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# Guide- Posts to GOD

The Sacramentals

by

Daniel A. Lord, S. J.

*A QUEEN'S WORK  
PAMPHLET*



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## THE SACRAMENTALS

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THE QUEEN'S WORK

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# GUIDEPOSTS TO GOD

## The Sacramentals

By Daniel A. Lord, S.J.

As an American, I love our national flag.

So, I think, do most Americans, except a small group of fanatics who can't see any difference between saluting the Stars and Stripes and burning incense to the golden calf. They don't strike me as being particularly representative, one least bit intelligent, or typical of the rest of us who love our country.

We do not worship or adore Old Glory. We do not bow our knees in homage to a piece of cloth, however beautiful we may think it. Just the same, we take off our hats when the color guard marches by. We get a great thrill when we see the flag waving over some American building in a foreign port. We insist by law that the flag be raised over our schools, so that our children can look up at the flag and think of the wonderful thing it is to be an American.

### My Flag

The flag to us is a number of important things:

1. It is a kind of graphic history of our land: the thirteen original colonies, symbolized by the red and white stripes; the forty-eight states who voluntarily joined themselves in a national union; all united together to make one great country.

2. Since it is not too easy to salute "our country," vast as it is and varied, the flag serves in simple form to represent our country before our eyes. We look up at it and think, "That is the standard of my country, and I love my country."

3. It is something which can be used to mark things which belong to the whole nation. It moves at the head of a regiment. It flies from the stern of a battle cruiser. When the submarine emerges from the sea, a flag run up over the tower says, "We are Americans." In a foreign land it marks United States property. It is stamped on government goods. The red, white, and blue on the wings of a plane cries aloud that "This is American."

4. Beyond this, we are human beings. We need to express our inner feelings in outward signs. And outward signs have a way of arousing our inner feelings. So it is that the flag takes on deep meanings: it is our expression of love of country. The red attests our willingness to shed our blood for our land. The white is the fine lives with which we must serve it. The blue and the stars recall the God under whose protection our country attained its greatness, the God in whom we trust.

It's a dull soul indeed who has not felt a glow of patriotism as the flag was carried by. Children stand and give the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag and know the stirrings of patriotism.

The flag expresses in simple form our love of country, and because we respond to beloved symbols, the flag awakens in us that same devoted love.

### **National Sacramentals**

Now the way this works is rather easy to understand.

Every American claims to "love his country." We know the richness which God has given to our land. We are grateful for the pre-eminent gifts of freedom and opportunity. We are proud of our great men, our heroes and our heroines. We let our imaginations sweep across the country, ocean to ocean, Alleghenies to Rockies, forests of the north to the Gulf, embracing all the rivers and lakes and mines and oil fields, the farms and cities, the forests and waterfalls, the lovely traditions and honorable customs, the differences of dialect and of cooking, the states and the counties which make up America.

Yet the very vastness of our country makes understanding it and loving it a little difficult.

So in a purely human instinct that is so easy to understand, we have developed and

cultivated an entire catalogue of symbols which represent some aspect of our country, make us understand it better, and help us to love it more unselfishly.

These are usually quite simple. They are inevitably imperfect. Sometimes they become important, not because they are valuable in themselves, but because of association with some great patriot or some historic event. Any school child could give you a list of these external symbols of our national greatness. For instance:

The American Eagle;

The Goddess of Liberty;

The National Shield;

The National Anthem;

The flowers of the individual states;

Pictures of great men and women who served America;

Mount Vernon;

Lincoln's log-hut birthplace;

A Fourth of July parade;

Arlington Cemetery;

The Tomb of the Unknown Soldier;

The enshrined documents in Washington—the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, the Bill of Rights;

On our walls, framed copies of the Gettysburg Address;

The Washington Cherry Tree;

Commemorative stamps struck to recall great national events;

Historic monuments and statues.



## Purpose All Clear

No one has the slightest doubt about the meaning and value of these things. They recall our history. They commemorate great national virtues, heroisms, or achievements. They turn our eyes to patriots whose example we should follow.

We stand before the great statue in the Lincoln Memorial; we walk across the beautifully kept lawns and into the reverently hushed atmosphere of Mount Vernon, Monticello, or the Hermitage; we try to read the fading pages of those documents which guarantee our freedom; we see the American Eagle suddenly burst forth in a display of fireworks; we watch while the Decoration Day parade swings by . . . and though we don't think for a moment that these things constitute patriotism or the love and service of our country, we feel that we are better Americans because of them.

