

Photo Politics

In the “A” section of today’s *New York Times*, there is a huge [photo](#)—approximately a quarter page in size—of a priest giving ashes to a woman on Ash Wednesday. The photo, shot from above, shows no one in the church but the two of them. The caption below says, “The Rev. Ed Zogby marked a worshiper’s forehead with ashes at the Shrine of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton near Battery Park. Ash Wednesday is the first day of Lent.” There was no attendant story.

We checked to see approximately how many Catholics were at the church yesterday to receive ashes. Thousands showed up. Not bad for a shrine in lower Manhattan. We also learned that the photographer was there at the time thousands were in attendance (he stayed for quite a while).

So it makes us wonder, why did the *New York Times* deliberately choose this photo? And why did it give it such prominence? To be honest, we’re really not wondering at all: We know exactly what the newspaper is up to.

By the way, in today’s *New York Post* there is a story about Ash Wednesday. Referring to the crowds at St. Patrick’s Cathedral, it says it was “the largest Ash Wednesday congregation in recent memory.” That, of course, is not exactly the kind of message the *New York Times* wants to send.

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