

Sacramentals

Q. 198. What are sacramentals?

Sacramentals are blessings, ceremonies, or religious articles instituted by the Church for our use, in order to increase our devotion and to aid in our salvation.

The difference between sacraments and sacramentals is that the sacraments were instituted by Jesus Christ; they give grace to our souls by their own power. The sacramentals were instituted by the Church and are helps to us in receiving God's graces, chiefly through the intercession of the Church.

Sacred Scripture

And God did extraordinary miracles by the hands of Paul, so that handkerchiefs or aprons were carried away from his body to the sick, and diseases left them and the evil spirits came out of them. *Acts 19:11-12*

Catechism of the Catholic Church

1670 Sacramentals do not confer the grace of the Holy Spirit in the way that the sacraments do, but by the Church's prayer, they prepare us to receive grace and dispose us to cooperate with it.

Q. 199. What is the effect of the sacramentals?

By the proper use of sacramentals, men are disposed to receive the chief effect of the sacraments, and various occasions in life are rendered holy.

Catechism of the Catholic Church

1668 Sacramentals are instituted for the sanctification of certain ministries of the Church, certain states of life, a great variety of circumstances in Christian life, and the use of many things helpful to man. In accordance with bishops' pastoral decisions, they can also respond to the needs, culture, and special history of the Christian people of a particular region or time. They always include a prayer, often accompanied by a specific sign, such as the laying on of hands, the sign of the cross, or the sprinkling of holy water (which recalls Baptism).

Q. 200. What are some of the sacramentals?

Some of the sacramentals are: (a) the consecration and dedication of churches; (b) the blessing pronounced on men and women who enter a religious brotherhood or sisterhood; (c) the blessing given in the Nuptial Mass to the bride; (d) the blessing given to a mother after childbirth; (e) the Sign of the Cross; and (f) various blessed articles, like Rosaries, scapulars, medals, candles, palms, ashes, holy water, holy oil, and incense.

For commentaries on each question with Cardinal Arinze, Sr. John Vianney and Fr. Straub (in Spanish), see Appendix E.

Sacred Scripture

Q. 198. 2 Cor 13:14; Rev 8:3-4.

Catechism of the Catholic Church

Q. 198. Paragraphs 1667-1669.

Q. 199. Paragraphs 1669-1670.

Q. 200. Paragraphs 1672-1673.

Catechism by Diagram

#S13-3



Sacramentals. A sacramental is an outward sign, like a sacrament, but sacramentals have been instituted by the Church and do not of themselves give grace. Rather, they dispose us for grace by arousing in us the desire to make acts of faith and love which make a claim upon God for answering grace. Whatever grace we obtain through the use of sacramentals comes to us because of our interior dispositions and because of the power of the Church's prayers, which support the sacramentals. The Church receives this power from Jesus Christ and shares His merits. Examples of sacramentals shown in the diagram are: holy medal, the Sign of the Cross, scapular, palms, blessing of the home and property, liturgical prayers, holy water, incense, and blessing of throats and candles.

Catechism of the Catholic Church

1671 Among sacramentals, *blessings* (of persons, meals, objects, and places) come first. Every blessing praises God and prays for his gifts. In Christ, Christians are blessed by God the Father “with every spiritual blessing.”¹ This is why the Church imparts blessings by invoking the name of Jesus, usually while making the holy sign of the cross of Christ.

1674 Besides sacramental liturgy and sacramentals, catechesis must take into account the forms of piety and popular devotions among the faithful. The religious sense of the Christian people has always found expression in various forms of piety surrounding the Church's sacramental life, such as the veneration of relics, visits to sanctuaries, pilgrimages, processions, the stations of the cross, religious dances, the rosary, medals,¹ etc.

Doctrine • Moral • Worship Exercise (see Appendix B for answer key)

1. How do the sacraments and the sacramentals differ?
2. How have sacramentals helped you and your family to receive God's graces?
3. Which sacramentals can you give to others—like members of your family, schoolmates, officemates, and friends—to help them to be more disposed to receive God's graces?

Chapter Summary Prayer

Almighty Father, strong is Your justice and great is Your mercy. Protect us in the burdens and challenges of life, especially through the grace of the sacraments that were given to us by Your beloved Son. Shield our minds from the distortion of pride and fill our hearts with desire for the beauty of Your truth. Help us to become more aware of Your loving design so that we may more willingly give our lives in service to You and to our neighbor for Your sake. You promised to remain forever with those who do what is just and right. Help us to live in Your presence and to find joy in the blessings of Your grace.

God of peace, Who brought back from the dead the great Shepherd of the flock, our Lord Jesus Christ, by the blood of the new and everlasting covenant, equip us thoroughly to do Your will by the sacraments of the Church, so that we may please You in all our actions.

Gracious Father, accept our worship of praise and supplication in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. Give us unshakable faith, firm hope, and sincere love. Bless our comings and our goings, our deeds and our desires, our work and our prayer. Blessed and praised be Your precious Name and Your mighty power. Amen.

Family Wisdom Library: Chapter 57

See Appendix A for more references.

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Sacrosanctum Concilium (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy), Vatican II, sect. 59-65, 79.

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Q. 200. What are some of the sacramentals?

Sacrosanctum Concilium (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy), Vatican II, sect. 59-65.



Thought Provokers

Please see Appendix C for the answers.

Q. 198: What does the Latin term *ex opere operantis* mean in reference to sacramentals?

Q. 199: What are some specific effects of sacramentals?

Q. 200: Isn't the use of sacramentals as prescribed by the Church superstitious?