We like the external signs of our country's history and greatness. Our emotions respond to these beautiful symbols. We know that America would still be America if vandals wrecked the statues of Lincoln, burned Mount Vernon to the ground, tore up the precious documents and used them for confetti, and issued an order that no Eagles were to be displayed and no further parades used to celebrate our national holidays. Yet did anyone give such an order, we would feel that the villain was a hater of his country. And we would know that some-

thing very valuable had been taken out of our lives.

## So Very Natural

Reduced to its simplest elements, we happen to be creatures composed of bodies and souls. We reach our souls through our bodies, and the thoughts and loves of our souls we express through words and gestures of our body. What we see reaches our brain and then our mind. What we hear excites our soul's emotions. And the love that is deep down in our will would never be known to other than God and ourselves if we did not sing our songs and write our poems, carve our statues, preserve our national monuments, cultivate our gardens, paint our pictures, dance with joy, and express what is deep inside us in some sign that others can see, recognize, and respond to.

That runs all through nature.

The essence of sport is the competition itself in the game. Yet the game is better played if the grandstands are packed with cheering, shouting spectators. The competition becomes keener when the teams are struggling for a worthless piece of cloth called a pennant, or for a totally useless cup or little brown jug or traditional keg.

Interest in the game is kept up by such things as the National Baseball Hall of Fame, by mythical All-American teams, by the enshrining of Babe Ruth's bat and Red

Grange's sweater with its famous 77, by pictures of athletes of the past and the present in the papers and on the walls of youngsters' bedrooms, by medals and trophies, and championships, and victory bonfires, and homecoming weekends—all the elaborate externals which surround the national sports, make them seem important, excite youngsters with an ambition to become champions, and lure the millions out to see the games.

### **Love Itself**

Love is really a charmingly personal emotion between a man and a woman.

Marriage is its culmination, a contract and a Sacrament.

Yet what would happen to love and how many would marry if it were not for all the externals which make for romance and courtship? Could it be said that these things are absolutely necessary? Are they of the essence of love and marriage?

Two total strangers could marry and the marriage would be valid.

Love might spring up between two people who never saw each other before and married without one preliminary gesture.

It's possible . . . but it's not very likely. Indeed, the whole idea strikes any normal person as inhuman, intolerable, quite abhorrent to our natures.

So love and marriage have all their charming external signs:

The engagement ring;

The symbolism of the wedding rings themselves;

Love letters, love poetry, serenades;

Flowers laid at the beloved's feet;

Dinners cooked in his honor;

All the beautiful romantic signs by which a man and woman display to each other and to the admiring world the love that is otherwise hidden in their hearts.

### **Natural Sacramentals**

Why, the human race is surrounded with these external signs by which it displays its inner emotions, and in turn develops and feeds those emotions which are precious and fine. You can think instantly of such things as:

Statues of the great;

Birthday cakes;

Memorial wreaths;

Flowers sent to the sick;

Christmas trees and decorations;

Easter eggs;

Firecrackers and night fireworks;

Decorations for the opening of a store;

Bands playing for some celebration;

Streets decked for the arrival of a notable person;

Arches commemorating national events or civic achievements;

Medals given for poems or plays or scientific discovery or bravery;

Anniversary gifts;

Class and society rings and pins.

The list is endless and no one, except a few pretty illogical fanatics, objects to them in the slightest.

### **So Naturally and Supernaturally . . .**

So naturally and supernaturally, the Church recognizes this universal human instinct and turns it to the glory of God and the good of humanity.

“Sacrament” means a sacred sign. In an affectionate diminutive sense, we call a wide variety of things in the Catholic Church, “Sacramentals.” They are all merely external signs of splendid religious emotions, or gracious incentives and inspirations, or delicate nudges and hints, to lead the soul to high thoughts and fine loves and notable spiritual deeds.

Most important it is to remember that the Church, while deeply supernatural, has a profound respect for what is natural. Nature is from God. God created human nature, and as a consequence, what is in accord with human nature and flows from nature, is from God. If man loves symbols, the Church knows that that love of symbols is from God. If we cannot express our

inner thoughts and emotions except by external words and gestures, these must be willed by God. And if external words and gestures have an infallible way of waking inner thoughts and emotions, God must have intended it that way.

