

Ash Wednesday 2021

Ash Wednesday marks the beginning of the solemn season of Lent. Ashes are an ancient sign of penitence; from the middle ages it became the custom to begin Lent by being marked in ash with the sign of the cross as a sign of self-examination and repentance.



The calculation of the forty days of Lent has varied considerably in Christian history. It is now usual in the West to count them continuously to the end of Holy Week (not including Sundays), so beginning Lent on the sixth Wednesday before Easter.

Due to the current restrictions around physical distancing we are unable to offer the imposition of ashes during our services this year. I therefore invite you to make your own ash and mark members of your household and yourself as a sign that Lent 2021 has begun.

The ash we use for this symbolic act is created from burning the blessed palm crosses distributed on Palm Sunday in the proceeding year. It is a symbol of another year passing and a new time of self-examination and renewal. These ashes are then mixed with the holy oils which were blessed and distributed to parishes by the Bishop at the Chrism Eucharist on Maundy Thursday in the Cathedral. By mixing the two, the ash becomes viscous in nature and easy to apply to the forehead.

Cooking instruction on how to prepare your ashes are provided here.

Once you have prepared your ashes you are welcome to tune in to one of our live-streamed Ash Wednesday services where you will be invited to anoint your household. Equally you may wish to do this during a personal time of prayer during the day at home.

Ash for Ash Wednesday cooking instructions.

You can simply burn your palm cross in a fire proof pot outside. Alternatively:

1. Preheat oven to 180oC or Gas mark 4.
2. Place palm cross on baking tray and place in the oven
3. Leave in oven until the heat absorbs the moisture from the cross and it has turned into ash. Approx 10-20mins.
4. Remove from oven and leave to cool.

Preparing the ashes

1. Place ash into a small bowl or container.
2. add 1-3 teaspoons of olive oil.
Do not use water as this can cause a chemical reaction which may burn the skin.
3. mix together until you have a tar like substance.

The traditional prayer for the imposition of ashes

*"Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return. (Genesis 3:19)
Turn away from sin and be faithful to Christ."*