February 8, 2021

Dear Friends in Christ:

How weary we are of beginning sentences with phrases like, "We didn't expect . . ." or "I know it's no ideal, but . . ." And yet, here are again. Against our hopes, we are observing another significant moment in the Church year together, separately. It would be nice to say we're used to it by now, but we all know that's not true.

However, what *is* true is that we are slowly getting closer to the time when we will be moving through the Church year, together *and* together. We don't know when that moment will come exactly, but we are closer to it now than we were last month. As more and more folks are vaccinated, we are inching our way toward being together, worshipping God in the same room, and living out our mission to share the Gospel through Worship, Hospitality, and Outreach.

Meanwhile, we stand on the doorstep of Lent, with Ash Wednesday arriving February 17th. Enclosed, you will find a bulletin to guide you through our online service that evening at 7pm, which could also be used to have your own private service if you prefer. All you need is a prayer book—and if you don't have one, please call the office and we can get you one.

We are used to imposing ashes on that day, though it is not required by anything other than our habits. The point of having ashes put on our foreheads is to remind us of the stark reality that we will one day die—a reminder that seems unnecessary on some level, given the year we have just been through.

On the other side of this sheet, you will find basic instructions for safely burning ashes at your house. As I've said many times now, any sort of marker will do (a burned candle wick, soot from your fireplace, etc). And, again, the imposition of ashes is not a Sacrament, and it is in no way required in order to properly begin a Holy Lent.

Above all, as we enter the season of Lent together, yet apart, it is my prayer that you remember you are loved and carried by the same God who created and redeemed you. As we hear every Christmas season, God is with us. And God always will be with us.

Faithfully,

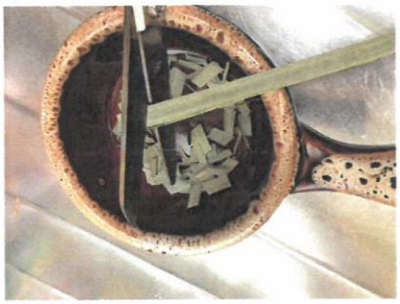
Fr. George

MAKING ASHES AT HOME

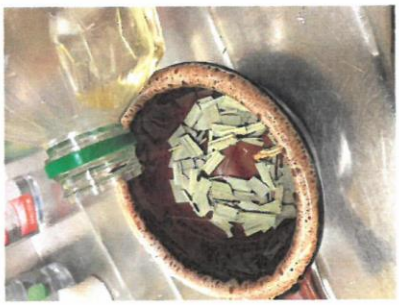
Making ashes out of palms is quite easy to do. Dried palms burn well on their own, though some people add a little oil to make them burn better, and to help them stay on the forehead better. (However, others say that the natural oil on people's foreheads is enough to make them stay.) The most important thing is to do the burning *outside*, since these things give off a *lot* of smoke.

As I've said previously, even though we typically use palms from Holy Week to make ashes, any sort of ashes will do for this ritual. Simplest of all is to rub your fingers on a burned candlewick. Some ashes from your fireplace will also do. Or--since the imposition of ashes is optional--you might also choose to skip this ritual this year, until we can be back together in our building.

If you have questions about any of this, please don't hesitate to give me a call or send an e-mail. Join us online at 7pm, February 17th, for our Ash Wednesday service.
Blessed ash making!



Cut the palm into smaller pieces



Add a drop of oil, if you like, though not necessary



Take it OUTSIDE to burn the palms



Setting the container on an unlit grill might be the most convenient place



Burn until it looks like ashes. Then it's helpful to grind it up with mortar and pestle, and pick out those larger chunks



The priest used too much oil. Don't be like the priest.