



*From the Pastor
19th Sunday in
Ordinary Time - A
August 13, 2023*

THE POWER OF SIGNS & SYMBOLS.

In reflection #8 on
*Pope Francis' 2022
Apostolic Letter,
'Desiderio Desideravi,'*
Latin for *Jesus' pre-
Last Supper* words: "*I
have earnestly desired*

[to eat this Passover with you before I suffer.] [Luke 22:15],
we reflect on the awesome power that signs and
symbols can have in helping us to understand
and express the realities made present to us in
Sacred Liturgy. For past articles in this series on
the three-year ***National Eucharistic Revival*** and
the ***Holy Father's Letter***, visit our ***Parish*** website.

'Desiderio Desideravi' draws an endearing image
of how powerful - and helpful - sacred signs and
symbols can be by those who understand and
properly use them. The ***Holy Father*** refers to a
heartwarming action I have personally seen
numerous times over the years. A young child
enters church, attentively watching mom or dad
'bless' themselves by making a ***Sign of the Cross***
on themselves after dipping their finger into a
Holy Water Stoop. The parent then helps the
child to dip his or her finger into the ***Holy Water
Stoop***, and with their large hand, guides the child
in blessing him or herself. Once the child 'gets it,'
he or she wants to do it again and again - without
any help: the 'sign' or 'symbol' has been
'internalized.' Perhaps not its meaning; that will
take time - but the 'process' has begun!

Over time, those who 'know' the value of that
'sign,' will start to make it - almost subconsciously
- to express prayerful gratitude, as when they
receive good news or great gifts - or to seek
divine help during traumatic or difficult times.
When celebrating the ***Sacrament of the Sick*** [aka:
the ***Anointing of the Sick***] - even the most
physically challenged rally their strength to
'bless' themselves. I have been amazed by those
who, even in advanced stages of dementia or
other similar diseases, will fold their hands in
prayer when they see my ***Roman Collar*** and try
to 'bless' themselves as I make the ***Sign of the
Cross*** over them. What awesome power we
Catholics have available to us through our
Sacramental Signs and ***Symbols***!

AVOID MINDLESSNESS. The death knell of
sacred signs or symbols, religious rites or rituals,
is the mindless, repetition of liturgical actions or
words. Not that all of us, at all times, must fully
understand and totally comprehend the
meaning of what we do and why we do it. But if
we never stop learning about them or paying
attention to what we do as we do them, we rob
ourselves of the comfort and hope, insight and
inspiration offered through these actions.

NEVER ENDING FAITH FORMATION. Before
reflecting on the last section of the ***Pope's Letter***
on the ***'Art of Celebrating'*** - which will take weeks
to unpack - a timely reminder. The document
often reminds us to never stop deepening our
knowledge of and experience of the ***Rites*** of our
Faith. To help us do that, our ***Parish*** pays the
subscription fees so that all of us can log onto the
online ***Catholic*** formation website: ***FORMED***.
You will not be pestered for additional products
or pressured to sign up for other formats.

Here's how to enjoy presentations, lectures, talks
and updates about the ***holy Mass*** and other
Sacred Rites - as well as orthodox, wholesome,
timely ***Catholic*** adult documentaries and movies
- and a host of programs appropriate even for
children: Log onto formed.org/signup. Search
for our ***Parish*** by Zip Code: **08887** - and select our
Parish. Add your name and email ... it is that
simple! It is not too late to make the ***Sacramental***
series, ***'Presence: The Mystery of the Eucharist'***
this summer's 'reading' or, rather, 'watching!'
And on a rainy day, fire up a 'kid's show' so that
they, too, can deepen their ***Faith*** with ***Christian***
cartoons and other age-appropriate offerings.

Do you express your ***Faith*** by blessing yourself
with ***Holy Water*** upon entering church or when
sprinkled with it? Do you strike your breast in the
Confiteor to show your repentance? Do you
mark your forehead, lips and heart with a ***Sign of
the Cross*** to ask ***God*** to open your mind to
understand, lips to proclaim and heart to love the
Gospel? Do you bow in the ***Creed*** in humble
thanks to ***God*** who became one of us in the
Incarnation? Do you bow in reverence before
receiving the ***Body*** and ***Blood*** of ***Christ***? Do you
genuflect upon entering and leaving the church?

In His holy Name,

Very Rev. Thomas J. Serafin, VF, KCHS