

## ASH WEDNESDAY Solemn Mass Form

The revised rite of Ash Wednesday was published in the 1962 edition of the *Missale Romanum*.

### PREPARATIONS

-the character of the day is penitential, thus:

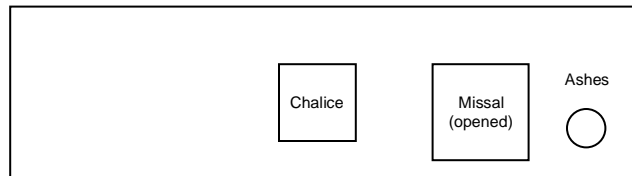
- the liturgical color is violet.
- the vestments should be sober, but of better quality.
- lace (a symbol of joy), should be omitted from the altar linens and vesture.<sup>1</sup>
- flowers are forbidden on the altar and in the sanctuary.
- plainer items should be used (thurible, ewer and basin, etc.).<sup>2</sup>

-sacristy:

- amices, albs, celebrant's and deacon's stoles, cinctures, dalmatic, tunicle, cope and birettas (if used) should be prepared in vesting order.<sup>3</sup>
- thurible with lit charcoal and incense boat.

-altar: prepared as usual for High Mass with these additions:

- “*The Missal, covered with violet, stands open on the Epistle-side...*”<sup>4</sup>
- “*...between the book and end of the altar, is a vessel containing the ashes...*”<sup>5</sup> “*This vessel—of silver or any other ornamental material<sup>6</sup>—is covered with a lid of similar material or with a violet veil<sup>7</sup>*” (cf. diagram of altar below).<sup>8</sup>



-on the sedilia: violet chasuble and maniples<sup>9</sup> in vesting order.

-credence: as usual for Solemn Mass<sup>10</sup> (including the dish and towel<sup>11</sup>) with these additions:

- ewer and basin filled with warm water.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *The Celebration of Mass: A Study of the Rubrics of the Roman Missal*, Rev. J.B. O'Connell (1964—reprinted by Preserving Christian Publications, 2007), p 448, ff 5.

<sup>2</sup> The practice of using more costly items for festal occasions and plainer ones for penitential days and Requiems is mentioned in the *Caeremoniale Episcoporum* (1886) and by rubricians, in particular regarding the quality of the altar crucifix and candles.

<sup>3</sup> If a second priest will assist in distributing ashes, also prepare in the sacristy an additional surplice and violet stole.

<sup>4</sup> *The Ceremonies of the Roman Rite Described*, Rev. Adrian Fortescue (1962—reprinted by St. Austin Press, 1996), p 266. It was the custom in Rome to enclose the missal in a cloth cover matching the color of the Mass and to use a similarly-colored pillow or missal stand with a colored veil. This is a laudatory practice and should be practiced if possible.

<sup>5</sup> If C (or another priest distributing) does not have the *Memento* formula memorized, a card can be printed with the text (“*Memento homo quia pulvis es et in pulverem reverteris*”) and placed behind the vessel of ashes. It is held by an acolyte during the distribution.

<sup>6</sup> Fortescue, p 266, ff 3: “M.R. [*Missale Romanum*] (cf. C.E. [*Caeremoniale Episcoporum*]; II, xviii, I).”

<sup>7</sup> Fortescue, p 266. It is recommended to place a matching tray under this vessel to protect the altar cloth.

<sup>8</sup> If a second priest will be distributing ashes simultaneously with C, then a second vessel should be prepared on the altar as the first.

<sup>9</sup> If a substitute-Sd is being used, then only two violet maniples will be prepared, as a substitute-Sd cannot wear a maniple.

<sup>10</sup> If necessary, a secondary credence may be used for the ewer, basin, and tray with soap and towel.

<sup>11</sup> For practical reasons the use of a ewer and basin is conceded to a priest for washing his hands after distributing the ashes (as it is impractical to do this with a cruet and small bowl). However, a priest must use a cruet and bowl during Mass because use of the ewer and basin for the *Lavabo* is a pontifical privilege.

- white towel on a tray.<sup>12</sup>
- clean bar of soap on a tray.
- aspersory and aspergil.

