



St. Rita News

The new monthly newsletter serving Saint Rita Parish

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Learning about Our Faith

What Is A Sacramental?

Catholics and non-Catholics alike are often confused as to the role of various Catholic devotional practices. One might ask, “Why do Catholics make the sign of the cross? What is holy water, anyways? Why do Catholics wear medals or keep blessed palms in their homes?”

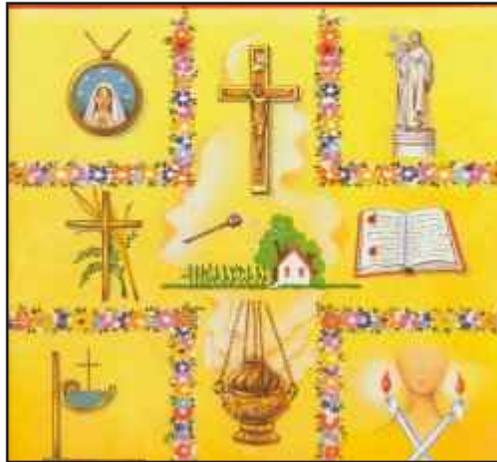
As Catholics, we believe that a sacrament is an outward sign instituted by Christ to cause inward grace. Since the Seven Sacraments (Baptism, Confession, Confirmation, Holy Communion, Matrimony, Holy Orders, Last Rites) were instituted by Christ during His time on earth, the Church cannot add to or take away from their number. But apart from the ceremonies relating to the administration of those Seven Sacraments, the Church has instituted others for the purpose of private devotion. To distinguish between them, the latter are named “sacramentals”, because of the resemblance between their rites and those of the Sacraments proper.

These sacramentals, which may be either acts (e.g., blessings or rituals) or objects, do not produce sanctifying grace *ex opere operato* (by virtue of the rite or substance employed), and this constitutes their essential difference from the sacraments. Which is to say: the sacraments give grace of themselves and are always efficacious when the faithful place no spiritual obstacles in the way. Sacramentals encourage a holy disposition, by means of which the faithful may obtain grace. It is not the sacramental itself that gives grace, but it is the devotion, love of God, or penitence that it encourages, along with the prayers of the Church, that render sacramentals effective against evil.

The Vatican II constitution “Sacrosanctum Concilium” discusses sacramentals in detail:

“[Sacramentals] are sacred signs which bear a resemblance to the sacraments: they signify effects, particularly of a spiritual kind, which are obtained through the Church's intercession. By them men are disposed to receive the chief effect of the sacraments, and various occasions in life are rendered holy.

Thus, for well-disposed members of the faithful, the liturgy of the sacraments and sacramentals sanctifies almost every



event in their lives; they are given access to the stream of divine grace which flows from the paschal mystery of the passion, death, the resurrection of Christ, the font from which all sacraments and sacramentals draw their power. There is hardly any proper use of material things which cannot thus be directed toward the sanctification of men and the praise of God.”

There are many examples of sacramentals, but no definitive list: the Church, which instituted them, has the power to develop, modify or abrogate them--and of course, to create new ones as it sees fit. Some notable examples of sacramentals are:

Acts include: the Sign of the Cross, genuflection (kneeling), prostration, blessings, the imposition of blessed ashes on Ash Wednesday, and exorcisms.

Objects include: Holy Water, incense, blessed ashes and candles, crucifixes, Chrism (blessed oil for use in administering the Sacraments), medals, relics of saints, blessed palm branches, rosaries, scapulars, religious vestments.

Through His Incarnation, Christ took on flesh in order to close the terrible chasm between man and God which was opened up as a result of Adam's sin. Christ's becoming Incarnate makes clear that the material world is not evil, and indeed, the early Church fought hard to suppress the many heresies that sprang up claiming that the physical world was irredeemable. After Christ's sacrifice made possible our redemption, material things could once again be instruments of grace. Though the visible signs of the Sacraments remain our primary way of encountering God during our time on earth, we should also immerse ourselves in the prayers and rituals of the Church, and surround ourselves with the material things that these prayers and rituals have consecrated to God. These sacramentals serve not merely as reminders of God's presence in our lives, but, through the prayers of the Church, are also powerful conduits of His grace.

