

Lesson 6

The Penitential Rite – an alternate form The Rite of Sprinkling

Action

During the Easter Season or on special feasts such as Pentecost, the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord and others, the priest may choose to use the Rite of Blessing and Sprinkling Holy Water in place of the usual penitential rite. After greeting the people the priest blesses the water that is to be sprinkled. He may choose to bless and sometimes even add blessed salt to the water. He then takes the aspergillum or sprinkler, first sprinkles himself and the altar servers then the rest of the clergy and people. He may then move through the church. Meanwhile, a hymn is usually sung. After completing the sprinkling the priest returns to his chair, offers a brief prayer to God, and the Gloria is then sung or said.

History

This ancient rite has its origins in the rites of the purification that took place in the Temple in Jerusalem when water was used to purify those who were about to offer sacrifice to God. The method we use probably originated around the eighth century when the Abbot of a monastery would lead a procession of monks through the living quarters of the monastery purifying and blessing each of the monk's rooms. Soon thereafter this rite began to be used before High Mass in churches. The Rite is a reminder of our baptism when the blessed baptismal water was poured over us washing us free from original sin.

What we can do to participate more fully in this Rite

The purpose of the rite is twofold: to remind us of our baptism when we were freed from our sins and brought into God's family and to free us from our less serious or venial sins. We should call to mind our sins and when the priest

sprinkles us with Holy Water we should bow as he approaches and make the sign of the cross as a sign that we receive his blessing.