

CHAPTER 13

SACRAMENTALS AND POPULAR PIETY

A. SACRAMENTALS

- 13.1.1 Sacramentals are sacred signs by which effects, especially spiritual effects, are signified in some imitation of the sacraments, and are obtained through the intercession of the Church. In the realm of grace, sacraments are effective *ex opere operato* and confer sanctifying grace on the persons who receive them, while sacramentals are effective *ex opere operantis* and *praesertim operante Ecclesia*.¹⁴¹¹
- 13.1.2 The Apostolic See alone can establish new sacramentals, authentically interpret those already received, or abolish or change any of them.¹⁴¹²
- 13.1.3 Sacramentals (principally blessings) are to be administered according to the prescribed rites. The faithful should have a proper respect and understanding for them, avoiding any hint of superstition.¹⁴¹³
- 13.1.4 In celebrating sacramentals, no special exception is to be made for any private persons or classes of persons, apart from the honors due to civil authorities in accordance with liturgical law.¹⁴¹⁴

B. BLESSINGS

General

- 13.2.1 Blessings come first among sacramentals. Every blessing praises God and prays for his gifts. In Christ, Christians are blessed by God the Father “with every spiritual blessing.” This is why the Church imparts blessings by

¹⁴¹¹ CIC can. 1166. See also CCC 1667, citing SC 60; cf. CCEO can. 867. *Catechism of the Council of Trent (Roman Catechism)* II. See also CCC 1670, citing SC 61: “Sacramentals do not confer the grace of the Holy Spirit in the way that the sacraments do, but by the Church’s prayer, they prepare us to receive grace and dispose us to cooperate with it. For well-disposed members of the faithful, the liturgy of the sacraments and sacramentals sanctifies almost every event of their lives with the divine grace which flows from the Paschal Mystery of the Passion, Death, and Resurrection of Christ. From this source all sacraments and sacramentals draw their power. There is scarcely any proper use of material things which cannot be thus directed toward the sanctification of men and the praise of God.”

¹⁴¹² CIC can. 1167 §1.

¹⁴¹³ AS 150.

¹⁴¹⁴ AS 149, cf. SC 32.

invoking the name of Jesus, usually while making the holy sign of the cross of Christ.¹⁴¹⁵

13.2.2 A blessing is invocative or constitutive.

- a. A blessing is *invocative* if it leaves the juridical status of the person, place, or thing unchanged. For example, the blessing of bees, animals, or fruit, does not make them sacred things; nor does an ordinary priestly blessing make its recipient a sacred person.
- b. A blessing is *constitutive* (actually both invocative and constitutive) when it confers a juridical sacred status on a person, place, or thing, as, for example, when a blessing reserves a chalice for liturgical use.¹⁴¹⁶

13.2.3 The more a blessing concerns ecclesial and sacramental life, the more is its administration reserved to the ordained ministry of bishops, priests, or deacons.¹⁴¹⁷

13.2.4 While lay people may preside at certain blessings, these blessings are not accompanied by the gesture of the sign of the cross.¹⁴¹⁸

¹⁴¹⁵ CCC 1671, citing Ephesians 1: 3. The term “blessing” is used here in a generic sense. Traditionally, blessings have been distinguished as consecrations, dedications, or blessings. The term “consecration” is now generally reserved to persons, while “dedication” is used of places. See *Communicationes* 12 (1980) 325.

¹⁴¹⁶ T. Lincoln Bouscaren and Adam C. Ellis, *Canon Law: A Text and Commentary*, second revised edition (Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Company, 1951) 646. Ecclesiastical authority confers sacred status upon places and objects through what the 1917 code explicitly identified as constitutive blessings (1917 CIC cann. 1148 §2, 1150). The 1983 code makes no mention of constitutive blessings as such, but both codes state that the rites for these dedications or blessings of places are found in the pertinent liturgical books. 1917 CIC cann. 1148 §2, 1154; 1983 CIC cann. 1205, 1167 §2. In fact, because they are constitutive signs (“actions” in the 1917 code) they cannot be carried out apart from liturgical rites. While the effects of sacramentals are *ex opere operantis* in the realm of grace, in the juridical realm constitutive consecrations and blessings, as opposed to merely invocative blessings, “produce their effects infallibly and in virtue of the very performance of the act (*ex opere operato*).” John A. Abbo and Jerome D. Hannan, *The Sacred Canons, A Concise Presentation of the Disciplinary Norms of the Church* (St. Louis: B. Herder Book Co., 1952) 2: 414, note 2. Matthew Ramstein, *A Manual of Canon Law* (Hoboken, New Jersey: Terminal Printing and Publishing Company, 1948) 512: “[The Church] begs God through her ministers to bestow favors on the recipient or user of the sacramental, her prayers being more efficacious (not necessarily infallible) than the prayers of a private member of the Church.” Constitutive dedications or blessings grant to places or things “the capacity to produce spiritual effects *ex impetratione Ecclesiae*, when they are used,” and they are “permanent sacramentals,” as opposed to “transitory sacramentals,” such as blessings, laying on of hands, anointings, prayers, etc. See José Tomás Martín de Agar, in *Code of Canon Law Annotated*, second edition (Montréal: Wilson and Lafleur Lte., 2004) 907.

¹⁴¹⁷ CCC 1669; cf. SC 79; CIC can. 1168; BB 16, 18.

¹⁴¹⁸ See BB *passim*.

