

Ash Wednesday and St. Blaise 2021

Diocese of San Angelo

FEBRUARY 3: Blessing of Throats on the Feast of St. Blaise

This date is during the annual Spring Priests' Conference.

For those parishes or schools offering the Blessing of Throats, it may be done during Mass, or in a celebration of the Liturgy of the Word, or during Morning Prayer or Evening Prayer.

It may be led by a priest, deacon, or lay minister, following the rites and prayers in chapter 51 of the Book of Blessings (paragraphs 1622 and following).

This year, because of the coronavirus pandemic, do not touch the persons with candles. Instead, give the blessing without the candles, extending hands over the assembly and saying the blessing as prescribed in the Book of Blessings.

FEBRUARY 17: Ash Wednesday

In 2021, because of the risk of spreading disease during the coronavirus pandemic, the minister is not to touch the recipient, and the ashes are not to be smeared by the thumb on the forehead. Instead, there are two options for the distribution of ashes this year:

- You may follow the ancient and common practice found in Rome and in a number of countries where ashes are sprinkled on the top of the head.
- You may impose ashes on the forehead by the use of a cotton swab. A new swab is to be used for each person. Swabs are to be burned after use. You may sprinkle some extra holy water into the ashes in order to moisten them so that the ashes will more effectively stick to the swab.

The blessing and distribution of ashes to the faithful on Ash Wednesday (Feb 17, 2021) shall follow the liturgical protocols already in place in the diocese during the time of pandemic.

- Masks must be worn by everyone, including the ministers, during the distribution of ashes.
- As needed, the deacon or lay ministers may join the priest in imposing ashes on the faithful.
- Ministers should sanitize their hands before the distribution of ashes.
- Ashes are always given by a minister. They may not be self-imposed, either in a liturgy or outside a liturgy.
- It is not acceptable to leave out a container of ashes in a public area for people to stop by and administer to themselves.
- The wearing of ashes, while customary and laudable, is not an obligation of the faithful, so anyone who is fearful of becoming sick should not come forward, or even come to church on Ash Wednesday.
- In order to reduce the size of crowds at each liturgy, for the sake of safe social distancing, offer multiple liturgies when possible.
- If additional liturgies are needed to accommodate the faithful in light of reduced capacity in the church, the Roman Missal gives the option that the blessing and distribution of ashes may take place in a Liturgy of the Word outside of Mass. (If led by a lay minister, ashes already blessed by a priest or deacon are used.)
- For a Liturgy of the Word outside of Mass, chapter 52 of the Book of Blessings (paragraphs 1656 and following) provides a helpful order with prayers, readings, and intercessions.