



**LITURGICAL DIRECTIVES  
FOR THE BLESSING OF THROATS AND THE DISTRIBUTION OF ASHES**

**OFFICE FOR DIVINE WORSHIP  
ARCHDIOCESE OF PHILADELPHIA  
MONDAY, JANUARY 25, 2021**

**OPTIONAL MEMORIAL OF SAINT BLAISE AND THE BLESSING OF THROATS  
WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 3, 2021**

This year in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia in all circumstances the blessing of throats is to take place according to the general form rather than the individual form with crossed candles as described in the *Book of Blessings*, no. 1628:

*If, for pastoral reasons, each individual cannot be blessed in the manner described in no. 1627, for example when great numbers are gathered for the blessing or when the memorial of Saint Blaise occurs on a Sunday, a priest or deacon may give the blessing to all assembled by extending hands, without the 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.*

The Blessing of Throats in this general form can take place during Mass as the conclusion of the Universal Prayer or as the Blessing during the Concluding Rites (see *Book of Blessings*, no 1626). If the Blessing of Throats takes place outside Mass, it is always to be preceded by a brief celebration of the Word of God (see *Book of Blessings*, nos. 1626 and 1636).

The Blessing of Throats, in addition to taking place on the Memorial of Saint Blaise, can take place at any time, including the Sunday before or after the Memorial of Saint Blaise.

The Blessing of Candles using one of the two forms in the *Roman Missal* should be scheduled to take place at one of the parish Masses on the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord, Tuesday, February 2, 2021.

## ASH WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 17, 2021

Ashes are to be distributed ONLY on Ash Wednesday and not the days before or after.

In the Archdiocese of Philadelphia for Ash Wednesday 2021, a parish or institution may decide on one of two forms for the distribution of ashes. Whatever form is decided for a parish or institution, it is to be observed by all—priests, deacons and extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion—who are distributing ashes to avoid any confusion on the part of the faithful.

The first form, as described by Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, on January 12, 2021, for the distribution of ashes in time of pandemic, takes places as follows:

The Priest says the prayer of blessing for the ashes as usual and then sprinkles the ashes with holy water, without saying anything. Then he addresses all those present only once with one of the formula given in the *Roman Missal*, *Repent, and believe in the Gospel* or *Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return*. He then sprinkles some of the blessed ashes on the top of the head of those who approach him without saying anything.

If this form of distribution is decided for a parish or institution, then an explanation to the faithful is necessary beforehand. This manner of distribution is the typical form in many parts of the world but not in the United States.

The second form follows what is our typical practice in the United States of placing the ashes on the forehead in the sign of a cross. As above, one of the formula given in the *Roman Missal* is addressed to all those present only once. With this form, if it is thought necessary, a cotton ball may be used for each person. These cotton balls should be burned after use.

It is also possible to distribute ashes outside Mass as described in the *Roman Missal* for Ash Wednesday and in the *Book of Blessings*, nos. 1656-1678. Blessed ashes can be distributed to the sick and homebound as well as in nursing and medical facilities with due consideration of the pandemic precautions. The distribution of blessed ashes is always to include a brief celebration of the Word of God. Practices such as “Ashes to go!” and leaving blessed ashes in a bowl or in small packets for people to help themselves are not permitted.

Please see the February Monthly Mailing, Office for Divine Worship, for more complete information about Lent. It is available now on the website of the Office for Divine Worship, <http://www.odwphiladelphia.org/sacred-liturgy/monthly-mailings/>.

Thank you so very much for your continued generous assistance throughout the COVID-19 Pandemic. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at [fr.dgill@archphila.org](mailto:fr.dgill@archphila.org).

In Christ, Father Dennis Gill, Director, Office for Divine Worship