### **NOTE ABOUT SOLITA OSCULA**

Despite the penitential character of the day, per the *Caeremoniale Episcoporum*<sup>13</sup> (and rubricians) the ceremonial kisses<sup>14</sup> are retained during the Ash Wednesday rite. As usual, the *solita oscula* are given before MC presents the incense spoon, thurible, aspergil or biretta to C, and upon receiving these items back.

### **SYNOPSIS OF THE CEREMONY**

1. PROCESSION (as usual for Solemn Mass with exception to sacred ministers)
2. BLESSING OF ASHES
  - A. *Exaudi nos, Domine* (sung by choir, said by C).
  - B. Four orations.
  - C. Blessing of incense.
  - D. Blessing of ashes first with holy water (while *Asperges* is said) then with incense.
3. DISTRIBUTION OF ASHES
  - A. Sacred ministers go to center of predella.
  - B. Highest ranking cleric gives ashes to C.
  - C. Highest ranking cleric receives ashes at predella.
  - D. D and Sd receive ashes at predella.
  - E. Clerics receive ashes at predella.
  - F. Servers receive ashes at predella.
  - G. Schola members receive ashes at predella.
  - H. Laity receive ashes at Communion rail.
4. WASHING C's HANDS
5. ORATION: CONCEDE NOBIS, DOMINE
6. HIGH MASS AS USUAL except:
  - A. Preparatory Prayers, *Aufer a nobis* and *Oramus* are omitted.
  - B. Tract: All kneel when the verse *Adiuva nos* is sung.
  - C. Postcommunion: Additional bow is made during the Lenten season.
  - D. D chants "*Humiliate capite vestra Deo*" for Lenten prayer over the people.

### **CEREMONY OF BLESSING OF THE ASHES**

-the order of the procession is as for Solemn Mass except C wears the cope hence D and Sd flank him and hold back the cope by the ophreys,<sup>15</sup> D on the right and Sd on the left.

-after the acolytes place their candles on the credence, Ac1 takes the aspersory and goes to his usual place while Ac2 positions himself *in plano* near the Epistle side of the foot and waits for MC to give him the veil and vessel's lid.

<sup>12</sup> This towel should be larger than the usual *Lavabo* towel; a 15 inch square linen towel (or medium-size white cotton towel) is ideal.

<sup>13</sup> Liber I, chap. XVIII, n. 16.

<sup>14</sup> The ceremonial kisses which give solemnity and signify joy in the blessings received from the priest; cf. *Caeremoniale in Missa, Privata et Solemni*, Msgr. C. Callewaert (1941—reprinted by Romanitas Press), p 38

<sup>15</sup> The paneled decoration or trim present on the open edges of the cope; it should be held back so that the decorative front side is revealed, not the lining.

- upon reaching the foot, MC2<sup>16</sup> genuflects and goes to the Epistle side of the sanctuary from where he ensures that the servers carry out their duties as described below.
- when the sacred ministers (SMs) reach the foot, MCI signals a genuflection, then he goes *per longiorum* to his Epistle side missal position, where he removes the veil and lid from the vessel with ashes and gives both to Ac2 who ascends to the second altar step to receive them. Ac2 then puts them on the credence and returns to his normal position.
- after genuflecting at the foot, C, D and Sd ascend to the predella where C kisses the altar. Then without any further reverence<sup>17</sup> all three SMs go to the Epistle side of the altar, D and Sd remaining on their respective sides of C.<sup>18</sup>
- when C arrives at the missal, MCI points out the proper text, *Exaudi nos, Domine*.
- while the choir sings *Exaudi nobis, Domine*, C reads it in a low voice and with joined hands; during this time, D and Sd do not hold the cope.
- when the choir has finished singing *Exaudi nobis, Domine*, remaining at the missal with D and Sd, C sings “*Dominus vobiscum*” without turning towards the congregation and in the ferial tone.
- C continues with the four orations, during which D and Sd do not hold the cope, except when C blesses the ashes with the sign of the cross (placing his left hand on the altar<sup>19</sup>), D momentarily holds back the ophrey.<sup>20</sup>
- after bowing at “*Oremus*” for the last oration, Th brings the thurible and boat<sup>21</sup> to the Epistle side of the foot as for High Mass.