- 13.2.5 While it is a liturgical book in that it is part of the Roman Ritual, the Book of Blessings also contains blessings that are purely invocative in nature.
- 13.2.6 The fullness of the Church's prayer occurs in the parish, with all the orders represented, ideally including bishop, priest, deacon, and laity. While nothing can replace the parish celebration, the contents of *Catholic Household Blessings and Prayers* are structured in such a way that they capture the essence and spirit of parish prayer and enrich people's lives. The book intentionally uses "leader" instead of "minister" to refer to the one who leads the prayer, to make families feel comfortable and to avoid the idea that a cleric must be present in order for them to pray.¹⁴¹⁹
- 13.2.7 The contents include a wide range of traditional and contemporary prayers, from the Hail Mary to blessings for special occasions, as well as familiar hymns. *Catholic Household Blessings and Prayers* can make the home a "virtual parish." The book can be used for family meals, national holidays, wedding anniversaries, moving, difficult decisions, grief, and preparation for major events. Study and prayer groups have numerous prayer options, such as prayers to begin a school year or a prayer for students. Prayers, readings, and blessings are provided for all holy seasons of the Church's liturgical year. In the revised edition, a home version of the Liturgy of the Hours has been added, along with select readings for specific times of need.¹⁴²⁰
- 13.2.8 Among the liturgical and other books, there are sometimes parallels among liturgical and non-liturgical blessings, or invocative and constitutive blessings, or between invocative and constitutive blessings on the one hand and sacraments on the other. For example, a couple could marry *sacramentally* in a liturgical rite; years later on an anniversary they could receive a *liturgical invocative blessing* from a priest using a prayer from the Book of Blessings, and then go to a reception where one of their children could bless them using a *non-liturgical invocative blessing* of some kind. Similar parallels can be seen among the sacraments and blessings given to children, or to the sick. In case there may be any confusion on such occasions, is necessary to make it clear that these are distinct rites.

¹⁴¹⁹ National Conference of Catholic Bishops, Bishops' Committee on the Liturgy, *Catholic Household Blessings and Prayers* (Washington: National Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1988); CDWN November-December 2007. CDWN August 2008 announced the publication of the revised edition of *Catholic Household Blessings and Prayers*.

¹⁴²⁰ CDWN November-December 2007.

Liturgical Blessings

- 13.3.1 *Invocative* blessings, which are imparted first of all to Catholics, can also be given to catechumens and even to non-Catholics unless there is a prohibition of the Church to the contrary.¹⁴²¹
- 13.3.2 The Roman Missal (Sacramentary) contains invocative blessings—including the blessing of the deacon before he reads the Gospel, and the blessing of the congregation at the end of Mass. The ritual books, such as the Rite of Baptism of Children, contain invocative blessings—in the case of infant baptism, for the parents, godparents, and the congregation. The Book of Blessings contains many invocative blessings of persons, places and things.¹⁴²²
- 13.3.3 Depending on the particular occasion and circumstances, a liturgical invocative blessing may be given a layperson as well as by a cleric.

Quinceañera Blessings

- 13.4.1 Orders for the Bendición al Cumplir Quince Años, or the Blessing on the Fifteenth Birthday, known as the Quinceañera, were approved by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops in 2004 and approved by the Apostolic See in 2007. They have been added to the Bendicional and Book of Blessings, and may be found in their entirety at the conference web site.¹⁴²³

Constitutive Liturgical Blessings

- 13.5.1 Among the *constitutive* blessings which are intended for persons (which are not to be confused with sacramental ordination) are the blessing of the abbot

¹⁴²¹ CIC can. 1170.

¹⁴²² CDWN November-December 2008: English and Spanish versions of a new Order for the Blessing of a Child in the Womb / Rito de Bendición de una Criatura en el Vientre have been prepared by the USCCB Committee on Pro-Life Activities to support the parents awaiting the birth of their child, to encourage, especially in the parish setting, prayers for and recognition of the precious gift of the child in the womb, and to foster respect for human life within society. The proposed blessing is distinct from the Blessing of Parents before Childbirth found in the Book of Blessings. The Committee on Pro-Life Activities had been asked by a number of dioceses for a Blessing of a Child in the Womb. After being unable to find an existing blessing for a newly conceived child, the Committee prepared this new blessing and submitted it to the Committee on Divine Worship for consideration. Upon receiving the recognition of the Congregation on Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments for use in the dioceses of the United States of America, the Blessing of a Child in the Womb Within Mass and Outside Mass, in English and in Spanish, will be included in future editions of the Book of Blessings when that text is revised.

¹⁴²³ BCLN July 2007. See www.usccb.org/Quinceanera. A commentary on the rite was published in BCLN December 2004 and is available at: <http://www.usccb.org/liturgy/innews/1204.shtml>.

- or abess of a monastery, the consecration of virgins, the rite of religious profession, and the blessing of certain lay ministries of the Church.¹⁴²⁴
- 13.5.2 The dedication or blessing of a church or an altar, the blessing of holy oils, vessels, and vestments, bells, etc., are examples of constitutive blessings that concern places and things.¹⁴²⁵
- 13.5.3 Sacred places are those which are designated for divine worship or for the burial of the faithful by a dedication or a blessing which the liturgical books prescribe for this purpose.¹⁴²⁶
- 13.5.4 Sacred things, which are designated for divine worship by dedication or blessing, are to be treated reverently and are not to be employed for profane or inappropriate use even if they are owned by private persons.¹⁴²⁷

C. HEALING SERVICES

General

- 13.6.1 It is licit for every member of the faithful to pray to God for healing. When this is organized in a church or other sacred place, it is appropriate that such prayers be led by an ordained minister.¹⁴²⁸
- 13.6.2 Prayers for healing are considered to be liturgical if they are part of the liturgical books approved by the Church's competent authority; otherwise, they are non-liturgical.¹⁴²⁹
- 13.6.3 Those who direct healing services, whether liturgical or non-liturgical, are to strive to maintain a climate of peaceful devotion in the assembly and to exercise the necessary prudence if healings should take place among those present; when the celebration is over, any testimony can be collected with honesty and accuracy, and submitted to the proper ecclesiastical authority.¹⁴³⁰

¹⁴²⁴ See the pertinent rites in the Roman Pontifical; BB ch. 63.

