

Doctrinal Session

APPRENTICES IN FAITH: A Resource for the RCIA Blessings and Popular Devotions

“[B]e filled with the Spirit, as you sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs among yourselves, singing and making melody to the Lord in your hearts, giving thanks to God the Father at all times and for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (Ephesians 5:18b–20)

Insight

What special mementos or articles grace your house, making it a place of liveliness, joy, and blessing?

The Memorial Day party was just beginning at Jim’s house. As Denny and his wife Rita arrived and entered the family room, they noticed something new. Rita was impressed and let it show in her voice, “Wow! You’ve got one of the seats!”

Jim laughed, pleased with himself, “Yes. As soon as they announced they were tearing down the old ballpark, I went online to find out how to get a piece of it.”

Rita nodded, “You know we’re big Sox fans. Comisky Park was just great. I wish we had a part of it, like you.” She went over and touched the old green, wooden seat, which was worn out. Touching it was like being there in the old ball park once again.

For Reflection . . .

The sacraments of the Church purify and integrate all of the rich signs and symbols of the universe and of social life into the celebrations of the Church. Everyone who is baptized is called to be a blessing to others and to bless.

In all of the beauty of nature, what moves you the most? In the variety and multiplicity of social life, what raises your mind and heart to God?

How are you daily a blessing to others?

Additional Background

Catechism of the Catholic Church: 1667–1679

United States Catholic Catechism for Adults: pages 294–303

Compendium—Catechism of the Catholic Church: 351–353

Church Teaching

Sacramentals

The Church uses sacramentals to focus us on the holy. This disposes the faithful toward the reception of the Sacraments. Sacramentals expand and radiate the grace encountered in the Seven Sacraments. In effect, sacramentals are blessings. They are signs based in God’s Word and celebrated from motives of faith.

Sacramentals proclaim newness of life in Christ that has its foundation in the Seven Sacraments. One of the simplest yet most profound sacramentals is when a person makes the sign of the cross over themselves.

Examples of the many kinds of sacramentals are found in the Church’s *Book of Blessings*, such as blessings of persons, meals, objects/places for liturgy, articles meant to foster faith, and places.

In addition to these forms of sacramentals, the Church also blesses an abbot or abbess of a monastery when they assume office, consecrates virgins and widows, and blesses persons professing vows in a religious community or congregation.

Popular Piety

Devotions have arisen among the faithful which also express faith. They include the veneration of relics (objects associated with a saint), visits and pilgrimages to special shrines, visits to the Blessed Sacrament and Forty Hours’ Adoration, processions, the Stations of the Cross, novenas, devotions to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, wearing of medals, and the recitation of the Rosary.

These expressions of piety cannot replace the liturgical life. They augment it and, to be authentic, they must always be in harmony with it and with the liturgical seasons. They must also be in accord with the Liturgy, derive from it, and lead people back to it.