## **BLESSING OF ASHES<sup>22</sup>**

- after the orations, Th ascends to the predella and incense is imposed as usual as at Solemn Mass with the addition of Sd holding back the cope.
- while incense is being imposed, AcI takes position near the Epistle side of the foot ready with the aspensory.
- after the incense has been blessed, Th retains the thurible and receives back the boat and steps down to the second altar step behind the SMs.
- while Th descends to the second step, AcI ascends to the second altar step and gives the aspensory to D; AcI remains on the step until the ashes have been sprinkled.
- D receives the aspensory from AcI and presents the aspergil to C with *solita oscula*. D and Sd hold back the cope while C sprinkles the ashes three times saying the entire antiphon *Asperges me* omitting the psalm.
- D then receives the aspergil from C with *solita oscula* and returns the aspensory to AcI who returns it to the credence and resumes his usual position.
- while D gives the aspensory to AcI, Th ascends to D’s right,<sup>23</sup> gives the thurible to D and waits there.

<sup>16</sup> MC2’s office is to direct and coordinate both the servers and clergy in choir as necessary and during Solemn Mass to assist D and Sd as required (cf. the MC2 at High Mass and Solemn Mass notes for details).

<sup>17</sup> Fortescue, p 267.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> While placing his left hand on the altar; *Ibid.*

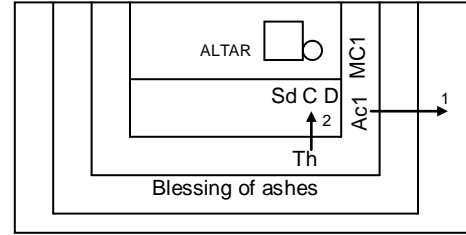
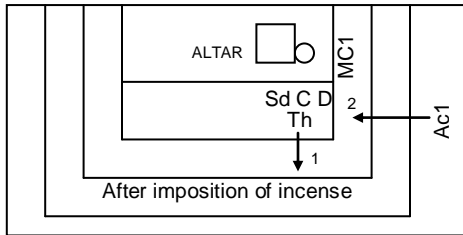
<sup>21</sup> If there is a boatbearer he will present the boat to MC and retrieve it as at High Mass.

<sup>22</sup> This part of the rite follows the Roman principle of performing the various preparatory blessings first (e.g., holy water, which usually was made prior, and blessed incense, which is always made at the moment when needed) before proceeding to the blessing of the sacramental (e.g., candles and ashes) or object (e.g., the catafalque during the Absolution). However, in the revised rite of Palm Sunday, this typical Roman order is not followed.

<sup>23</sup> If the predella is not deep enough to accommodate Th, he should remain on the second altar step.

-D gives the thurible to C with *solita oscula* and both D and Sd hold back the cope while C incenses the ashes with three singles fanned saying nothing.

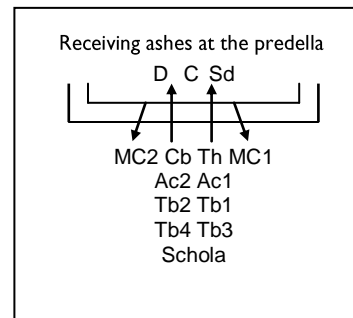
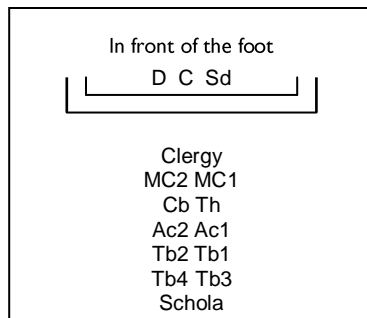
-D receives the thurible from C with *solita oscula* and returns it to Th who descends *in plano* and in preparation for receiving ashes, either returns the thurible to the sacristy or places it near his normal position.<sup>24</sup>



## DISTRIBUTION OF ASHES

In receiving ashes, the clerics, servers and schola<sup>25</sup> all approach in the same manner after the sacred ministers:

- all form up in pairs in order of precedence (highest rank first), each pair genuflects upon reaching the foot, ascends to the predella and kneels to receive ashes.
- all clergy receive ashes from C in the shape of an equilateral cross where they would be tonsured (in the center of the head); non-clergy receive it on the forehead.
- deacons and priests (in choir) receive their ashes wearing their stoles.
- upon receiving, the pair stands and turns inwards, each one descending to their respective side of the next pair at the foot, turn inwards and face the altar, whereupon the former and following pair (all four) genuflect simultaneously.
- the former pair returns to their places while the following pair repeats the previously described actions.
- the clergy sit upon returning to their places, but the servers stand.