¹⁴²⁵ CCC 1672.

¹⁴²⁶ CIC can. 1205. Cf. DCA *passim*; BB ch. 43.

¹⁴²⁷ CIC can. 1171.

¹⁴²⁸ IPH, disciplinary norms, art. 1. See also ADW, Liturgical Norms and Policies, 2010, ch. 8, Anointing of the Sick.

¹⁴²⁹ IPH, disciplinary norms, art. 2.

¹⁴³⁰ IPH, disciplinary norms, art. 9.

- 13.6.4 In no instance may the non-ordained perform anointings either with the oil of the sick *or any other oil*.¹⁴³¹
- 13.6.5 When abuses are verified in liturgical or non-liturgical healing services, or when there is obvious scandal among the community of the faithful, or when there is a serious lack of observance of liturgical or disciplinary norms, authoritative intervention by the Archbishop is proper and necessary.¹⁴³²
- 13.6.6 The use of means of communication (in particular, television) in connection with prayers for healing, falls under the vigilance of the Archbishop in conformity with CIC can. 823 and the norms established by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.¹⁴³³
- 13.6.7 Without prejudice to what is established regarding the celebration of the anointing of the sick within Mass or to other celebrations for the sick provided in the Church's liturgical books, prayers for healing—whether liturgical or non-liturgical—must not be introduced into the celebration of the Holy Mass, the sacraments, or the Liturgy of the Hours. In the celebrations referred to, special prayer intentions for the healing of the sick may be included in the Prayer of the Faithful, when this is permitted.¹⁴³⁴

Liturgical Healing Services

- 13.7.1 The Archbishop has the right to issue norms for the Archdiocese regarding liturgical services of healing. To date no such norms have been issued. Those who conduct liturgical services of healing must request permission from the appropriate archdiocesan office for each case.¹⁴³⁵

¹⁴³¹ EDM 9 §1. Archbishop Malcolm Ranjith, Secretary, CDWDS, Letter to Wilfrid Fox Cardinal Napier, Conference of Bishops of South Africa, 1 September 2008: "It is reported that the faithful are frequently being anointed, during the course of what are called 'Healing Services,' by deacons or even by lay ministers, who use the so-called 'Oil of Gladness' that is claimed to be a Sacramental. This Dicastery observes that canon 1003, §1, expressly forbids anyone other than a priest to administer the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick. Furthermore, as the Inter-Dicasterial Instruction *Ecclesiae de mysterio*, art. 9, makes clear: 'No other person [than a priest] may act as ordinary or extraordinary minister of the sacrament [of Anointing] since such constitutes simulation of a sacrament' (15 August 1997). This Congregation also observes that there are only three blessed oils used in the Roman Ritual, namely, the Oil of Catechumens, the Oil of the Sick, and Sacred Chrism. The use of any other oil or any other 'anointing' must be considered proscribed and subject to ecclesiastical penalties (cf. canons 1379 and 1384)." See also ADW, Liturgical Norms and Policies, 2010, 8.2.1 and its note.

¹⁴³² IPH, disciplinary norms, art. 10.

¹⁴³³ IPH, disciplinary norms, art. 6. Cf. CDF, Instruction on Some Aspects of the Use of the Instruments of Social Communication in Promoting the Doctrine of the Faith, 30 March 1992.

¹⁴³⁴ IPH, disciplinary norms, art. 7 §§1-2.

¹⁴³⁵ IPH, disciplinary norms, art. 4 §§1-2. Cf. CIC can. 838 §4.

- 13.7.2 Permission to hold such services must be given explicitly, even if they are organized by bishops or cardinals, or include such as participants. Given a just and proportionate reason, the Archbishop has the right to forbid even the participation of a particular bishop.¹⁴³⁶
- 13.7.3 Liturgical prayers for healing are to be celebrated according to the rite prescribed in the Book of Blessings, and with the proper sacred vestments indicated therein.¹⁴³⁷

Non-Liturgical Healing Services

- 13.8.1 Non-liturgical prayers for healing are distinct from liturgical celebrations, as gatherings for prayer or for reading of the Word of God; these also fall under the vigilance of the local ordinary.¹⁴³⁸
- 13.8.2 Confusion between such free non-liturgical prayer meetings and liturgical celebrations properly so-called is to be carefully avoided.¹⁴³⁹
- 13.8.3 Anything resembling hysteria, artificiality, theatricality or sensationalism, above all on the part of those who are in charge of such gatherings, must not take place.¹⁴⁴⁰

D. EXORCISMS

- 13.9.1 The Lord Jesus Christ performed exorcisms, and from him the Church has received the power and office of exorcizing.¹⁴⁴¹ When the Church asks publicly and authoritatively in the name of Jesus Christ that a person or object be protected against the power of the Evil One and withdrawn from his dominion, it is called exorcism. In a simple form, exorcisms are performed at the celebration of baptism.¹⁴⁴²

¹⁴³⁶ IPH, disciplinary norms, art. 4 §3.

¹⁴³⁷ IPH, disciplinary norms, art. 3 §1. Cf. BB, ch. 39.

¹⁴³⁸ IPH, disciplinary norms, art. 5 §1. Cf. CIC can. 839 §2.

¹⁴³⁹ IPH, disciplinary norms, art. 5 §2.

¹⁴⁴⁰ IPH, disciplinary norms, art. 5 §3.

¹⁴⁴¹ CCC 1673, citing cf. Mk 1: 25-26; 3: 15; 6: 7, 13; 16: 17.

¹⁴⁴² CCC 1673, citing cf. CIC can. 1172. See, for example, RBC 49, RCIA 144.

