

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**DATE: February 9, 2016**

**ASH WEDNESDAY AND THE SIGNIFICANCE OF ASHES**

Ash Wednesday begins the season of Lent, so named because of the Church's tradition of marking the foreheads of each member of the Faith community with consecrated ashes on this day. Catholics receive the ashes as a tangible reminder that Lent is a time for prayer, fasting, and charitable works (almsgiving) in preparation for Easter, the Resurrection of Jesus Christ.

According to Catholic tradition, Lent provides us with a yearly opportunity to renew and deepen our relationship with Christ. It is a time during which penitential practices and good works are stressed equally by the Church. Acts of sacrifice and self-denial alongside actions directed toward love of God and neighbor combine to powerfully fulfill our baptismal commitment to be like Christ.

Ash Wednesday and Good Friday are days of fast and abstinence. Fasting means the limiting of oneself to a single full meal per day.

All Catholics who have reached their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday and have not as yet reached their 60<sup>th</sup> birthday are obligated to fast. Abstinence from meat begins for all Catholics who have reached their 14<sup>th</sup> birthday.

**Ashes will be distributed at St. John Cathedral East 9<sup>th</sup> and Superior Ave. in downtown Cleveland at 7:15 a.m., 11:00 a.m., 12:00 Noon, 1:00 p.m., 5:10 p.m. and 7:00 p.m. and at all Catholic Churches in the Diocese of Cleveland (check times for those local Masses).**

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