-after D has given away the thurible, he takes the vessel of ashes and then SMs go to the center of the predella with D and Sd remaining on their respective sides of C, and face the congregation.

- meanwhile, MC2 coordinates the pairs of clergy, servers (MCs, Th and Cb,<sup>26</sup> acolytes, then Tbs) and schola in the center of the sanctuary in hierarchal order.

-the highest ranking cleric (without wearing a stole<sup>27</sup>) approaches and puts ashes on C's bowed head in the form of the cross<sup>28</sup> saying nothing.<sup>29</sup>

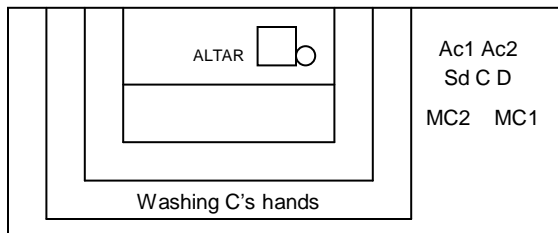
<sup>24</sup> A thurible stand can be temporarily set up here for this purpose (though at least a foot away from the credence to protect the linen cloth), or it may be set in a safe place on the floor.

<sup>25</sup> I.e., a liturgical schola made up of men and boys wearing cassock and surplice.

<sup>26</sup> If there is a Communion rail gate, Cb may close it after he has received his ashes.

- the highest ranking cleric (not wearing his stole<sup>30</sup>) genuflects at the foot, ascends to the predella and puts ashes in the center of C's bowed head in the form of an equilateral cross saying nothing.<sup>31</sup>
- the highest ranking cleric then kneels on the predella, puts on his stole, receives his ashes on his head from C,<sup>32</sup> descends to the foot, genuflects and returns to his place;<sup>33</sup> the rest of the clergy then follow in pairs.
- D gives the vessel of ashes to MCI to hold momentarily, while D and Sd kneel on edge of the predella and receive ashes from C on their heads. D then resumes holding the ashes during the remainder of the distribution, as well as holding back the cope with Sd.<sup>34</sup>
- after SMs, C distributes ashes to the clergy on their heads at the predella, followed by the servers and then the schola members.
- after all in the sanctuary have received ashes, SMs descend to the foot while D and Sd simultaneously change sides behind C, genuflect, and go to the Epistle side of the Communion rail.
- while distributing at the rail, whenever SMs reach the center, all must turn towards the altar, genuflect, and then continue to the other side.
- meanwhile, Th should prepare another set of charcoals for the beginning of Mass if needed; towards the end of the distribution he should be in his normal place in the sanctuary to take the remaining ashes from C to the sacristy.

## WASHING C's HANDS



-towards the end of the distribution of ashes, the acolytes go to the credence where Ac1 retrieves the ewer and basin and Ac2 the tray with the towel and soap; both remain near the credence facing the nave.

- when the distribution is ended, with D and Sd still holding the cope the SMs follow MCI to the foot, genuflect on his signal, turn inwards, and follow him to the Epistle side of the sanctuary (*in plano*<sup>35</sup>).
- there D gives the vessel of remaining ashes to MCI who passes them to Th<sup>36</sup> to put in the sacristy.

<sup>27</sup> Fortescue, p 267.

<sup>28</sup> All clerics receive ashes in the form of a cross on the top of their heads (i.e., where their mark of tonsure would be). However, all others receive ashes on their forehead.

<sup>29</sup> Neither D nor Sd may give ashes to C; see Fortescue, p 268: "If no other priest is present the celebrant stands<sup>l</sup>, facing the altar, and puts the ashes on himself, in the form of a cross, saying nothing [1 SRC I Nov. 1931]."

<sup>30</sup> Fortescue, p 267; a server may hold this for him nearby until he kneels down.

