is not a holy day of obligation and there is no requirement to receive ashes. It remains, however, an important observance for many as a sign of penance to help recipients develop a spirit of humility and sacrifice.

Catholic churches around the Diocese of Dallas will hold Ash Wednesday services with COVID precautions in place. Catholics wishing to receive ashes should check with their local parish for the schedule.

Please note* The Most Reverend Edward Burns, Bishop of the Diocese of Dallas, will preside over the Ash Wednesday Mass at 12 noon on February 17th at the Cathedral Shrine of the Virgin of Guadalupe. Media can find a livestream of the service at <https://m.facebook.com/DallasCath/>.**

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