To learn more about sacramentals, see Ann Ball's excellent book, [The How-To Book of Sacramentals](#).

■ EVENTS IN OUR DIOCESE

Join the Bishops of Arlington and Richmond to discuss critical issues with your state representatives during **Catholic Advocacy Day (CAD)** on **Thursday, January 31**. CAD 2013 begins with prayer and a welcome from the Bishops, followed by briefings, lunch, and visits with your legislators. For more details about registration and travel, please go to: www.vacatholic.org and click on Catholic Advocacy Day page.

Looking for a volunteer opportunity? **Life Runners** will be organizing a 5K in conjunction with the National March for Life at 8am on **Saturday, January 26**. For more information, please contact Jeff Grabosky at jeffg@liferunners.org.

A Pontifical Latin Mass will be celebrated at 6pm following the March for Life on **Friday, January 25** at St. Mary Mother of God Catholic Church in Chinatown in Washington, DC. The mass will be celebrated by Bishop Joseph Perry from the Archdiocese of Chicago.

Learning Christ through the Rule of St. Benedict at the St. Benedict Monastery in Bristow, 7:30pm-8:30 pm on **February 8, March 8, April 10 and May 10**. Contact Sr. Andrea Westkamp, (703) 393-2485 or bpcosb@comcast.net. Learn how Saint Benedict's dedication to simplicity and efficiency and his devotion to finding Christ in the most basic aspects of daily life

COMING TO ST RITA! Stop the Yelling, Power Struggles & Sibling Fights: Do you need help calming your household? Tired of yelling at, negotiating with and bribing your child? Do you want your child to take responsibility for his assignments, chores and attitude? We promise you will laugh and leave with a dozen practical strategies that really work. Come see Kirk Martin and his teenage son, Casey on **Monday, January 28** at St. Rita School (evening workshop -- 7pm to 9pm) or at Blessed Sacrament School (morning workshop -- 9am to 11am). Their strategies are concrete, practical and work in everyday situations whether your child is a toddler or teenager. The workshop is free. Visit www.CelebrateCalm.com to learn more.

can nourish your spiritual, emotional and physical well-being.

Fiat Group Nun Run--a tour of local convents for high school-aged girls--on **January 19** from 8 am-7 pm. Register by Jan. 14 with the Office of Vocations at (703) 841-2514 or vocations@arlingtondiocese.org.

■ LIVING OUR FAITH

Baptisms at St. Rita



- + Charlotte Austin Hinds, Dec. 1
- + Brigid Elaine & Teresa Mae Mah-Chamberlain (twins), Dec. 1
- + Travis Nathan Day, Dec. 8
- + Maria Aurora Hammond, Dec. 8
- + Sophia Marie Reyes, Dec. 9
- + James Pascal Smith, Dec. 14
- + Luke Gregory Hardiman, Dec. 15

- + Patrick Augustine Brewster, Dec. 1
- + Magdalena Jean Masson, Dec. 22
- + Allison Alejandra Torrez, Dec. 22
- + Jessie Ashling Olivia-Flores, Dec. 22
- + Ashley Sarai Velasquez, Dec. 22
- + Aba Marie Perez, Dec. 30

Funerals at St. Rita

- + Cecilia Ann Lawson, funeral Mass on Dec. 20
- + Geraldine C. Hager, funeral Mass on Dec. 22



Weddings at St. Rita

- + Michael Graham Day & Arianna Marie Hammond, Dec. 1
- + James William VanDyke & Samantha Theresa Kepler, Dec. 29

Prayer Intention

Please pray for the 39 young men and women in our parish who are preparing to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation on Feb. 10.

Do you know of a parishioner who is ill, and in need of prayers? Or a parishioner who is serving in the armed forces, overseas? We will be happy to publish their names so that fellow parishioners can pray for them.

Please contact Catherine Feil (catherine.feil@gmail.com, or 703.671.0402) or Erin Church (erinmchurch@gmail.com).

Do you have ideas for future items in the parish newsletter, or would you like to submit a feature for publication? Is there an upcoming event of interest to St. Rita's parishioners that we should know about? All submissions can be directed to our editors: Catherine Feil (catherine.feil@gmail.com, or 703.671.0402) or Erin Church (erinmchurch@gmail.com). *Thank you!*