

Understanding the Mass: The Rite of Blessing and Sprinkling of Holy Water

Appendix II of the 3rd Edition of the Roman Missal reads;

1. On Sundays, especially in Easter Time, the blessing and sprinkling of water as a memorial of Baptism may take place from time to time in all churches and chapels, even in Masses anticipated on Saturday evenings.

If this rite is celebrated during Mass, it takes the place of the usual Penitential Act at the beginning of Mass.

2. After the greeting, the Priest stands at his chair and faces the people. With a vessel containing the water to be blessed before him, he calls upon the people to pray in these or similar words.

Dear brothers and sisters, let us humbly beseech the Lord our God to bless this water he has created, which will be sprinkled on us as a memorial of our baptism. May he help us by his grace to remain faithful to the spirit we have received.

And after a brief pause of silence, he continues with his hands joined:

Almighty ever living God, who willed that through water, the fountain of life and the source of purification, every soul should be cleansed and receive the gift of eternal life; be pleased, we pray, to + bless this water, by which we seek protection on this your day, O Lord. Renew the living springs of this water we may be and worthy to receive your grace within us and grant that by defended from all ills of spirit and approach you with hearts made clean your salvation.



Through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Other similar prayers are used inside of Easter Time between Easter and Pentecost.

In addition, the Roman Missal reads:

3. Where the circumstances of the place or the custom of the people suggest that the mixing of salt be preserved in the blessing of the water, the priest may bless salt, saying:

We humbly ask you, almighty God: be pleased in your faithful love to + bless the salt you have created, for it was you who commanded the prophet Elisha to cast salt into water, that impure water might be purified. Grant, O Lord, we pray, that, wherever this mixture of salt and water is sprinkled, every attack of the enemy may be repulsed and your Holy Spirit may be present to keep us safe at all times.

Through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Then he pours salt into the water, without saying anything.

4. Afterward, taking

himself and the

people, moving

Meanwhile, one of

appropriate chant is sung.



the aspergillum, the priest sprinkles

ministers, then the clergy and the

through the church, if appropriate.

the following chants, or another

Outside Easter Time

Antiphon 1 Sprinkle me with hyssop, O Lord and I shall be cleansed; wash me and I shall be whiter than snow. (Psalm 51:9)

Antiphon 2 I will pour clean water upon you, and you will be made clean of all your impurities, and I shall give you a new spirit, says the Lord. (Ezekiel 36:25-26)

Antiphon 3 Blessed be the God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who in his great mercy has given us new birth into a living hope through the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, into an inheritance that will not perish, preserved for us in heaven for the salvation to be revealed in the last time!

During Easter Time

Antiphon 1 I saw water flowing from the Temple, from its right-hand side, Alleluia: and all to whom this water came were saved and shall say: Alleluia, Alleluia. (Cf. Ezekiel 47:1-2, 9)

Antiphon 2 On the day of my Resurrection, says the Lord, Alleluia, I will gather the nations and assemble the kingdoms and I will pour clean water upon you, hallelujah. (Cf. Wis. 3:8; Ez. 36:25)

There are additional options during Easter time, but the main theme of the Rite of Blessing and Sprinkling of Holy Water is a cleansing of sins to prepare ourselves to celebrate the Sacred Mysteries. Ezekiel 36 is worth quoting in full. Ezekiel writes:

I will sprinkle clean water over you to make you clean; from all your impurities and from all your idols I will cleanse you. I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put my spirit within you so that you walk in my statutes, observe my ordinances, and keep them (Ezekiel 36:25-27).



The cleansing and the new heart and the new spirit in Ezekiel mirror Psalm 51, which we discussed in the Penitential Act.

5. When he returns to his chair and the singing is over, the Priest stands facing the people, and, with hands joined, says:

May almighty God cleanse us from our sins, and through the celebration of this Eucharist make us worthy to share at the table of his kingdom.

Amen.

6. Then when it is prescribed, the hymn Gloria in Excelsis (Glory to God in the highest) is sung or said. ¹

¹ 3rd Edition of the Roman Missal Appendix II

In his book, “The Mystery of Faith: A Study of the Structural Elements of the Order of the Mass” Lawrence Johnson explains the history and origin of the “sprinkling rite.” He writes,

*Until the liturgical reform after the Second Vatican Council, a rite known as the Asperges was celebrated before the principal Mass on Sunday. The word comes from Psalm 51:9: “Cleanse me with the sin of hyssop, that I may be purified.” Verses of the psalm were sung while the priest walked through the church and sprinkled holy water over the people. During Paschal time the Asperges was replaced by the Vidi Aquam, a text based on Ezekiel 47: 1, 8,9: “I saw water flowing from out beneath a threshold of the temple.”*²

Johnson adds, “*This custom, which gained popularity in the Middle Ages, seems to have originated in eighth-century monasticism as a sign of sanctification. A procession moved through the cloister, and its rooms were sprinkled.*”³ Have you ever had your house blessed? Each room is sprinkled with holy water as the priest moves throughout the house.

In summary, Johnson writes, “*this sprinkling with water is a visual reminder of Baptism (the foundational sacrament of all repentance) and the unique character of Sunday. Through the sacraments of Christian initiation we die, are buried, and rise again with Christ: we thereby share in Christ’s victory over sin and death. Although the sprinkling is not a penitential rite, nonetheless, every Sunday is a Paschal Feast celebrating the memorial of the Lord’s Resurrection which is the taproot of all reconciliation.*”⁴

We get the word aspergillum, which is the stick-shaped instrument or branch-type instrument that gathers vessel that holds the holy-water onto the faithful.



the blessed water from the aspesory (the water), and is used to project the holy There are many shapes and forms of this

aspergillum or aspergilla available today.

² The Mystery of Faith: A Study of the Structural Elements of the Order of the Mass Pg. 19

³ Ibid Pg. 19

⁴ Ibid Pg. 19

Photo Sources:

Pope Pius XII Blessing Water Pg. 1

https://www.google.com/url?sa=i&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=images&cd=&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=0ahUKEwiS5ZmokaJAhUKpYgKHd_1Bc0QjRwIBw&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.salvemariaregina.info%2FSalveMariaRegina%2FSMR-160%2FEaster%2520Octave%2520Customs.htm&bvm=bv.108194040,d.cGU&psig=AFQjCNFNcp-26BbnKavXvkMNbzKEcv9Pg&ust=1448491376209100

Pope Francis Sprinkling the faithful Pg. 2

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Ezekiel Pg. 3

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Aspergillum Pg. 4 <http://www.fisheaters.com/aspergill.jpg>

