

Ashes This Wednesday Produce Time For Self-Reflection And Future Ahead In 2022

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
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ALTON/EDWARDSVILLE - With the COVID-19 Pandemic restrictions lightening, Ash Wednesday this year carries a strong symbol for self-reflection, repentance, and the future.

For two years, people throughout the world have included masks in their daily lives and been hit with constant COVID-19 limitations. The COVID-19 Pandemic was unleashed in relentless fashion on the region around two years ago in March 2020. Wednesday was a beautiful day and attendance at churches around the region for ashes was reported as "strong."

Father Paul Nguyen, OMV, estimated by the end of the day on March 2, 2022, at St. Mary's Church in Alton, more than 700 K-12 students received ashes, along with another 700 Catholic parishioners. Marquette Catholic students filled the church for one of the morning Masses.

"It is great to have the church full and so many voices supporting the prayers," Nguyen said. "Ash Wednesday begins the season of Lent and preparation for the celebration of Easter. Easter is Jesus' triumph over sin and our hope it is also a sobering time to remind us of our sins and that we need redemption. We need to take Jesus' sacrifice seriously. The undertaking of our own prayer improvement is not only with the ashes of the forehead but fasting today on Ash Wednesday and on Friday with no intake of meat."

Nguyen said it is very important for all to emphasize self-reflection during the month leading up to Easter Day and on.

When the ashes are placed on the forehead, it is marked with ashes as a sign of repentance by Roman Catholics. Ash Wednesday is observed by Catholics, Lutherans, Moravians, Anglicans, Methodists, and many others from Congregationlist, Continental Reformed, and Presbyterian churches.

Father Jeff Goeckner, VF, of St. Boniface Church in Edwardsville, sees Ash Wednesday as a very important day for families.

"It is a day where people come together and it looks like we are slowly easing out of the COVID Pandemic," he said. "We had a good crowd this morning and afternoon. With the Ukraine issues, it is a special way for us to fast and pray for a peaceful resolution. The conflict really helped bring out a lot of people."

The dictum "Remember that you are dust and dust you shall return," are words used when ashes are placed on foreheads at many services. The ashes are prepared by burning palm leaves from the previous year's Palm Sunday celebrations.

Father Jeff said this was a beautiful Ash Wednesday in this area with temps at 70 degrees outside.

"I think I smell a little spring air outside," he said with joy, hopeful for a peaceful resolution in the Ukraine situation and continued relief from the COVID-19 Pandemic.