

Archbishop O'Brien to Celebrate Ash Wednesday Masses at Basilica and Cathedral

Ash Wednesday marks the beginning of Lent, the 40-day period when the Catholic Church asks the faithful to give themselves to prayer and to the reading of the Scripture, to fasting and to giving alms, in an effort to sharpen their senses and focus mind and heart on the reign of God.

Easter is Sunday, April 4.

All Catholic churches in the Archdiocese will make the sacrament available on Wednesdays (times are set by each parish) beginning Wednesday, February 24.

The campaign is called "The Light is on for You" and was first initiated in the Archdiocese of Washington several years ago. It utilizes billboards, bus, internet and TV ads to encourage Catholics in the Archdiocese of Baltimore to reconnect with the sacrament during Lent.

Last year, the Archdiocese implemented the program for the first time and more than 8,000 Catholics responded by participating, including many who did so for the first time in many years.

Recent statistics indicate that approximately 11 percent of Catholics go to confession once a year or more. Comparatively, in 1965, 38 percent of all American Catholics went to confession at least once a month.

"The Church needs to do a better job of educating our people about the spiritual benefits offered by the sacrament of Reconciliation, as well as the direct connection between Reconciliation and the reception of the Eucharist," Archbishop O'Brien said. "We are also hopeful that this initiative will lead people who have been away from the sacrament not only back to the confessional, but also back to the pews. We hope it helps them to deepen their faith, while also knocking down some of the myths and stereotypes associated with confession."

For more information about “The Light is on for You,” contact a Catholic church in the Archdiocese of Baltimore or visit www.archbalt.org.