

# SACRAMENTALS

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Sacramentals are “sacred signs instituted by the Church that dispose people to receive the chief effects of the Sacraments and they make holy various occasions in human life.

Sacramentals are distinguished from Sacraments in that they have been instituted by the Church. They exist in order to make holy almost every event in the lives of believers and, like the Sacraments, draw their power from the Paschal Mystery.

Some Sacramentals, such as holy water, ashes, palms and candles, serve legitimate liturgical purposes that enhance individual and communal prayer. Other Sacramentals, such as rosaries and medals, are not used in a specifically liturgical context, but they do remind individuals of God’s presence in their lives and calls them to prayer.

Liturgical prayers and rites used in administering the Sacraments, funerals, exorcisms, blessings of people, consecrations, and blessings of objects are also included as Sacramentals.

## Principal Sacramentals

### **Holy Oils**

The blessing of oils has traditionally been done on Holy Thursday by the bishop. The oil of Chrism is used in Baptism, Confirmation, Holy Order and in blessings and consecrations. Oil of the Catechumens is used in Baptism. The oil of the Sick is used in the Sacraments of Healing / Anointing..

### **Bells**

The use of bells has had a long history in marking a variety of ceremonies in the Church. Bells were silenced from Holy Thursday (the Gloria during the Liturgy) until the Gloria at the Easter Vigil, as a commemoration of Christ’s Passion.

The “sanctus” bell is sounded during the Mass, at the Sanctus (three times) to signal the consecration and three times each at the Elevation of the Host and the chalice.

### **Incense**

Incense is symbolic in its burning (zeal and fervor), its fragrance (virtue) and its rising smoke (acceptable prayer) as in Psalm 141:2: “Let my prayer be incense before you; my uplifted hands an evening sacrifice.” Veneration is shown by incensing, as in the incensing of the altar, the book of the Gospel, the people and the body of the deceased at a funeral. Five grains of incense are found imbedded in the Paschal Candle to signify the five wounds in Christ.

### **Candles**

Altar candles express devotion and the lighting of the Baptismal candle from the Christ candle is part of Christian initiation. A prime Christ/Easter symbol (the Paschal Candle) remains lit from its enthronement during the Easter Vigil, throughout the fifty days of Easter. After that time it is used for its resurrection symbolism at baptisms and funerals. The familiar Sanctuary candle signals the presence of the Blessed Sacrament. A recent innovation for weddings is the Unity candle which is flanked by

two other candles representing the couple and their baptism. Vigil candles (votive candles) represent the prayer vigilance of expectant faith.

### **Holy Water**

A common Sacramental is blessed water (holy water) that is used for baptizing and to recall our baptism. It is a common practice to have holy water fonts at the entrances of churches. In the past, it was also found in the home in small fonts at the doorways of certain rooms. **Asperges** is the term for the blessing with holy water during the Mass; it is taken from the Latin of the first words of the psalm used in the rite: "You will sprinkle me with hyssop...."

### **Medals**

Medals are often worn as a necklace to commemorate, memorialize, and inspire us about God, Mary or one of the saints.

### **Scapulars**

Originally, these were a part of a religious habit. With the rise of third orders (lay associates of a religious community) in the thirteenth century, it evolved into a symbol worn under the outer garments. A lay scapular evolved as a devotional article; two small rectangles of cloth worn front and back, connected by ribbons and worn under clothing. There are five most familiar that are Church approved:

1. The Brown Scapular of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel
2. The Red Scapular of Christ Passion
3. The Black Scapular of the Seven Sorrows of Mary
4. The Blue Scapular of the Immaculate Conception
5. The White Scapular of the Holy Trinity

The Scapular medal is a substitute for the scapular and has the Sacred Heart on one side and Mary on the other side.