So since symbols can be tied in closely with patriotism and sports and human love, the Church knows that they can be tied in with religion and human goodness and God.

The Church is deeply concerned with the supernatural. But it will willingly use nature to lead man to the supernatural. It does not think that because a man becomes holy, he ceases to be human. It doesn't ask him to lay aside his natural instincts in order to serve God as a pure spirit might. We are men and women, not angels. We are body and soul, not disembodied spirits. So the Church has wisely reached the soul through the eyes and the ears. It has turned our love of symbols to high spiritual purposes. It believes that the love of God can be increased, as the love of country or of one's fellow man is increased, by noble signs and inspiring acts.

And these things are called Sacramentals.

### **Essentials**

No intelligent Catholic mistakes accidentals for essentials. Smart patriots are the same. A wife may know that the essentials of marriage are contract, Sacrament (identical for Catholics), and later on, the

faithful observance of wedding vows; but she also knows that loving attention, occasional gifts, the outward expression of love and devotion help enormously.

And the Church looks for what will help make religion intelligible and attractive.

Christ Jesus, the founder of the Catholic Church, gave the Church all its essentials. These were:

The truths which the Church was to teach to all people of all nations.

The Sacrifice of the Mass, to continue splendidly the worship of God.

The Sacraments as the channels of grace from Christ to the individual souls.

The authority of the Church.

But God, the Creator of the human race, gave mankind its basic instincts. And the Church would not be so unwise as to disregard these, disdain them, or ask that they be religiously atrophied by disuse.

When Christ gave to Peter and his successors the duty of feeding both lambs and sheep, and to the Church the obligation of carrying on the Kingdom of God upon earth, He certainly expected His Church to act wisely and in accord with human nature as well as the laws of grace.

The Church was to lead men and women safely to their heavenly destiny.

For this it was to use the truth and the helps which Christ had left behind.

But it was also to act in accord with human nature, and direct that complete man, body and soul, up toward his glorious destiny. It was to make the road to heaven as easy and as attractive as possible.

It was to use all the means that were good, mature, instinctive, given by God. Hence it was, that music and song became early a part of the Church's treasury; so did beautiful architecture and stained glass and painting and mosaics.

Christ acted that way and the Church could not act any other.

### **Sacraments First**

Christ was a great one for external signs. He drove the devils, in an external sign of His contempt for them, into the despised swine. He made a poultice of mud to lay on the ears of the deaf boy. He would touch blind eyes with spittle. He used a symbolic yet actually physically harmless knot of cords to cleanse the Temple. And He gave us the beautiful symbolism of the Sacraments.

Every Catholic and many non-Catholics know what a Sacrament is:

1. It is an outward sign. . .
2. Instituted by Christ. . .
3. To give grace to the soul, the very grace it symbolizes.

Always it is an outward sign: water and words in Baptism; the bread and wine in the



Eucharist; oil in Extreme Unction; the laying on of hands in Holy Orders . . . and so on.

Always the sign is clear and full of meaning: water for washing, bread and wine for food, oil for strength, hands transmitting the powers possessed to those who would receive and exercise them.

Uniquely, however, the Sacraments were directly instituted by the Savior Himself. They were His immediate invention. He gave them to His Church to be the means by which His grace would come tangibly and clearly to those for whom He had lived and died.

Uniquely too, these Sacraments give grace. They are not just symbols of grace; they impart grace. The words and the water of Baptism make the little pagan a child of God, wash away original sin, and give the soul the wonderful grace of God. The bread and wine, after consecration, do not symbolize or suggest or commemorate the Body and Blood of the Savior; they are His Body and Blood, His Flesh which He promised for the life of the world.

### **Much Different**

Sacraments and Sacramentals sound alike. There are points of similarity and great points of difference.

Both are external signs. Both are a concession to the fact that man is body and

soul and that inward emotion must be expressed in outward signs, and that the soul is reached through the senses. So the crucifix, a Sacramental, is an outward sign, as water flowing in Baptism is an outward sign. Both are holy things; the words say that: Sacrament and Sacramental are both from the word *sacrum*, which means holy, dedicated to God.

But while the Sacraments were instituted by Christ, the Sacramentals were instituted by the Church or approved by the Church as growing out of man's natural instincts. Most of the Sacramentals have a direct connection with Christ; but they are not things which Christ Himself originated or gave to us.

