



ARCHDIOCESE OF NEWARK

Sacramentals Update During Covid-19 Pandemic #2

January 18, 2021

The following guidelines still require wearing masks and social distancing by presiders, ministers and recipients, as stated in all of our diocesan directives.

Re: Blessing of Throats and Distribution of Ashes Update

After the January 11, 2021, directives were sent regarding sacramentals from the Archdiocese of Newark, the Vatican and the USCCB published directives for the blessing of throats and the distribution of ashes.

The Archdiocese is therefore retracting its directives for these two items and replacing it with the following memo on both topics which was sent from the Federation of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions (USA). It sums up both directives.

The Archdiocesan directives regarding holy water remain in place for the time being.

Once the Vatican provides updated materials for the celebration of Holy Week they will be distributed.

Thank you for your patience and understanding during these changing times.

If you have any questions, feel free to contact the Worship Office.

The Blessing of Throats on the Memorial of Saint Blaise (February 3, 2021)

The blessing of throats may simply be offered over all the people. "...a priest may give the blessing to all assembled by extending hands, without crossed candles, over the people while saying the prayer of blessing. A lay minister says the prayer proper to lay ministers without making the sign of the cross" (Book of Blessings, 1628).

"If the blessing is conferred during Mass, the blessing follows the homily and the general intercessions [sic.], or, for pastoral reasons, the prayer of blessing may take the place of the final blessing of the Mass..." (BB 1626).

Therefore, throats should not be blessed individually.

The Distribution of Ashes on Ash Wednesday (February 17, 2021)

On January 12, 2021, Archbishop Leonard Blair, Chair of the Bishops' Committee on Divine Worship, issued a memorandum to all the Bishops of the United States. In it he wrote, "While Ash Wednesday is not a holyday of obligation and while there is no requirement for the clergy

and faithful to receive the imposition of ashes, it is rightly observed as a celebration of high importance, and many will surely wish to participate even amid the current difficulties.” Archbishop Blair then shared a message from the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments. He writes, “During this time of pandemic, the Holy See has modified the method of distributing the ashes, as outlined in the “Note” on page 3:

Archbishop Blair notes that “these changes minimize the necessity of physical contact between minister and recipient and removes the need for the minister to speak while in close proximity to the recipient.

The distribution of ashes via sprinkling is a common practice in some countries but is not well known here. Therefore, the Committee encouraged ministers to provide some explanation to the faithful, to avoid unnecessary confusion.

Note also that the Book of Blessings provides instructions for the distribution of ashes outside of Mass (nos. 1656-1678).”

Parish Catechesis

An instrument is not needed; typically, one can simply use the tips of the fingers, similar to sprinkling spices into a recipe.

Sprinkling ashes on the head is not a common practice in the United States, but it is common in Europe and elsewhere.

Let us remember, that the ashes are not mandatory, but are a traditional exterior sign of our interior conversion. This is the focus of our Lenten journey and our ongoing journey of faith.

Holy Week 2021

Finally, Archbishop Blair also briefly addressed Holy Week in his message to the Bishops: “You will recall that the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments issued two decrees last year (dated March 19 and March 25, 2020) that provided special guidance for the celebration of Holy Week during the pandemic. The instructions that were given were intended mostly to assist priests in circumstances in which the presence of a congregation would be impossible. Those provisions, however, were explicitly granted only for the year 2020. As Lent approaches, we will have to wait to see whether the Holy See will issue similar guidance this year, should the situation continue to warrant it.

“As we move closer to Holy Week, the Committee on Divine Worship of the USCCB will continue to monitor developments and offer further observations for your consideration.” (BCDW Memorandum to Bishops, January 12, 2021).

The Archdiocese will continue to update parishes regarding Holy Week as information is received.

Thank you

Prot. N. 17/21

NOTE ON ASH WEDNESDAY
Distributions of Ashes in Time of Pandemic

The Priest 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 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 and sprinkles them on the head of each one without saying anything.

From the Congregation for Divine Worship and the
Discipline of the Sacraments, 12 January 2021.

Robert Card. Sarah, *Prefect*
+Arthur Roche, *Archbishop Secretary*