- 13.9.2 The solemn exorcism, called a “major exorcism,” is directed at the expulsion of demons or liberation from demonic possession through the spiritual authority which Jesus entrusted to his Church.¹⁴⁴³
- 13.9.3 The ministry of exorcism must be carried out in strict dependence on the Archbishop, and in keeping with the norms of canon law, the instructions of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, and the Rite of Exorcism. No one can perform an exorcism legitimately upon the possessed unless he has obtained special and express permission from the local ordinary. Any hint of superstition is to be avoided.¹⁴⁴⁴
- 13.9.4 The local ordinary is to give permission to perform an exorcism only to a priest who has piety, knowledge, prudence, and integrity of life.¹⁴⁴⁵
- 13.9.5 It is absolutely forbidden to insert prayers of exorcism into the celebration of the Holy Mass, the sacraments, or the Liturgy of the Hours.¹⁴⁴⁶
- 13.9.6 The prayers of exorcism contained in the Roman Ritual must remain separate from healing services, whether liturgical or non-liturgical.¹⁴⁴⁷
- 13.9.7 The Moderator of the Curia should be contacted in regard to requests for exorcisms, after pastors have considered the circumstances.

E. MINISTERS OF SACRAMENTALS

- 13.10.1 The minister of sacramentals is a cleric who has been provided with the requisite power.¹⁴⁴⁸
- 13.10.2 Bishops and priests permitted by law or legitimate grant can perform consecrations and dedications validly.¹⁴⁴⁹

¹⁴⁴³ CCC 1673, citing cf. CIC can. 1172. See *Rituale Romanum, De exorcismus et supplicationibus quibusdam*, editio typica (Romae: Typis Vaticanis, MIM).

¹⁴⁴⁴ AS 150; IPH, disciplinary norms, art. 8 §1. Cf. CIC can. 1172 §1; CDF, *Epistula Inde ab aliquot annis, Ordinariis locorum missa: in mentem normae vigentes de exorcismis revocantur*, 29 September 1985; *Rituale Romanum, De exorcismus et supplicationibus quibusdam*, editio typica (Typis Vaticanis, MIM), *praenotanda*, 13-19. This rite has not been translated into English. BCLN January 2002.

¹⁴⁴⁵ CIC can. 1172 §2.

¹⁴⁴⁶ IPH, disciplinary norms, art. 8 §3.

¹⁴⁴⁷ IPH, disciplinary norms, art. 8 §2.

¹⁴⁴⁸ CIC can. 1168.

¹⁴⁴⁹ CIC can. 1169 §1.

- 13.10.3 Priests preside at blessings by virtue of their priestly ministry, and can impart any blessings except those reserved to the Roman Pontiff or to bishops.¹⁴⁵⁰
- 13.10.4 Deacons preside at blessings because they are assistants to the bishop and the college of presbyters, and can impart those blessings expressly permitted by law.¹⁴⁵¹
- 13.10.5 According to the norm of the liturgical books and the judgment of the local ordinary, lay persons who possess the appropriate qualities can also administer some sacramentals.¹⁴⁵²
- 13.10.6 In the absence of a priest or deacon, in a case in which a lay person can impart a blessing, preference is to be given to an instituted acolyte or lector.¹⁴⁵³
- 13.10.7 Other laymen and laywomen, in virtue of the universal priesthood, a dignity they possess because of their baptism and confirmation, may celebrate certain blessings, as indicated in the respective orders of blessings, by use of the rites and formularies designated for a lay minister. Such laypersons exercise this ministry in virtue of their office (for example, parents on behalf of their children) or by reason of some special liturgical ministry or in fulfillment of a particular charge in the Church, as is the case in many places with religious or catechists appointed by decision of the local ordinary.¹⁴⁵⁴
- 13.10.8 In confecting or administering sacramentals, the rites and formulas approved by the authority of the Church are to be observed carefully.¹⁴⁵⁵
- 13.10.9 Sacramentals always include a prayer, often accompanied by a specific sign, such as the laying on of hands, the sign of the cross, or the sprinkling of holy water (which recalls baptism).¹⁴⁵⁶

¹⁴⁵⁰ CIC can. 1169 §2. BB, general introduction, 18b-c.

¹⁴⁵¹ CIC can. 1169 §3. BB, general introduction, 18b-c.

¹⁴⁵² CIC can. 1168. "Sacramentals derive from the baptismal priesthood: every baptized person is called to be a 'blessing,' and to bless. Hence lay people may preside at certain blessings; the more a blessing concerns ecclesial and sacramental life, the more is its administration reserved to the ordained ministry (bishops, priests, or deacons)." CCC 1669, citing cf. Genesis 12: 2; Luke 6: 28; Romans 12: 14; 1 Peter 3: 9; SC 79; CIC can. 1168; BB 16, 18

¹⁴⁵³ BB, general introduction, 18d.

¹⁴⁵⁴ BB, general introduction, 18d.

¹⁴⁵⁵ CIC can. 1167 §2. See also ADW, Liturgical Norms and Policies, 2010, 1.1.6.

¹⁴⁵⁶ CCC 1668.