They differ, these Sacramentals, from the Sacraments in this, too: they do not of themselves give grace. The external confession, the expression of heartfelt sorrow, the absolution of the priest, and the acceptance of the penance, effect directly the forgiveness of sins in the Sacrament of Penance. Christ said directly to the Apostles, and their successors, "Whose sins you shall forgive they are forgiven." But though a sinner may be moved, at the sight of the crucifix, to sorrow for sin and tears of repentance, the crucifix itself does not free him from sin.

So the Sacraments and the Sacramentals are both external signs: the Bread and Wine of the Eucharist, the beads that make up a rosary.

The Sacraments were the direct institution of Christ; the Sacramentals were instituted or approved by the Church to meet men's religious needs and instincts.

The Sacraments by their own God-given power give grace. The Sacramentals lead people toward God and His grace, but do not give this grace directly.

### **Why Sacramentals?**

The teaching of truth, Mass, and the Sacraments are essential to Christ's religion.

The Sacramentals are the precious and beautiful aids to religion.

Some of them lead the mind to think of holy things.

Most of them are so closely connected with Christ that their mere presence brings the soul closer to the Savior.

Many of them are charmingly accurate symbols of some virtue, an inspiration or a challenge to better living.

Some of them came to us directly from the hands of great saints. They had helped these saints become great; our use of them makes us a little more like the holy men and women who first employed them.

Always the Sacramentals make the difficult things of religion a little easier. They make the mysteries a little clearer. They turn the heart from the distractions of a too beautiful world to the more beautiful unseen world which is all around us. They make the practice of virtue seem more at-

tractive. They inspire us to a spontaneous prayer, to the realization of God's love, to a memory of Mary and the saints, and to a desire to become ourselves more worthy of God's great goodness.

They are to religion what the flag or the American Eagle is to love of country.

They make the supernatural life more attractive, as beautiful pictures and good music and poetry make the natural life more charming and easier to live.

### **Parallels**

As sports trophies and pennants and the pictures and records of outstanding athletes inspire young people to aim at playing the games well, the Sacramentals inspire good people to run a little harder in the contests for the eternal prize, to become better athletes of Christ.

As the engagement or wedding ring, the love letter or the serenade, a gift of flowers or candy stimulate the love of a man and woman, the Sacramentals help stimulate our love for God.

All are outward signs closely connected with our inner emotions. And when the Church created and encouraged and blessed the Sacramentals, it was wisely giving us guideposts to God, pleasant little helps toward heaven, charming reminders of the Divine Providence that is all around us, mementoes of the life and death of the Savior, poetic figures of speech which externally

express pleasant religious experiences, little nudges that say, "You too can become like the saints."

They are not essential. Yet since they flow so clearly from our God-given nature, they are inevitable to God's true religion and the greatest possible help to one who wants to serve God and lead the good life.

They are delightful adornments of religion, lubricant on the wheels of spiritual progress, outward signs of the grace that we must develop to become pleasing to God.

### **The Cross**

No Sacramental of the Church has ever been better loved and more universally used than the reproductions of the cross of our Savior. The Church from the very beginning loved the cross. It was scratched by the early Christians on the wall of their dungeons before they were led out to their own martyrdom. The crossed sticks of Mary Magdalen's hermitage remained for her a lovely reminder of the Blessed Lover who had driven out the seven demons and given her a place at the foot of His saving cross on Calvary. The hermits of the Egyptian desert knew the cross with the Scriptures as their only reading matter, as later Thomas of Aquin was to say that the crucifix was his favorite and most persuasive text. The Christians made the sign of the cross on their foreheads to identify themselves one to the other. Early blessings began to be given in the sign of the cross. The cross took its place on walls of houses

and roofs of buildings and the rising spires of churches. Churches themselves were built in the form of the cross. The Crusaders adopted their name from the cross which they wore over their armor. The cross became almost the synonym for the faith. Literally, religious took up their cross when they made their vows, and the cross rested on their desks, hung over their beds, was carried upon their breasts, and was worked into the pattern of their habits.

The crucifix added to the stark cross the figure of the dying Savior. What imagination had placed there when the saints prayed before the crossed sticks, artists and artisans now placed there in vivid reality, to recall the sufferings of Christ and the love of the Savior which made Him lay down His life for His sheep.

