

Whittier-area Catholics celebrate Ash Wednesday and start of Lent

By Sandra T. Molina, Staff Writer
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Teacher Heidi Worrell receives ashes from the Rev. Michael Reardon during the Ash Wednesday prayer service at St. Bruno Catholic Church in Whittier on Wednesday March 9, 2011. Ash Wednesday begins Lent and occurs 46 days before Easter. (SGVN/Staff Photo by Keith Durlinger)

WHITTIER - Like millions of Catholics around the world, for Helen Trujillo, Ash Wednesday, the start of Lent, represents something "very personal."

For Ash Wednesday, which begins the 40-day period before Easter, the Catholic faithful receive ashes, placed on the forehead by a priest, as a sign of repentance.

"For me, this day is very personal. I feel as if I am going step by step with the Lord," said Trujillo, who attended Ash Wednesday Mass at Our Lady of Perpetual Help in Whittier. "I would feel lost if I didn't go through this."

For Nathan Jimenez, 19, the observance is "a realization of what Christ has sacrificed for us." And for Christopher Morales, 21, it is "a day of promise."

"It's like waiting for something special," he said, referring to Easter Sunday.

The Rev. Michael Reardon of St. Bruno Catholic Church said Ash Wednesday and Lent represent a rebuttal of wrong and a calling back to the Lord.

"I will encourage (congregates) to look at their lives during this time to bring about healing," he said. "We're turning away from sin and being faithful to the gospel."

Lent is a penitential season, encouraging reflection, he said. The ashes, which come from the palm fronds of the previous Palm Sunday, are meant as reminders of mortality.

Lenten practices include the decision of the faithful to give up a favorite food or drink, such as chocolate, soda and beer, or activity, such as going to the movies.

"They emphasize this world is not our home," Reardon said.

In downtown Los Angeles, newly minted Archbishop Jose H. Gomez celebrated Ash Wednesday Mass at noon at the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels.

It was the first time Gomez led the faithful for the holy day since he replaced retired Cardinal Roger Mahony last month.

"Lent is the season of renewal, the springtime of the spirit," Gomez said in his Lenten message. "It is time for purification,

Parishioners Receive Ashes at St. Bruno Catholic Church

School children stand after receiving ashes during the Ash Wednesday prayer service at St. Bruno Catholic Church in Whittier on Wednesday March 9, 2011.
(SGVN/Staff Photo by Keith Durlinger)



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