



From the Pastor
19th Sunday in
Ordinary Time - A
August 13, 2023

THE POWER OF SIGNS & SYMBOLS. In reflection #8 on Pope Francis' 2022 Apostolic Letter, '[Desiderio Desideravi](#),' Latin for Jesus' pre-Last Supper words: "I have earnestly desired [to eat this Passover with you before I suffer.]" [Luke 22:15], we

reflect on the awesome power that signs and symbols can have in helping us to understand and express the realities made present to us in **Sacred Liturgy**. For past articles in this series on the three-year **National Eucharistic Revival** and the **Holy Father's Letter**, visit our **Parish** website.

'**Desiderio Desideravi**' draws an endearing image of how powerful - and helpful - sacred signs and symbols can be by those who understand and properly use them. The **Holy Father** refers to a heartwarming action I have personally seen numerous times over the years. A young child enters church, attentively watching mom or dad 'bless' themselves by making a **Sign of the Cross** on themselves after dipping their finger into a **Holy Water stoop**. The parent then helps the child to dip his or her finger into the **Holy Water Stoop**, and with their large hand, guides the child in blessing him or herself. Once the child 'gets it,' he or she wants to do it again and again - without any help: the 'sign' or 'symbol' has been 'internalized.' Perhaps not its meaning; that will take time - but the 'process' has begun!

Over time, those who 'know' the value of that 'sign,' will start to make it - almost subconsciously - to express prayerful gratitude, as when they receive good news or great gifts - or to seek divine help during traumatic or difficult times. When celebrating the **Sacrament of the Sick** [aka: the **Anointing of the Sick**] - even the most physically challenged rally their strength to 'bless' themselves. I have been amazed by those who, even in advanced stages of dementia or other similar diseases, will fold their hands in prayer when they see my Roman Collar and try to 'bless' themselves as I make the **Sign of the Cross** over them. What awesome power we **Catholics** have available to us through our **Sacramental Signs and Symbols!**

AVOID MINDLESSNESS. The death knell of sacred signs or symbols, religious rites or rituals, is the mindless, repetition of liturgical actions or words. Not that all of us, at all times, must fully understand and totally comprehend the meaning of what we do and why we do it. But if we never stop learning about them or paying attention to what we do as we do them, we rob ourselves of the comfort and hope, insight and inspiration offered through these actions.

NEVER ENDING FAITH FORMATION. Before reflecting on the last section of the **Pope's Letter** on the '**Art of Celebrating**' - which will take weeks to unpack, a timely reminder made often in the document is that we should never stop deepening our knowledge and experience of the rites of our **Faith**. To help us do that, our **Parish** pays the subscription fees so that all of us can log onto the online **Catholic** formation website: **FORMED**. You will not be pestered for additional products or pressured to sign up for other formats.

Here's how to enjoy presentations, lectures, talks and updates about the **holy Mass** and other **Sacred Rites** - as well as orthodox, wholesome, timely **Catholic** adult documentaries and movies - and a host of programs appropriate even for children: Log onto formed.org/signup. Search for our **Parish** by Zip Code: 08753 - and select our **Parish**. Add your name and email ... it is that simple! It is not too late to make the **Sacramental** series, '**Presence: The Mystery of the Eucharist**' this summer's 'reading' or, rather, 'watching!' And on a rainy day, fire up a 'kid's show' so that they, too, can deepen their **Faith** with **Christian** cartoons and other age-appropriate offerings.

Do you express your **Faith** by blessing yourself with **Holy Water** upon entering church or when sprinkled with it? Do you strike your breast in the **Confiteor** to show your repentance? Do you mark your forehead, lips and heart with a **Sign of the Cross** to ask **God** to open your mind to understand, lips to proclaim and heart to love the **Gospel**? Do you bow in the **Creed** in humble thanks to **God** who became one of us in the **Incarnation**? Do you bow in reverence before receiving the **Body** and **Blood** of **Christ**? Do you genuflect upon entering and leaving the church?

In Christ,

Father Mark

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