The crucifix became a triumphant standard carried before the bishop in procession, before kings as they walked forward to be crowned, before armies mustered in defense of western civilization.

### **Not in Itself**

It was St. Paul who gloried in the cross of Christ. It was St. Peter who begged that the cross on which he died be inverted so that he might die head downward. It was the Church that cried out, "*Ecce, Vexilla Regis!*" "Hail, Standard of the King!" It was penitents who clasped the feet of the large crucifixes. It was Catholic peasants and nobles who built the roadside crucifixes

in the little shrines throughout Europe. It was a conviction that our hope is in the cross which caused the building of the crosses which mark the graves of our heroic dead.

Now, no intelligent Catholic believes that the cross or the crucifix of itself has the power to give grace. But no intelligent person could doubt its meaning or its suggestive power. It stands as the proud reminder of God's love for mankind. It is the battle standard of the triumphant victory of Calvary. It speaks eloquently of the Savior who died upon the cross and commanded His followers to take up the cross and follow Him.

### At the Cross

Some years back, the almost final scene of *The Informer* was played at the foot of a gigantic crucifix. The agonizing Irish mother knew that the Informer had betrayed her son to his death. She stumbled into the church to find strength near the side of that other Mother who had seen her Son die unjustly. And over her shoulder she looked back in forgiveness at the man who had caused the murder of her son, taking him into her arms, as Mary had taken sinful humanity when the voice of Christ from the Cross said, "Behold thy son!"

Eugene O'Neill, in a brief personal flashback to the faith of his youth, sends his hero in *Days Without End*, in sorrow for sin and the quest of forgiveness, to the crucifix

on which the sculptured figure of Christ hangs, an eternal reminder of His longing to save the most completely astray of His lost sheep.

We kiss the cross in acceptance of the sorrows of life.

We look up to the cross from a sickbed to think of the greater agony and the utter patience of the dying Christ.

We bless ourselves with the sign of the cross, since it is the profession of our Christian faith, an expression of our hope in the merits of Christ, and gratitude for the love which caused Christ to embrace the cross for our sakes.

In itself the cross is two crossed sticks. In meaning it is rich and full and wonderful. In inspiration it is an invitation to high daring and splendid achievement. In sorrow it is the most reassuring symbol in the world. It is proof positive of God's love and the invitation of outstretched arms to love God in return. It is a standard urging on to triumph. It is the guarantee of Easter following any individual passion.

Whatever form it takes, the cross is just about the most wonderful of the Sacramentals.

### **Holy Water**

The divine inventive genius never exercised itself more potently or skillfully than in the creation of the simple element we call water. Water remains the perfect



quencher for our thirsts. It is basic in all cleaning processes. It makes up the largest part of our body. With the sun it makes possible plant and animal life. It sustains the ships which are a fundamental form of transportation. Brought to a boil, it is the great sterilizer. Frozen, it is the great preservative. And in God's usual lavish generosity, the most important and versatile of elements makes up three-fourths of the surface of the globe and no one knows how much of its interior.

As soon as nations grew even slightly civilized, they thought of water as a precious and almost sacred element. Besides its multiplied natural uses, they turned water to the service of their religion. Holy water became a common factor among the Jews and among the pagans. They washed their hands in symbol of their need to cleanse their souls. They used lustral water to sprinkle their temples, their houses, even their cities; for water was the symbol of cleanliness, of fertility, of the outpouring of blessings from on high.

The Church instantly seized on this very lovely symbol of water to make it one of Catholics' best beloved Sacramentals.

When we enter the church (or most Catholic places) we dip our hands into the holy water font and bless ourselves. Solemn high Mass does not begin until the priest has sprinkled the people with holy water. Almost every blessing is given with the sign of the cross and holy water. Holy

water is a constant accompaniment of a Catholic's devotional life.

Now once more we may make it clear that holy water is in no sense essential to faith and morals or even the service of God. But it helps to all. It is one of those universal human symbols which say eloquently just what we want said.

Water purifies us from dirt and grime; holy water reminds us of the necessity, the much higher necessity, of purifying our souls from the filth of sin. A plant does not grow until it has been well watered; the seeds of sanctity and holiness in the soul cannot begin to grow until they are "watered" with that grace so well typified by water. And the lavish way in which God has poured water upon the earth—rains and rivers and dews and waterfalls—reminds of the even more lavish way in which He longs to pour out His supernatural blessings upon mankind.

