

ASH WEDNESDAY MARKS THE FIRST DAY OF LENT



For this year, 2006, March 1 will be Ash Wednesday and to those who will attend the Mass will be marked on the forehead with a cross of ashes as a sign of penitence and mortality. Putting a cross mark on the forehead was an imitation of the spiritual mark or seal that is put on a Christian in baptism. This is when the newly born Christian is delivered from slavery to sin and the devil, and made a slave of righteousness and Christ (Rom. 6:3-18).

Ashes are biblical symbol of mourning and penance. In Bible times the custom was to fast, wear sackcloth, sit in dust and ashes, and put dust and ashes on one's head. Blessed ashes having been used in God's rituals since the time of Moses (Numbers 19:9-10, 17).

Symbolism

The marking of their forehead with a cross made of ashes reminds each churchgoer that; (1) God made the first human being by breathing life into dust, and without God, human beings are nothing more than dust and ashes, (2) the phrase often used when the ashes are administered reminds Christians of the doctrine of original sin and (3) the cross of ashes may symbolize the way Christ's sacrifice on the cross as atonement for sin replaces the Old Testament tradition of making burnt offerings to atone for sin.

As the ashes are being administered, is for the priest to say ***"Turn away from sin and believe in the gospel"*** this is for us to reflect on our sins and do penance during the Lenten season.

The ashes used on Ash Wednesday are made by burning the palms that were blessed on the previous year of Palm Sunday. The ash is sometimes mixed with anointing oil, which makes sure that the ashes make a good mark. The use of anointing oil also reminds the churchgoer of God's blessings and of the anointing that took place at their baptism

From the Directory on Popular Piety and the Liturgy:

The act of putting on ashes symbolizes fragility and mortality, and the need to be redeemed by the mercy of God. Far from being a merely external act, the Church has retained the use of ashes to symbolize that attitude of internal penance to which all the baptized are called during Lent.

We are a 501C Non-Profit Corporation. Thank you for your generous support of our ministry. All donations are tax deductible.

Please pray for our ministry

"Support for this prayer leaflet is made possible by your generous tax-deductible donations"