

THE THIRD ORDER

Of the Society of St. Pius X



1st May 2010

jordiestephens@hotmail.com

PO Box 500, Tynong
Victoria, 3813

Phone: [61] 3/5629 1045

Fax: [61] 3/5629 2710

Dear Postulants and Professed members,

All of us are accustomed to the use of **holy water**, perhaps even too accustomed. Familiarity breeds contempt, and, like all things precious, we need to constantly renew our appreciation of their value, lest we both profane what is holy and deprive ourselves of lush blessings.

Water has a prominent place in God's inspired Word, what we call Sacred Scripture or the Bible. Already in the 2nd verse of chapter 1 in Genesis we are told that "the spirit of God moved over the waters". After being told in chapter 2 of the existence of both the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, it is narrated that "a river went out of the place of pleasure to water paradise".

When the Israelites made their exit ("Exodus" in greek) out of Egypt after 4 centuries of slavery, we are told that with regard to the Red Sea "the children of Israel went in through the midst of the sea dried up: for the water was as a wall on their right hand and on their left" (Exodus 14:22). At the end of a further 40 years of wandering in circles in punishment for their infidelity and grumbling, with Josue (a Hebrew variation of "Jesus") at the head "the people marched over against Jericho: and the priests that carried the ark of the covenant of the Lord, stood girded upon the dry ground in the midst of the Jordan, and all the people passed over through the channel that was dried up" (Jos 3:17). So water played an immense role in both the delivery of the Chosen People from the bondage of Egypt (sin) and their successful entry into the Promised Land of Chanaan (eternal life).

In the New Testament, amongst other examples, Our Lord was baptised in the waters of the Jordan, walked across the water immediately before the great promise of the Eucharist, and had water flow out His pierced side on calvary. In the very last chapter of the last book of Sacred Scripture, the Apocalypse, St John is shown "a river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb...bearing twelve fruits, yielding its fruits every month, and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations" (22:1-2).

Most of the human body, and even the earth itself, consists of water. We can get by for a long time without solid food, but only a few days without water. It has even been fashionable for some time now to drink many glasses of water a day to optimize one's health on the physical level. The Lord God, through His Catholic Church, has willed that water have a prominent place not only in our natural life, but also our supernatural life.

The Church has blessings universally for anything and everything, as you would expect from the religion that calls itself "Catholic" or "Universal". The fact is, once God had entered time, clothed Himself with human flesh and walked this earth, *everything* has been converted broadly into a sort of sacramental (especially the "Holy Land", which is why it is thus called), becoming a channel of God's grace. But Christ gave His Church a *special* sacramentalising power which, while not indeed as powerful as the 7 Sacraments instituted personally by Christ, gives to *any* created thing the ability to be a conduit of God's grace in a unique manner. And of all the objects that can be blessed, the blessing given to water is surely the most important. This is not only because water is the most flexible and adaptable of all created things, and the most "spiritual" of God's creatures. For a Catholic, holy water, and more particularly the blessing of oneself with it has deeper signification.

Although we may have "mini" holy water fonts in our homes at the entrance to rooms and where we say the Rosary, the most important variety, both in size and significance, is that which is found at the entrance of every Catholic church.

Firstly, blessing ourselves with water from the church font is a helpful reminder of the water that flowed over our (probably tiny) head when we were baptised. For most of us, our godparents expressed *for* us the desire to be baptised, whereas now with each use of holy water we can renew with our *own* will the desire to belong completely to Christ and to renounce completely all the pomps and glamour of Satan. Somewhat as God's initial creation of the world continues by His sustaining creative hand, so our initial baptism should continue daily with a constant and deliberate renouncing of Satan, and giving of oneself to Christ.

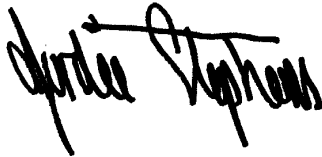
Secondly, it signifies (and truly brings about, if we have living faith) the purification required in order to enter into the presence of God, a presence unique to a Catholic church (or a Catholic breast immediately after Holy Communion). If the “mere” presence of sanctifying grace in our *soul* is a profound reason to bless the body enshrining it, then how much more when that body and soul enter into the substantial presence of Our Lord in the *tabernacle*! When Moses approached the burning bush on Mt Sinai, God said to him, “Come not hither. Put off the shoes from thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground” (Exodus 3:5). Who among us does not need purification in the presence of Him before whom His most immaculate Seraphim proclaim “Holy, Holy, Holy, the Lord God of hosts, all the earth is full of His glory”? (Isaias 6:3).

Lastly, this self-blessing is one of the greatest means offered to us for the forgiveness of both the *guilt and temporal punishment* owing on our venial sins (as well as the temporal punishment owing on our mortal sins). As I mentioned last time, when your soul (by abstention from mortal sin) retains the principle of *spiritual* life, sanctifying grace, the guilt of venial sin can be healed “from the inside”, just as with physical life with regard to most *bodily* ailments.

Unlike the 7 *Sacraments*, the many *sacramentals* of the Church produce an effect entirely dependent upon the fervour and faith with which we use them. Whereas the Sacraments, eg. Baptism of an infant, bring about a definite amount of grace of themselves if the minimum dispositions are present, sacramentals are relatively impotent if not used ardently and reverently. Holy water is *not* a lucky charm. For a Catholic, there is no such thing as a “lucky charm”, not only because luck doesn’t exist when all is penetrated by Providence, but because a lucky charm pretends to have special power of its own, whereas we know that all power comes from God through His One True Church.

May all of us 3rd Order members (and postulants) incorporate more holy water into our lives, proving our living faith that Almighty God intends to work His greatest marvels through “the weak things of this world” (I Cor 1:27).

In the Sacred Heart, through the Immaculate heart of Mary,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jordie Stephens". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Fr Jordie Stephens
Spiritual Director of the Third Order of SSPX for Australia