Holy water reminds us of our needs and of God's generous fulfillment of those needs. Once more, it is an almost perfect symbol and a gracious Sacramental.

### **The Rosary**

The rosary is not one of the very primitive Sacramentals. Yet it is one of the dearest.

Rosary means, of course, a garland of roses. Roses have from the dawn of history been the symbol by which man expressed his love. We may be sure that Adam pre-

sented flowers to Eve, even in the Paradise in which flowers were almost a commonplace. And when Adam built his first little altar-table where He would entertain God as He came down at the vesper hour, he and Eve were sure to have decorated it with flowers.

In the same way, human beings have had a way of stringing together what they thought beautiful or precious as a garland for the neck of someone honored or beloved. Garlands of flowers, strings of pearls, necklaces of shells or jewels graced the first banqueters and the latest arrival on tropical islands.

Beyond this, no man has ever been satisfied to say just once something he thought important. He says, not "I love you," but "I love you; I love you; you know I love you." Not "Hooray!" but "Hooray! Hooray! Hooray!" He sings over and over again the chorus of beloved songs. Outside the palace, he shouts again and again the name of the king. All simple poetry, the poetry of the people, is full of repetitions. When we mean something very deeply, we say it in gay repetition. "This is true. You know it is true. I swear it is true. Yes, it is true." Today, the TV and radio commercials are masterpieces of repetition. They know that the human mind wants to hear over and over anything that is important or significant.

## Garland

Now in that sweet Sacramental which is the rosary, we have the religious fulfill-

ment of all these instincts. This is a garland of roses, a bouquet made up of the most gracious prayers—the Creed, the Our Father, the Hail Mary, and the Glory Be. It is very close to being a piece of spiritual jewelry, the chain binding together the small stones, which may be inexpensive as shells, and as precious as flawless gems. It repeats, in the fashion of people stressing something very important, the world's greatest prayer, the cry of the angel and of St. Elizabeth, the faith of the Apostles, and the adoration of men and angels.

As the fingers move along the beads, they create a musical rhythm setting the underlying beat that accompanies the melody of our meditation on the mysteries. Dedicated to Mary, the story of the mysteries is the story of Christ as seen through the eyes of the person closest to Him. No Sacramental is more suitable or more reasonable.

## Medals

What collection of excavations from some remote city of the past fails to display one of the most human of inventions—the medal? The Egyptians made them as did the Assyrians. Medals were struck in Greece before it was Greece, and Rome when it was still a cluster of barbarous villages. Stone Age men carved them out of flint. Primitive men in remote parts of the world make them from the seashells. The most civilized of nations regard the medal as a lofty award, a splendid form of commemoration. The greatest achievements of the scien-

tist and the highest heroism of the soldier are rewarded with the simple gift of a medal.

Once more the Church in striking its medals followed the universal human impulse, turning it from things of earth to things of eternity.

The religious medal is worn as an outward profession of faith. "I believe in God," the wearer of the medal says without words.

"I am a follower of the crucified Christ," he may amplify.

"I am striving for a love as pure as the love of the Sacred Heart."

"I am dedicated to the service of the world's most beautiful and spotless woman."

"I am a member of the great Communion of Saints."

It is a gentle reminder to those of the higher world that we humans depend upon them. These are no charms or talismen, these Catholic medals. They are really worth studying in themselves. Those Catholic medals are masterpieces of capsule art, condensed devotion, professed faith, gentle reminders to heavenly patrons. The Sacred Heart Medal with its representation of the boundless love of the Savior . . . the Miraculous Medal commemorating the patient and protective love of a Heavenly Mother . . . medals in honor of individual saints, recalling their glorious achievements and chal-

ing the wearer to walk in their shining way . . . St. Christopher carrying on his shoulder the Infant Traveller as we must carry Christ with us wherever we go . . . each Catholic medal is a brilliantly conceived and executed tribute to the heavenly great, and a challenge to the Christian struggling in their footsteps.

And there is encouragement to be felt in the conviction that from the courts of heaven powerful friends look down to see us wearing their name engraved on a beautiful medal. It is a kind of heavenly campaign button, as if we gave them our vote and expected in return their patronage.

### **Scapulars**

Along that same line is the wonderful significant Sacramental which is the scapular.

