

RITE FOR THE BLESSING AND DISTRIBUTION OF ASHES

2021

Prior to the Liturgy, two small bowls containing ashes are prepared. Normally, the ashes are made by burning the palms left from the previous Ash Wednesday. If this is not possible, ashes should be prepared from the burning of wood or other vegetation.

Distribution of Ashes in Time of Pandemic – adapted for Assembly of the Word

The leader says the prayer for blessing the ashes. The ashes are sprinkled with holy water, without saying anything. The leader address all those present and only once says the formula, “Turn away from sin and be faithful to the Gospel.”

The leader then cleanses their hands with sanitiser, puts on a face mask and distributes the ashes to those who come to them or, if appropriate, the leader goes to those who are standing in their places. The leader takes the ashes and sprinkles them on the head of each one without saying anything.

The Liturgical Commission offers an alternative suggestion. The distribution of ashes could proceed with the use of an individual cotton bud dipped in the ashes and signed on the forehead of each person present, without saying anything, ensuring the process is contactless.

Three people would be required for the distribution of ashes – the leader distributing the ashes, one person with a bowl to provide the leader with a new cotton bud for each person and one person with a larger bowl to collect the used cotton buds. The leader would be the only person touching the cotton bud. The leader cleanses her/his hands, puts on a face mask (gloves are optional) and distributes the ashes to those who come to them or, if appropriate, the leader goes to those who are standing in their places.

PRAYER FOR BLESSING THE ASHES

Leader 1: Dear friends in Christ,
let us implore God our Father to renew us in spirit
as these ashes are placed on our heads
as a sign of repentance.

Brief pause for silent prayer.

Lord, you do not wish sinners to die
but to turn to you and live.
In your goodness hear our prayer:
Pour out your blessing on these ashes,
which we place on our heads to remind us
that we are dust and unto dust we shall return.
Grant that by our faithful observance of Lent
we may gain pardon for our sins
and newness of life in the image of your risen Son.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

DISTRIBUTION OF THE ASHES

The distribution of ashes commences using one of the above formulas.

When all have been signed with the ashes, the Liturgy continues with the Opening Prayer.