



Office of Divine Worship
Diocese of Springfield in Massachusetts
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Dear Monsignors, Fathers and Deacons,

On January 12 of this New Year, The Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments has issued a “Note on Ash Wednesday.” During this time of pandemic, the Holy See has modified the method of distributing the ashes.

In the readings for Ash Wednesday, we are reminded to “rend your hearts not your garments” (Jl.2:13) and “not to perform righteous deeds in order that people may see them” (Mt.6:16). With this in mind, we have been asked by the Holy See to distribute ashes in a different way than we are accustomed due to the pandemic. In keeping with COVID-19 guidelines, Bishop Byrne has asked that we as a Diocese follow Rome’s instruction to sprinkle ashes on the congregant’s head without saying anything.

The Office of Worship in conjunction with Catholic Communications has produced a short tutorial on the distribution of ashes. This video is available on our Diocesan website, www.diopspringfield.org and in an email recently provided.

The instruction states: “The Priest (or in his place, the Deacon), 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 (or Deacon), 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,” (as if adding a pinch of salt to a recipe), “and sprinkles them on the head of each one without saying anything.” (Note on Ash Wednesday, Prot. N. 17/21, January 12, 2021)

Bishop asks that we use this moment as a unifying factor for all in our community, a true turning of our lives and hearts toward the Lord in this way, reflecting on the reality that once again, this time is different for all of us. Note however, that this practice of sprinkling is an ancient form of distribution still done in many other countries around us. This could certainly become a universal sign of our Catholicity this year as well as another way to offer up our own inconveniences.

Should you have further questions please do not hesitate to contact the Office of Worship.

Fraternally,

Rev. William J. Hamilton
Dir. Office of Divine Worship