F. POPULAR PIETY

General

- 13.11.1 While the liturgy is “the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed” and “the font from which all her power flows,” it is not possible to fill up the day with participation in the liturgy. The spiritual life is not limited solely to participation in the liturgy, yet the Christian must “pray without ceasing.” Popular devotional practices play a crucial role in helping to permeate everyday life with prayer to God.¹⁴⁵⁷
- 13.11.2 Besides sacramental liturgy and sacramentals, catechesis must take into account the forms of piety and popular devotions among the faithful. Down through the centuries, popular religiosity has also given rise to various other devotions related to the sacramental life of the Church—the veneration of relics, pilgrimages, visits to sanctuaries, novenas, processions and celebrations in honor of Mary and the other saints, the recitation of the rosary, the Angelus, the Stations of the Cross; and the use of sacramentals, such as images or icons, statues, holy water, chaplets, medals, and so forth.¹⁴⁵⁸
- 13.11.3 Zeal for the spiritual growth of the faithful naturally leads to an attitude of support and encouragement for such devotions, especially when they are inspired by Sacred Scripture and the liturgy, whether they flow from the hearts of saints or from a long tradition of faith and witness.¹⁴⁵⁹
- 13.11.4 These expressions of piety extend the liturgical life of the Church, but do not replace it. They “should be so drawn up that they harmonize with the liturgical seasons, accord with the sacred liturgy, are in some way derived from it and lead the people to it, since in fact the liturgy by its very nature is far superior to any of them.”¹⁴⁶⁰
- 13.11.5 Pastoral discernment is needed to sustain and support popular piety and, if necessary, to purify and correct the religious sense which underlies these devotions so that the faithful may advance in knowledge of the mystery of Christ. Their exercise is subject to the care and judgment of the bishops and to the general norms of the Church. Equipped with a fuller understanding of the proper role of popular devotional practices, the faithful will be better able to

¹⁴⁵⁷ CDW, *Popular Devotional Practices: Basic Questions and Answers*, 12 November 2003; cf. SC 7, 10, 12; 1 Thessalonians 5: 17; CCC 1675.

¹⁴⁵⁸ CCC 1674, citing cf. Council of Nicea II (787); Council of Trent, Session XXV, *Decretum de invocatione, veneratione et reliquiis Sanctorum, et sacris imaginibus* (1563): DS 1822. AS 153.

¹⁴⁵⁹ AS 153; CCC 1674.

¹⁴⁶⁰ CCC 1675, citing SC 13, no. 3.

- avoid possible misapplications and to recognize devotions whose appropriateness is questionable.¹⁴⁶¹
- 13.11.6 At its core the piety of the people is a storehouse of values that offers answers of Christian wisdom to the great questions of life. The Catholic wisdom of the people is capable of fashioning a vital synthesis. It creatively combines the divine and the human, Christ and Mary, spirit and body, communion and institution, person and community, faith and homeland, intelligence and emotion. This wisdom is a Christian humanism that radically affirms the dignity of every person as a child of God, establishes a basic fraternity, teaches people to encounter nature and understand work, and provides reasons for joy and humor even in the midst of a very hard life. For the people this wisdom is also a principle of discernment and an evangelical instinct through which they spontaneously sense when the Gospel is served in the Church and when it is emptied of its content and stifled by other interests.¹⁴⁶²
- 13.11.7 Popular piety is a living reality in and of the Church, “a true treasure of the People of God.” Its source is the constant presence of the Spirit of God in the ecclesial community; the mystery of Christ Our Savior is its reference point, the glory of God and the salvation of man its object, its historical moment “the joyous encounter of the work of evangelization and culture.”¹⁴⁶³
- 13.11.8 Popular piety has an innate sense of the sacred and the transcendent, manifests a genuine thirst for God and “an acute sense of God’s deepest attributes: fatherhood, providence, constant and loving presence,” and mercy. Popular piety directs its attention to the Son of God, to the mystery of the afterlife, communion with the saints in Heaven, the Blessed Virgin Mary, the angels, and suffrage for the souls of the dead.¹⁴⁶⁴
- 13.11.9 In genuine forms of popular piety, the Gospel message assimilates expressive forms particular to a given culture while also permeating the consciousness of

¹⁴⁶¹ CCC 1676, cf. Pope John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Catechesi tradendae* (1979) 54. CDW, Popular Devotional Practices: Basic Questions and Answers, 12 November 2003. Cf. AS 152 b: “The Bishop encourages those expressions of piety which are deeply rooted in the Christian people, purifying them, if need be, of any excesses that are less in conformity with the truth or with the mind of the Church. He should prudently remain open to the possibility of new forms of popular piety.”

¹⁴⁶² CCC 1677, citing CELAM, Third General Conference (1979) 448 (tr. NCCB, 1979); cf. Pope Paul VI, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii nuntiandi* (1975) 48.

¹⁴⁶³ DPP 61, citing Pope John Paul II, Homily given at the Celebration of the Word in La Serena, Chile (1987) 2; idem, Homily given at the shrine of the Virgin Mary of Zapopang (1979) 2.

¹⁴⁶⁴ DPP 61-62, citing Pope Paul VI, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii nuntiandi* (1975) 48; Pope John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Catechesi tradendae* (1979) 54. 79-80.

- that culture with the content of the Gospel, and its idea of life and death, and of man's freedom, mission and destiny.¹⁴⁶⁵
- 13.11.10 The Magisterium also highlights the importance of popular piety for the faith-life of the People of God, for the conservation of the faith itself and in inspiring new efforts at evangelization.¹⁴⁶⁶
- 13.11.11 Dangers to piety include: lack of sufficiently Christian elements; disconnection with the Church and the Holy Spirit; a disproportionate interest in saints; lack of contact with Sacred Scriptures; isolation from the sacramental life; a dichotomy between worship and the duties of Christian life; a utilitarian view of some forms of popular piety; the use of "signs, gestures and formulae, which sometimes become excessively important or even theatrical"; and in certain instances, the risk of "promoting sects, or even superstition, magic, fatalism or oppression."¹⁴⁶⁷
- 13.11.12 To remedy such defects, there is a need to "evangelize" popular piety. Pastoral sensibility recommends that this work should proceed patiently, tolerantly, and with great prudence, following the methodology adopted by the Church throughout the centuries in matters relating to inculturation of the Christian faith, the sacred liturgy, and those inherent in popular piety.¹⁴⁶⁸

Liturgical Year

- 13.12.1 The celebration of the liturgical year possesses a distinct sacramental force and efficacy because Christ himself in his mysteries and in the memorials of his saints, especially of his mother, continues his mission of infinite mercy. Therefore his faithful people not only recall and contemplate the mysteries of redemption but also lay hold of them, enter into communion with them, and live by them.¹⁴⁶⁹
- 13.12.2 In addition to the celebrations that make up the liturgical year, many regions maintain their own popular customs and devout practices. The bishops as

¹⁴⁶⁵ DPP 63.

