



***ENRICHING PRAYER WITH
SACRAMENTALS AND DEVOTIONS***

Our prayer lives and participation in the sacraments can be enriched by a number of symbols, rituals and devotional prayers that the Church has been given as part of our Catholic practices.

Sacramentals are objects or actions that are usually accompanied by a special prayer. They include blessings; actions such as processions or blessing ourselves with holy water while making the Sign of the Cross or having our throat blessed (on the Feast of Saint Blaise, typically); and objects, such as candles, ashes, and medals and statues of saints.

The Church has instituted sacramental to enrich us in receiving the fruits of the sacraments, and to sanctify or make holy, the variety of circumstances of our lives. Among the sacramental, blessings hold an important place. A common blessing you probably know is the blessing of meals, in which we pray the Grace Before Meals or another prayer. All blessings praised God for his gifts. Blessings usually address the Blessed Trinity through the Sign of the Cross. Sprinkling of holy water may also accompany a blessing. There are blessings for objects, such as a religious medal, rosary, or cross; blessings of people, often consecrating them for a special purpose for God; and blessings of places, such as a home or a school.

Devotions

Through the centuries, the Christian faithful have developed numerous forms of popular devotions to enrich their spiritual lives. While devotions are distinct from the Mass and other sacramental rites, they are part of the liturgical life of the Church. Popular devotions include the Stations of the Cross; pilgrimages to the Holy Land or to Marian shrines; participating in holy day processions; wearing Marian medals; venerating statues and sacred relics; and receiving blessed ashes on Ash Wednesday.

Often, devotions have their origins in a specific culture, and may be common only to that culture. For example, the devotion to Our Lady of Guadalupe is especially important to the people of Mexico and Central America, as well as among Hispanic Americans. Among popular devotions, the Rosary holds a special place because of its relationship to the Paschal Mystery and to the faith of the Virgin Mary.

Popular forms of piety express a desire to proclaim one’s faith and enrich Christian life; however, they are intended to accompany liturgical practices, and not as a substitute for them. This means that we must remember that worshipping God through participation in the Liturgy of the Mass and the Sacraments is our most important form of prayer.

(SR: FAITH FUSION: Knowing, Loving, and Serving Christ in the Catholic Church, p. 184)