Once more, we cannot find a time when men and women were not impressed with the importance of a uniform or of a livery. Soldiers were so marked with a distinctive dress . . . as were kings and priests and scholars. Men gladly put on the livery of some distinguished college, proud to admit their membership in that group of learned men. Special professions wore a distinctive cap and gown. They put on, once they entered their offices, the uniform of a doctor, a dentist, a chemist, or a nurse. If their regiment was notably distinguished, they wore a distinguishing uniform. Pages and knights in the household of a great em-

peror wore his colors, as later on schoolboys wore their school colors for all to see.

Well, religious men and women in the Catholic Church put on the distinctive habit of their orders. The Benedictines and Dominicans and Franciscans and Carmelites, to mention just a few, could be instantly recognized by their dress. They followed the rule of life drawn up by the founder of monasticism, St. Benedict. They were watchdogs of the Lord—*Domini-can*es. They dressed in the poor brown of the Troubadour of Christ. They were dedicated to Our Lady of Mount Carmel.

With time, the religious members of the order shared these distinguished and distinguishing habits with notable lay men and women. When it became difficult for a variety of reasons to wear the entire habit, the lay people took to wearing the most distinctive feature of the habit, the scapular, a thin strip of cloth reaching from the neck to the ground, front and back between the shoulders. When this too became difficult and cumbersome, it was cut to a small piece of cloth, correct in color, but easy to wear under one's normal clothing.

The scapular had a great many important meanings:

It marked the wearer as attached to a religious order which in turn was dedicated entirely to the service of God and souls.

It reminded God and Our Lady and the saints that here was a "special member of

their household," wearing their uniform, dressed in their livery, carrying their colors.

The scapular was an external symbol of the importance of clothing the soul in divine grace and in the virtues which Christ taught, Mary exemplified, and the saints practiced.

Again, here was a very apt symbol fit to be one of the great Sacramentals.

### **All With a Purpose**

No one has the slightest doubt about the importance of the national flag or the wedding ring, a cake for an anniversary, flowers for a big event. No one questions the wisdom of framing and placing for our children to see them the pictures of our great national heroes, the pioneers and explorers, the men of science. We feel there is an inspiration in keeping a record of the sports champions. We would regard it as a national calamity if Mount Vernon were closed or the Washington Monument razed.

In the Sacramentals, the Church applies all this natural instinct to a supernatural purpose.

The pictures of the saints recall the great heroes and heroines of God and excite us lesser mortals to aspire to some of their achievements.

The statues of the saints pay the same honor in the same sort of way to Christ and the saints that the statues in our public



parks pay to our distinguished historical figures.

And if we carry with us the small picture of Christ, Our Lady, and the saints, or a tiny statuette of one of these wonderful personages, it is with the double purpose of recalling their names with honor and reminding them of our love.

The same impulse as enshrines a lock of our beloved's hair in a locket makes Catholics cherish the relics of the saints. If everything that was connected in any slight way with Stephen Collins Foster is faithfully enshrined in the lovely memorial building erected by the University of Pittsburgh, the Church does no less for the things which had been close to the heroic persons of our martyrs and virgins and confessors and doctors of the faith.

Sacramentals are eminently reasonable.

I have never understood the strange impulse which, during the days of the Protestant revolution, cut the Sacraments down from seven to two or three and outlawed the human instinct which made Sacramentals so dear and intimate a part of the Catholic religion.

No one has ever claimed that a Sacramental of itself gives grace or can make a person holier. But it is inescapable that we grow to admire the people whose pictures are near us. It is certainly right to honor and to find consolation in the sign

of our salvation, the holy cross. Medals will be struck for all the great of history; why exclude the great who made God's history? Uniforms are part of the national scene; the scapular is merely a uniform lifted to a slightly higher plane.

And so it goes.

Sacramentals make religion clearer to understand and easier to practice. Christ did not establish them. But Christ, in whom and by whom and through whom were, in His divine nature, created all things which are made, created our human natures. Our human natures need and indeed demand external signs of our inward emotions. We need the helps and props and inspirations and nudges that come to us through our senses. We use them in every form of wholesome human activity. The Church knows they work beautifully in our religious life.

Sacramentals are from God for His honor and our greatest safety, happiness, inspiration and guidance.

They make most attractive and serviceable guideposts to heaven.



**THE QUEEN'S WORK**  
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