¹⁴⁶⁶ DPP 64.

¹⁴⁶⁷ DPP 64, citing Pope John Paul II, Allocution to the Conference of the Bishops of the Abruzzi and the Molise (1986); idem, Discourse at Popayan, Colombia (1986).

¹⁴⁶⁸ DPP 65, citing Pope John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Vigésimus quintus annus* (1988) 18; idem, Allocution to the Conference of the Bishops of the Abruzzi and the Molise (1986); cf. CELAM, Third General Conference (1979) 458-459; CDWDS, Circular letter, *Orientamenti e proposte per la celebrazione dell'anno mariano*, 4 April 1987, 68; CDWDS, Instruction *Varietates legitimae* (1994) 9-20.

¹⁴⁶⁹ CB 231.

part of their pastoral charge should attach great importance to such customs and practices that build up piety, religious devotion, and an understanding of the mysteries of Christ.¹⁴⁷⁰

Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus

- 13.13.1 An excellent form of piety that should be preserved is the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus.¹⁴⁷¹
- 13.13.2 Jesus knew and loved us each and all during his life, his agony and his Passion, and gave himself up for each one of us: “The Son of God ... loved me and gave himself for me.” He has loved us all with a human heart. For this reason, the Sacred Heart of Jesus, pierced by our sins and for our salvation, “is quite rightly considered the chief sign and symbol of that ... love with which the divine Redeemer continually loves the eternal Father and all human beings” without exception.¹⁴⁷²

Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary

- 13.14.1 To foster the sanctification of the people of God, the Church commends to the special and filial reverence of the Christian faithful the Blessed Mary ever Virgin, Mother of God, whom Christ established as the mother of all people.¹⁴⁷³
- 13.14.2 On Saturdays when the Mass and Office of our Lady is permitted, the prayers and readings may be selected from among the Masses of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the weekday Lectionary, or from the Collection of Masses of the Blessed Virgin Mary.¹⁴⁷⁴
- 13.14.3 The Church’s devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary is intrinsic to Christian worship, and is an excellent form of piety that should be preserved.¹⁴⁷⁵
- 13.14.4 The Archbishop will be concerned that shrines, many of which are dedicated to the Holy Mother of God, should offer an effective contribution to the spiritual life of the diocese. He will oversee the dignity of their liturgical

¹⁴⁷⁰ CB 233.

¹⁴⁷¹ AS 152 b.

¹⁴⁷² CCC 478, cf. Galatians 2: 20; John 19: 34; Pope Pius XII, Encyclical Letter *Haurietis aquas* (1956).

¹⁴⁷³ CIC can. 1186.

¹⁴⁷⁴ ADW Ordo 17.

¹⁴⁷⁵ Pope Paul VI, Apostolic Exhortation *Marialis cultus* (1974) 56; AS 152 b; CCC 971-972, 2673-2679.

- celebrations and the preaching of the Word of God, and will take steps to remove from their vicinity anything that could hinder the devotion of the faithful or suggest undue concern for profit.¹⁴⁷⁶
- 13.14.5 Foremost among the Marian devotions is the rosary, which is a kind of compendium of the Gospel and, as such, it is a profoundly Christian devotion that helps the faithful to contemplate the mysteries of the life of Jesus Christ through the eyes of the Virgin Mary.¹⁴⁷⁷
- 13.14.6 The recitation of the Angelus marks the Christian's day with a brief meditation on the Incarnation of the Word.¹⁴⁷⁸
- 13.14.7 There is no official rite for a May crowning. Unlike the solemn crowning of an image by the bishop, it would not be liturgically correct to perform the popular devotion of May crowning within Mass. It may be done, however, immediately before or after.

Veneration of the Saints

- 13.15.1 The Church promotes the true and authentic veneration of the saints whose example instructs the Christian faithful and whose intercession sustains them.¹⁴⁷⁹
- 13.15.2 It is permitted to reverence through public veneration only those servants of God whom the authority of the Church has recorded in the list of the saints or the blessed.¹⁴⁸⁰
- 13.15.3 It is for the local ordinary to ensure that inappropriate images or those leading to error or superstition are not exposed for the veneration of the faithful.¹⁴⁸¹

¹⁴⁷⁶ AS 152 d.

¹⁴⁷⁷ AS 153. Cf. Pope John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Rosarium Virginis Mariae* (2002); SC 102; Pope Paul VI, Apostolic Exhortation *Marialis cultus* (1974) 42; CCC 2676-2678.

¹⁴⁷⁸ AS 153.

¹⁴⁷⁹ CIC can. 1186. Clement of Alexandria, *Miscellanies* 7, 12: "[The true Christian] prays in the society of angels, as being already of angelic rank, and he is never out of their holy keeping, and though he pray alone, he has the choir of saints standing with him." Origen, *On Prayer* 11: "But not the high priest [Christ] alone prays for those who pray sincerely, but also the angels ... as also the souls of the saints who have already fallen asleep."

¹⁴⁸⁰ CIC can. 1187.

¹⁴⁸¹ DPP 244.