<sup>31</sup> "If no other priest is present the celebrant stands<sup>l</sup>, facing the altar, and puts the ashes on himself, in the form of a cross, saying nothing [1 SRC I Nov. 1931]."

<sup>32</sup> Fortescue, p 268.

<sup>33</sup> If the highest-ranking cleric, presumably a priest, will not be assisting with the distribution, he may wash his hands in the sacristy's sacrarium during that time.

<sup>34</sup> If C requires the *Memento* card, Sd holds it.

<sup>35</sup> This washing is purely for practical reasons and has no symbolic inference, hence why Fortescue directs that it should not be performed at the altar as during Mass.

<sup>36</sup> He should also take the vessel from the assisting priest if there is one.

-when C approaches the acolytes, both bow to him, wash his hands, and bow again afterwards;<sup>37</sup> D and Sd hold back the cope and D assists C with the towel.

### **ORATION: CONCEDE NOBIS, DOMINE**

-when the washing is completed,<sup>38</sup> MCI accompanies SMs *per brevior*em to their former missal position resuming his own place at the missal where he indicates the oration, *Concede nobis, Domine*.

-meanwhile the acolytes return the washing items to the credence.

-immediately after the oration, MC leads SMs "...straight to the sedilia, without a reverence to the cross..."<sup>39</sup>

-D removes the cope from C, which MC takes and gives it to AcI who returns it to the sacristy; then D and Sd put on their maniples and assist C in vesting with his maniple and chasuble as usual.

-meanwhile Cb and Ac2 takes the ewer and basin items<sup>40</sup> and aspersion into the sacristy as these items are no longer needed for Solemn Mass.

-afterwards, Cb and the acolytes return to their places.

### **MASS**

Solemn Mass is as usual with these exceptions:

- Preparatory Prayers are omitted inclusive of *Aufer a nobis* and *Oramus*; C goes immediately to the center of the predella to impose incense for the first incensation of the altar.<sup>41</sup>
- during the Collect,<sup>42</sup> after all bow first for "Oremus", MCI signals all (except SMs<sup>43</sup>) to kneel; all bow as usual for the Holy Name.<sup>44</sup> After "Amen", MCI signals all to stand.
- during the Tract, MCI signals all to kneel when the verse, "*Adjuva nos...nomen tuum...*" is sung, but *not* when C says it at the missal;<sup>45</sup> during this entire verse SMs kneel on the predella's edge.<sup>46</sup>
- during the Postcommunion, MCI repeats the steps as previously explained for the Collect. All remain kneeling for the special Lenten prayer over the people and bow their heads (only) when D turns and sings facing the congregation, "*Humiliate capite vestra Deo.*" They remained bow while C sings the special prayer inclusive to "*per Dominum nostrum Jesum Christum...*"<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> If another priest was also distributing ashes, following the rules of precedence he must wait to wash his hands after C (*cf.* Fortescue, p 268)—however, the acolytes should not bow to him before and after because he is not a sacred minister. Or the assisting priest may wash his hands in the sacrarium in the sacristy.

<sup>38</sup> If another priest also distributes ashes, he must wash his hands *after* C does as this follows the rule of precedence; *cf.* Fortescue, p 268.

<sup>39</sup> Fortescue, p 268.

<sup>40</sup> The water in the basin should be poured into the sacrarium as it contains residual of the blessed ashes.

<sup>41</sup> Both the *Missale Romanum* and Fortescue denote that C does not kiss the altar before the Introit, most likely because he has already made this preliminary act before blessing the ashes.

<sup>42</sup> *M.R. (Rubricae Generales; X; 521, c); cf. The Rubrics of the Roman Breviary and Missal* for the English rendition: p 108, X; 521, c.

<sup>43</sup> D and Sd remain standing with C.

<sup>44</sup> Those kneeling are inferior ministers, clergy in choir and the faithful who usually bow when kneeling. The sacred ministers remain standing for these prayers thus bow as usual.

<sup>45</sup> Fortescue, p 268 and *M.R. (Rubricae Generales; X; 518, a); for the English translation, cf. The Rubrics of the Roman Breviary and Missal*, p 107, X; 518, a.

<sup>46</sup> Fortescue, pp 268-269.

<sup>47</sup> A separate bow is not made for the Holy Name since one is already bowing.