

The Triumph of the Faithful

John, a disciple of Jesus, had many visions of God and Heaven. The Book of Revelation, the last book of the Bible, contains these visions. In one of the visions, John saw a scene in Heaven in which all of Jesus' faithful followers who had died were gathered together. Jesus, the Lamb of God, welcomed them into everlasting life.

After this I had a vision of a great multitude, which no one could count, from every nation, race, people, and tongue. They stood before the throne and before the Lamb, wearing white robes and holding palm branches in their hands. They cried out in a loud voice:

“Salvation comes from our God,
who is seated on the throne,
and from the Lamb.”

All the angels stood around the throne . . .
and exclaimed:

“Amen. Blessing and glory,
wisdom and thanksgiving,
honor, power, and might
be to our God forever and ever. Amen.”

Revelation 7:9-12

Then one of the elders explained that the people standing before the throne of the Lamb were those who remained faithful to God in life. They will be led by the Lamb to life-giving water, “. . . and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.”

Revelation 7:17

Signs of God's Love

The Book of Revelation is filled with symbols. The Scripture story you just read mentions the symbols of white robes, palm branches, and life-giving water. The white robes and palm branches symbolize the joy and victory God's faithful people will experience when they are united with him in Heaven. The life-giving water is a symbol of God's grace.

The Church also gives us symbols that remind us of God's love. These symbols are called **sacramentals**. Sacramentals help us draw closer to God and prepare us to receive the grace of the Sacraments.

Sacramentals include blessings, sacred objects, and sacred actions. Here are some examples.

Blessings Prayers of blessing for people, places, objects, and special activities


Sacred objects Bibles, crucifixes, rosaries, medals, holy water, holy oil, blessed ashes, blessed palms, blessed candles, church bells, statues, holy cards

Sacred actions The Sign of the Cross, the sprinkling of holy water, the anointing with oil, and the laying on of hands

Blessings are the most important kind of sacramental. God calls every baptized person to be a blessing in the world and he gives priests the sacred power to bless in his name.

ACTIVITY

In the box, sketch all the sacred objects that you see in your classroom.



Faith Words

sacramentals

Sacramentals are sacred signs instituted by the Church.

What holy objects remind you of God's love?

Hear and Believe

Reminders of God's Grace

The Seven Sacraments were given to us by Jesus himself. Sacramentals are given to us by the Church. When a bishop, priest, or deacon blesses an object, it becomes a sacramental. Catholics should always use sacramentals in a holy and prayerful manner. They help us stay close to God and focus on his love and mercy.

Here are just a few of the sacramentals offered by the Church.



Holy Water Holy water is the most widely used sacramental. It is a reminder of our Baptism. When we enter or leave church, we dip our right hand into the holy water font and bless ourselves by making the Sign of the Cross.

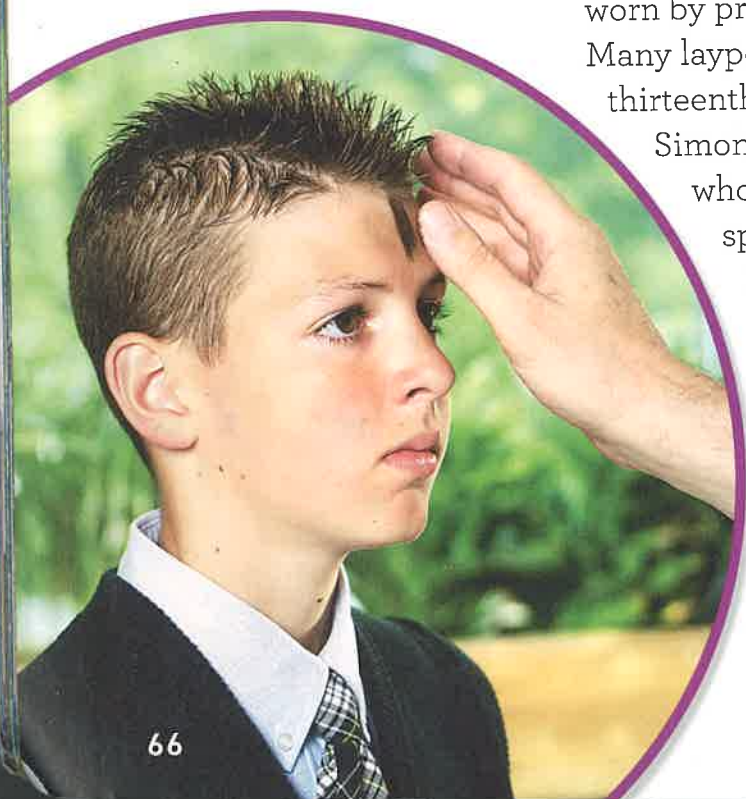


Catholics can also use holy water to bless their homes, farms, businesses, and even their cars and pets.

Scapulars A scapular is two rectangular pieces of cloth attached to a cord that is worn around the neck. The pieces of cloth are usually decorated with images of the Virgin Mary.

The most famous scapular is the brown scapular worn by priests and nuns of the Carmelite Order. Many laypeople also wear the brown scapular. In the thirteenth century, the Virgin Mary appeared to Saint Simon Stock of England and told him that anyone who wore the brown scapular would receive her special protection. Wearing the brown scapular is one way that Catholics can show their love and devotion to Our Lady.

Blessed Ashes On Ash Wednesday Catholics have their foreheads marked with blessed ashes. The ashes are a reminder of our need for repentance.





Church Bells Since the eighth century, churches, especially cathedrals, were expected to have bells that would ring whenever Mass was being celebrated.

The bells would also ring to announce the hours when priests and religious brothers and sisters prayed the Liturgy of the Hours. The Liturgy of the Hours is the official daily prayer of the Church. It is made up of psalms and other readings from the Bible.

Church bells are also rung to announce the election of a new pope. On March 13, 2013 church bells rang throughout Rome to announce the election of Pope Francis.

Our Church Teaches

Sacramentals call our attention to God's love and presence. They prepare us to receive the grace of the Sacraments and help us live holy lives.

ACTIVITY

Choose one of the sacramentals mentioned on these pages or on page 65. Then tell how it could help you focus on God's love for you and become closer to him.

We Believe

Sacramentals help us to become closer to God. They prepare us to receive the grace of the Sacraments.

On which Sunday does the Church give out blessed palms?