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ARCHDIOCESE OF ST. LOUIS

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LENTEN OBSERVANCE—ARCHDIOCESE OF ST. LOUIS

The Blessing of Ashes should take place within the celebration of the Mass or a scheduled service consisting of at least an appointed Scripture reading and a brief homily stressing the meaning of the ashes as a symbol of penance and self-denial.

In the case of genuine pastoral necessity, Archbishop Carlson has given permission for lay ministers (for example, extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion) to assist the priest and deacon in the distribution of the blessed ashes. Please refer to the *Book of Blessing* for additional information that will be of assistance to you in this matter.

The Blessing of the Ashes is reserved to the priest or deacon, and priests and deacons should participate in the distribution of the ashes, whenever possible. They are the primary ministers of the ritual.

ARCHDIOCESAN LENTEN REGULATIONS

Then to all, Christ said,

“Whoever wishes to be my follower must deny his very self, take up his cross each day, and follow in my steps.”

(Luke 9:23)

The Church has always helped us fulfill these words of Jesus by prescribing very definite penance for all Catholics. Accordingly, the Pope and the American Bishops have outlined obligatory fast and abstinence as follows:

Ash Wednesday (March 5, 2014) and Good Friday (April 18, 2014) are days of *abstinence* for all Catholics *over the age of 14*. On these two days, *fast*, as well as *abstinence*, is also obligatory for those *from the ages of 18-59*. Abstinence means refraining from meat. Fast means one full meal a day, with two smaller meals and nothing between meals (liquids are permitted). No Catholic will lightly excuse himself or herself from this obligation.

All Fridays in Lent are days of *abstinence* from meat. Here again Catholics will not hold themselves lightly excused, but if there is a serious health problem, this obligation would not apply.

We should strive to make all days of Lent a time of prayer and penance.