

LITURGY BYTES

The New Normal for Ash Wednesday



This Wednesday, February 17th, begins the season of Lent with the celebration of Ash Wednesday. Because of COVID, the Pope has requested that the priests use the European method for the distribution of ashes. For many years, all over Europe, it has been the tradition to sprinkle ashes on the head. In our country, this is definitely something new! However, we will acquaint ourselves once again this year to another “new normal” experience of our faith through the sprinkling of ashes. As always, our parish will have take-home packets of ashes for those unable to come in person.

Lent encourages all of us to retreat, reflect and even keep silent. The environment of the Church moves into that penitential purple color, minus the display of flowers. We are also urged to follow the traditional Lenten practices of prayer, fasting and almsgiving and, as many do, decide on what to give up for Lent. Or as I like to say, “What am I fasting from this Lent?” Some try to keep their resolutions for all 40 days, while others change weekly.

Many are asking, why give anything up after what we have been through since last March of 2020 with the pandemic? I am sure that hits home with most of us. Re-focus on this - Lent need not be depressing. Yes, we should be repentant and realize that sin led to the suffering and death of Our Lord on the cross. However, there is more to the story. During Lent this year may I suggest remembering repentance, suffering and death but also remember that NEW LIFE arises from these very things. Let us help each other grow in faith and holiness. Remember God loves us even in our sinfulness, and God never tires of cleansing our hearts and renewing our spirits!

Have a blessed, safe, healthy, and peaceful week!!!

Michele Hahn