Sacred Relics

- 13.16.1 The term “relics of the saints” principally signifies the bodies—or notable parts of the bodies—of the saints who, as distinguished members of Christ’s mystical Body and as temples of the Holy Spirit in virtue of their heroic sanctity, now dwell in Heaven, but who once lived on earth.¹⁴⁸²
- 13.16.2 Objects which belonged to the saints, such as personal objects, clothes and manuscripts are also considered relics, as are objects that have touched their bodies or tombs such as oils, cloths, and images.¹⁴⁸³
- 13.16.3 The Roman Missal reaffirms the validity “of placing the relics of the saints under an altar that is to be dedicated, even when not those of the martyrs.” This usage signifies that the sacrifice of the members has its origin in the Sacrifice of the altar, as well as symbolizing the communion with the Sacrifice of Christ of the entire Church, which is called to witness, event to the point of death, fidelity to her Lord and Spouse.¹⁴⁸⁴
- 13.16.4 Many popular customs have been associated with this eminently liturgical cultic expression. The faithful deeply revere the relics of the saints. An adequate pastoral instruction of the faithful about the use of relics will not overlook:
- a. ensuring the authenticity of the relics exposed for the veneration of the faithful; where doubtful relics have been exposed for the veneration of the faithful, they should be discreetly withdrawn with due pastoral prudence;¹⁴⁸⁵
 - b. preventing undue dispersal of relics into small pieces, since such practice is not consonant with due respect for the human body; the liturgical norms stipulate that relics must be “of a sufficient size as make clear that they are parts of the human body;”¹⁴⁸⁶

¹⁴⁸² DPP 236; cf. 1 Corinthians 3: 16, 6: 19; 2 Corinthians 6: 16; SC 111; cf. Council of Trent, Session XXV, *Decretum de invocatione, veneratione et reliquiis Sanctorum, et sacris imaginibus* (1563): DS 1822.

¹⁴⁸³ DPP 236.

¹⁴⁸⁴ GIRM 302; DCA ch. 4, 5; DPP 237.

¹⁴⁸⁵ DPP 237; cf. DCA, ch. 2, 5.

¹⁴⁸⁶ DPP 237; cf. DCA, ch. 2, 5. See also ADW, *Liturgical Norms and Policies*, 2010, 1.5.1 and its note.

- c. admonishing the faithful to resist the temptation to form collections of relics; in the past this practice has had some deplorable consequences;¹⁴⁸⁷ and
 - d. preventing any possibility of fraud, trafficking, or superstition.¹⁴⁸⁸
- 13.16.5 The various forms of popular veneration of the relics of the saints, such as kissing, decorations with lights and flowers, bearing them in processions, in no way exclude the possibility of taking the relics of the saints to the sick and dying, to comfort them or use the intercession of the saint to ask for healing. Such should be conducted with great dignity and be motivated by faith.¹⁴⁸⁹
- 13.16.6 The relics of the saints should not be exposed on the *mensa* of the altar, since this is reserved for the Body and Blood of the King of Martyrs.¹⁴⁹⁰
- 13.16.7 It is absolutely forbidden to sell sacred relics. Relics of great significance and other relics honored with great reverence by the people cannot be alienated validly in any manner or transferred permanently without the permission of the Apostolic See.¹⁴⁹¹

Sacred Images

- 13.17.1 The practice of displaying sacred images in churches for the reverence of the faithful is to remain in effect. Nevertheless, they are to be exhibited in moderate number and in suitable order so that the Christian people are not confused nor occasion given for inappropriate devotion.¹⁴⁹²
- 13.17.2 If they are in need of repair, precious images, that is, those distinguished by age, art, or veneration, which are exhibited in churches or oratories for the reverence of the faithful are never to be restored without the written permission of the ordinary; he is to consult experts before he grants permission.¹⁴⁹³

¹⁴⁸⁷ DPP 237. Individuals who no longer wish to have the care of sacred relics in their possession may donate them to a parish church or to the Archives of the Archdiocese of Washington, where they are certain to receive appropriate care. See also ADW, Liturgical Norms and Policies, 2010, 1.5.3-4.

¹⁴⁸⁸ DPP 237, cf. CIC can. 1190 §§1-2.

¹⁴⁸⁹ DPP 237.

¹⁴⁹⁰ DPP 237, 244. Cf. Saint Ambrose, *Epistula* 77; DCA, ch. 4, 10. See also ADW, Liturgical Norms and Policies, 2010, 13.17.5.

¹⁴⁹¹ CIC can. 1190 §§1-2. See also ADW, Liturgical Norms and Policies, 2010, 1.5.1.

¹⁴⁹² CIC can. 1188.

¹⁴⁹³ CIC can. 1189. See also ADW, Liturgical Norms and Policies, 2010, 1.5.1-8.

- 13.17.3 Sacred images of great significance and other images honored with great reverence by the people cannot be alienated validly in any manner or transferred permanently without the permission of the Apostolic See.¹⁴⁹⁴
- 13.17.4 The Church blesses sacred images because of their cultic significance. This is especially true of the images of the saints which are destined for public veneration, when she prays that, guided by a particular saint, “we may progress in following the footsteps of Christ, so that the perfect man may be formed in us to the full measure of Christ.”¹⁴⁹⁵
- 13.17.5 The Church has published norms for the exposition of sacred images in churches and other sacred places which are to be diligently observed. No statue or image is to be exposed on the *mensa* of the altar.¹⁴⁹⁶
- 13.17.6 Scapulars and medals can be blessed in accordance with the provisions of the Book of Blessings.¹⁴⁹⁷

Processions

- 13.18.1 The practice of having processions on parish property for the Solemnity of the Body and Blood of the Lord, the Mass of the Lord’s Supper on Holy Thursday, the Way of the Cross, and other occasions should be preserved.¹⁴⁹⁸

Novenas

- 13.19.1 Novenas are also encouraged, especially those leading up to liturgical solemnities (e.g., Pentecost or Christmas), as are vigils in preparation for great feasts.¹⁴⁹⁹

Popular Devotions and Private Revelation

- 13.20.1 Some popular devotions are based on private revelations rather than public revelation. The Church distinguishes between public revelation, which God has given to the Church as a whole and to which all the faithful are bound,

¹⁴⁹⁴ CIC can. 1190 §3. See also ADW, Liturgical Norms and Policies, 2010, 1.5.1-8.

