



DIOCESE OF BUFFALO
OFFICE OF WORSHIP

Reminders for the Season of Lent

*This is a supplement to the "Precepts for Celebrating the Liturgical Calendar."
Please refer to that document for more complete information regarding the Season of Lent.*

*Due to COVID-19, the dispensation from the obligation to attend Sunday Mass and Holy Days
remains in place until otherwise announced.*

Ash Wednesday

Ash Wednesday will be celebrated on February 17, 2021. On Ash Wednesday, the beginning of Lent, which is observed everywhere as a fast day, ashes are distributed." (General Instruction of the Roman Missal, nos. 27-29)

Ashes are blessed and imposed after the homily. These ashes are of branches of the olive tree, or, according to custom, of the palm tree or other trees, which have been blessed the previous year.

Apart from Mass, a liturgy of the Word precedes the rite of blessing, concluding with general intercessions, the Lord's Prayer, a concluding prayer, a blessing, and a hymn (see Book of Blessings, nos. 1656-1678).

The ordinary minister for the blessing of ashes is a priest or deacon. Others (e.g., extraordinary ministers of holy communion) may assist with the imposition of ashes where there is genuine need, especially for the sick and shut-ins. One of the following formulas is used:

"Repent, and believe in the Gospel."

or

"Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return."

COVID-19 Protocol

Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, ashes *should not* be imposed on a person's forehead in the usual manner. Instead, the European custom of sprinkling ashes on the crown of a person's head should be employed.

Advance notice and catechesis that this is allowable by the ritual should be communicated to parishioners before Ash Wednesday. A sample text that could be used in bulletins or on social media / websites is included below:

We have had a year filled with different ways of living and praying. There are fewer people in church. No water in the front. Less singing. Communion primarily in the hand. No coffee and doughnuts on the way home. Yet we still pray.

Instead of giving ashes as a cross on the forehead—unsafe in this COVID time—we can still receive them by sprinkling on the top of the head (permitted by our ritual rules).

Sprinkling ashes on the crown of the head recalls the biblical method of putting on sackcloth and ashes as a sign of penance: “Now on the twenty-fourth day of this month the people of Israel were assembled with fasting and in sackcloth, and with earth upon their heads” (Neh 9:1).

We will look a little cleaner. We can still repent, and believe in the Gospel. We will still bear ashes home to begin our lenten practices, borne of our hearts.

The Season of Lent

“Lent is ordered to preparing for the celebration of Easter, since the Lenten liturgy prepares for celebration of the Paschal Mystery both catechumens, by the various stages of Christian Initiation, and the faithful, who recall their own Baptism and do penance.

The forty days of Lent run from Ash Wednesday up to but excluding the Mass of the Lord's Supper exclusive. From the beginning of Lent until the Paschal Vigil, the *Alleluia* is not said.

Abstinence

All Catholics who have reached their 14th birthday are bound to abstain totally from meat on the following days: Ash Wednesday, all Fridays of Lent and Good Friday.

Fasting

All Catholics between their 18th and 59th birthdays are also bound to observe the Law of Fast on the following days: Ash Wednesday and Good Friday. This practice involves limiting oneself to a single full meal and avoiding food between meals. Light sustenance may be taken on two other occasions in the course of the day.

Easter Duty

After they have been initiated into the Most Holy Eucharist, all the faithful are bound by the obligation of receiving Communion at least once a year. This precept must be fulfilled during the Easter season, unless for a good reason it is fulfilled at another time during the year. This obligation may be fulfilled between February 21, 2021 (First Sunday of Lent) and May 30, 2021 (Trinity Sunday).

Baptism

There is no universal rule that would forbid the practice of baptism during Lent. However, given that Lent is traditionally focused on the preparation for baptism, many parishes have policies that discourage it. This is left to the discretion of the pastor / staff.

Holy Matrimony

While weddings may be celebrated during the Season of Lent (except for the Sundays of Lent), the priest/ deacon preparing the couple should make the couple aware of the special nature of the proposed date for celebration and its penitential character. They should be discouraged from too much pomp or display. (See *Order of Celebrating Holy Matrimony* #32)

Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA)

The Rite of Election will occur on the First Sunday of Lent, February 21, 2021, at 3:00 PM at Saint Joseph Cathedral.

Scrutinies seek to remove all obstacles to holistic conversion of the elect (unbaptized) and deepen their resolve to bind themselves to Christ, to carry out their mission to love God above all else. They take place in the parish on the Third, Fourth, and Fifth Sundays of Lent. **Year A** readings with appropriate chants are used. The *Roman Missal* contains specific orations and prefaces suited to these celebrations. (See *Roman Missal*, "Ritual Masses: 2. For the Celebration of the Scrutinies")

Scheduling Notes for Lent and Easter 2021

- Sunday, February 21, 2021 — The Rite of Election
3:00 PM at Saint Joseph Cathedral
- Tuesday, March 30, 2021 — Chrism Mass **** Please Note — Tuesday, March 30th ****
7:00 PM at Saint Joseph Cathedral
(This will include a Rite of Dismissal for the elect and candidates to be fully initiated at the Easter Vigil.)
- Please note that weddings are not permitted from Thursday, April 1, 2021 through Sunday, April 11, 2021.
- Monday, May 24, 2021, the Monday after Pentecost, is the Memorial of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of the Church. (See [usccb.org/motherofthechurch](https://www.usccb.org/motherofthechurch))