

**ROMAN CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF ALBANY**  
**LITURGICAL UPDATES**  
**2<sup>nd</sup> February 2021**

This is just a brief liturgical update, in part to respond to various questions and ideas that have been sent in over the last few weeks.

- Ash Wednesday. A number of people have asked about the possibility of placing the ashes on the forehead as is the general custom in the USA; but by using an instrument such as a cotton ball swab. The Vatican and the USCCB instructions make no mention of this possibility. However, some dioceses do offer this method in their guidelines as an alternative to the sprinkling of ashes. The Bishop has given permission for this practice of applying ashes to the forehead, where it is desirable or feasible (given numbers present etc.). Please note the following requirements if this method is to be employed:
  1. The formula must still be said only once before the actual distribution of the ashes begins (as in the Vatican, USCCB and Albany Diocesan Guidelines). The ashes are therefore placed on the forehead without anything being said.
  2. A new swab must be used for each person
  3. The swabs are to be put in a suitable container and then burned after the Mass or service.

Whatever method is chosen, it is, of course important that the ashes are distributed in an appropriate and reverent manner and that liturgical norms are followed. For example, see the Roman Missal: Ash Wednesday, or the Diocesan Guidelines for Lent, Holy Week and Easter published on the Diocesan portal.

- A gentle reminder that the various Diocesan Liturgical Guidelines and Updates (for example those published on 28<sup>th</sup> September) remain in place for the moment. A number of concerns have been raised from people such as the wearing of masks during Mass, the correct placing of the elements on the altar, the distribution of Holy Communion or the purifying of the vessels used at the Mass.
- Further updates, especially relating to Holy Week, the Sacred Triduum and Easter will be published as we get closer to that time. At present, the Guidelines/Update issued on 12<sup>th</sup> January 2021 remain in force. At this time, it seems highly probable that the Chrism Mass will take the form as outlined in those Guidelines (for example, a very limited attendance with a priest representative from each Vicariate to concelebrate and then to take the oils back to the Vicariate).