¹⁴⁹⁵ DPP 244; cf. BB ch. 36.

¹⁴⁹⁶ DPP 244; cf. CIC can. 1188; GIRM 318. See also ADW, Liturgical Norms and Policies, 2010, 13.16.6.

¹⁴⁹⁷ BB ch. 44-46.

¹⁴⁹⁸ AS 153. See also ADW, Liturgical Norms and Policies, 2010, 6.46.11.

¹⁴⁹⁹ AS 153.

and private revelations, which God has given to a particular individual or group and which place no obligation on the rest of the Church.¹⁵⁰⁰

- 13.20.2 The term public revelation refers to the revealing action of God directed to humanity as a whole and which finds its literary expression in the Old and New Testaments. It is called revelation because in it God gradually made himself known to men, to the point of becoming man himself, in order to draw to himself the whole world and unite it with himself through his incarnate Son, Jesus Christ.¹⁵⁰¹
- 13.20.3 Public revelation has been transmitted in Sacred Scripture and in Sacred Tradition, which together “form one sacred deposit of the word of God, committed to the Church.” This is the revelation that was given to the entire Church and that must be received in faith by all the People of God. It is complete in itself and does not need to be supplemented by later revelations. “In Christ, God has said everything, that is, he has revealed himself completely, and therefore revelation came to an end with the fulfillment of the mystery of Christ as enunciated in the New Testament.” The Fathers of the Second Vatican Council affirmed, “we now await no further new public revelation before the glorious manifestation of our Lord Jesus Christ.”¹⁵⁰²
- 13.20.4 Private revelations refer “to all the visions and revelations which have taken place since the completion of the New Testament.” A vision or any other kind of miraculous communication from God or from Mary or another saint falls into this category. Private revelations are given to an individual or small group, not to the Church as a whole. Consequently, while specific commands may be directed to an individual or small group, no obligation of assent of Catholic faith is placed on the Church as a whole. “Even when a ‘private revelation’ has spread to the entire world ... and has been recognized in the liturgical calendar, the Church does not make mandatory the acceptance either of the original story or of particular forms of piety springing from it.” Private revelations do not have the same authority as public revelation. Public revelation “demands faith; in it in fact God himself speaks to us through human words and the mediation of the living community of the Church.” Private revelations do not demand faith on the part of the Church as a whole because such revelations do not belong “to the deposit of the faith.

¹⁵⁰⁰ CDW, Popular Devotional Practices: Basic Questions and Answers, 12 November 2003, 9.

¹⁵⁰¹ CDW, Popular Devotional Practices: Basic Questions and Answers, 12 November 2003, 9; cf. CDF, Message of Fatima, 120.

¹⁵⁰² CDW, Popular Devotional Practices: Basic Questions and Answers, 12 November 2003, 9; cf. DV 4, 10; CDF, Message of Fatima, 120; CCC 66.

- It is not their role to improve or complete Christ's definitive revelation, but to help [people] live more fully by it in a certain period of history."¹⁵⁰³
- 13.20.5 The role of private revelations is to help people to enter more deeply into the faith that has been revealed publicly. Private revelations are thus in service to the faith, which is based on public revelation. Private revelations are "a help to this faith and shows its credibility precisely by leading [one] back to the definitive public revelation."¹⁵⁰⁴
- 13.20.6 Private revelations are always to be judged by their conformity to public revelation, particularly to the Sacred Scriptures, and not the other way around. As public revelation is centered on Christ, any genuine private revelation will make Christ known and will help bring people to Christ. The criterion for the truth and value of a private revelation is therefore its orientation to Christ himself. When it leads us away from him, when it becomes independent of him or even presents itself as another and better plan of salvation, more important than the Gospel, then it certainly does not come from the Holy Spirit, who guides us more deeply into the Gospel and not away from it.¹⁵⁰⁵
- 13.20.7 Although not every popular devotion has its origin in a private revelation, every popular devotion must be in conformity with the faith of the Church based on public revelation and must ultimately be centered on Christ.¹⁵⁰⁶

¹⁵⁰³ CDW, *Popular Devotional Practices: Basic Questions and Answers*, 12 November 2003, 9; cf. CDF, *Message of Fatima*, 121. The CDF quotes the statement from the treatise by Cardinal Prospero Lambertini (later Pope Benedict XIV) regarding private revelation: "An assent of Catholic faith is not due to revelations approved in this way; it is not even possible. These revelations seek rather an assent of human faith in keeping with the requirements of prudence, which puts them before us as probable and credible to piety." See also NCCB, *Pastoral letter Behold Your Mother: Woman of Faith*, 21 November 1973, 100; CCC 67.

¹⁵⁰⁴ CDW, *Popular Devotional Practices: Basic Questions and Answers*, 12 November 2003, 9; cf. CDF, *Message of Fatima*, 121.

¹⁵⁰⁵ CDW, *Popular Devotional Practices: Basic Questions and Answers*, 12 November 2003, 10; cf. CDF, *Message of Fatima*, 121. See CCC 67: "Christian faith cannot accept 'revelations' that claim to surpass or correct the Revelation of which Christ is the fulfillment, as is the case in certain non-Christian religions and also in certain recent sects which base themselves on such 'revelations.'"

¹⁵⁰⁶ CDW, *Popular Devotional Practices: Basic Questions and Answers*, 12 November 2003, 10.