

Tridentine Community News

November 22, 2009

Clarity in Blessings: A Comparison of the Extraordinary and Ordinary Forms of the Roman Ritual – Part 1 of 3

Which of the following fits your concept of a blessing better?

Extraordinary Form

✠. Our help is in the name of the Lord.

℟. Who made heaven and earth.

✠. The Lord be with you.

℟. And with your spirit.

Let us pray.

O God, whose word suffices to make all things holy, pour out Thy blessing ✠ on this object (these objects); and grant that anyone who uses it (them) with grateful heart and in keeping with Thy law and will, may receive from Thee, its (their) Maker, health in body and protection of soul by calling on Thy holy name. Through Christ our Lord.

℟. Amen.

[It (they) is (are) sprinkled with Holy Water.]

Ordinary Form

✠. Lord, show us your mercy and love.

℟. And grant us your salvation.

[A short passage of sacred Scripture is read.]

✠. May the merciful Lord enliven and strengthen by his blessing ✠ the spirit of devotion and filial love in your hearts, so that you may walk blamelessly through this life and happily reach life everlasting.

℟. Amen.

The former is the Blessing of All Things from the 1961 edition of the Extraordinary Form *Rituale Romanum*. The latter is the counterpart Blessing of Religious Articles from the 1989 edition of the Book of Blessings, the English edition of the *De Benedictionibus* volume of the Ordinary Form Roman Ritual. [There is no general blessing of non-religious articles in the latter, – an unfortunate omission.]

You would not be the only person to be confused by the second form. Where in that prayer is the religious article actually blessed? In fairness, the Book of Blessings also includes this simpler, yet more specific “short formula” to be used by a priest or deacon “in special circumstances”:

✠. May this (name of article) and the one who uses it be blessed, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, ✠ and of the Holy Spirit.

℟. Amen.

Next, let’s compare the Blessing of Automobiles:

Extraordinary Form

✠. Our help is in the name of the Lord.

℟. Who made heaven and earth.

✠. The Lord be with you.

℟. And with your spirit.

Let us pray.

Graciously hearken to our prayers, O Lord God, and with Thy holy hand bless ✠ this vehicle. Appoint as its custodians Thy holy Angels, ever to guard and keep safe from all danger them that ride herein. And as by Thy Levite, Philip, Thou didst bestow faith and grace upon the Ethiopian, seated in his carriage, and reading Holy Writ, so likewise show the way of salvation to Thy servants that, strengthened by Thy grace and constantly intent upon good works, they may attain, after the vicissitudes of this life, the happiness of everlasting life. Through Christ our Lord.

℟. Amen.

[It is then sprinkled with Holy Water.]

Ordinary Form

✠. Our help is in the name of the Lord.

℟. Who made heaven and earth.

[A short passage of sacred Scripture is read.]

✠. All-powerful God, Creator of heaven and earth, in the rich depths of your wisdom, you have empowered us to produce great and beautiful works. Grant, we pray, that those who use this vehicle may travel safely, with care for the safety of others. Whether they travel for business or pleasure, let them always find Christ to be the companion of their journey, who lives and reigns with you for ever and ever.

℟. Amen.

The latter seems banal and trite in comparison with the former. It quasi-blesses the people using the object, without blessing the object itself. The users of an object, if mentioned at all, should be the secondary, not primary thing being blessed. What we presently have might more accurately be called a “Blessing of Motorists”.

Holy Water

The Book of Blessings has three options for the Blessing of Holy Water. None of the three bless the water itself. The first two are quasi-blessings of the people who use the Holy Water. The only phrase in the third option that resembles a blessing is this declarative statement: “Let this water call to mind our baptism into Christ, who has redeemed us by his death and resurrection.” There is no exorcism or admixture of salt, nor is there an exorcism of the water. In contrast, the Extraordinary Form Blessing of Holy Water incorporates an exorcism of salt, an exorcism of the water, and multiple signs of the Cross during prayers that clearly purify and bless the Holy Water.

Salt itself is not explicitly referenced in the Book of Blessings. The index at the back of the book refers the reader looking for the Blessing of Salt to the general Blessing of Food. Despite its purifying properties, salt no longer seems to have a role in the blessings, or in the Sacrament of Baptism, of the Ordinary Form.