

+ ASH + = Wednesday =

Ash Wednesday 2020 was one of the last times we gathered “normally” as a parish. It was a solemn day with three well-attended liturgies. Ashes were imposed in the shape of a cross on the foreheads of the faithful, petitions were offered on bended knee, and beautiful, penitential music was offered. We all know what happened a few weeks later, and we still find ourselves in a bit of a holding pattern, to the glory of God and the safety of the entire community.

While there is much hope on the horizon for the coming months, this year’s Ash Wednesday will be necessarily modified. The modifications themselves, however, are rooted in medieval history and grounded in a robust theology of the yearly Fast. We will record and broadcast the Proper Liturgy for Ash Wednesday, as it is offered in the Book of Common Prayer. We will release the video at 7:00am on Ash Wednesday, February 17th on [St Mary's YouTube channel](#) so that you may start your day in prayer, or access is later when you have some quiet time.

If you are free from **12:00pm-1:00pm** or from **5:00pm-6:00pm**, we invite you to join us at the Welcome Center doors under the porte-cochère for the distribution of ashes. Instead of the familiar method of distribution involving a cross of ashes imposed upon the forehead by the thumb of the minister, we will be sprinkling a small amount of ashes on your head, and then backing up to say the words of imposition before sending you on your way with a prayer card. The whole process will take less than a minute!

Believe it or not, sprinkling is the most ancient method of distribution to be found, originating first in monasteries, when ashes were sprinkled on the tonsures (shaved spots!) on the heads of the monks. While certainly different from what we are used to, there’s another powerful dimension to be found in the sprinkling of ashes; the gesture that is supposed to remind us of our mortality directly parallels what happens at funerals, when a bit of dirt is sprinkled on the top of a casket or urn shortly before it is committed to the ground.

Friends in Christ, we do hope you will join us this Ash Wednesday as we step into the wilderness of Lent. We hope you join us in prayer on the broadcast, and we hope to see you at the doors of our wonderful church. **Keep the faith, stay hopeful, and have a holy Lent.**