

## Blessings

Note: Whenever I use **bold type** or underline, the emphasis is mine and not the emphasis of the source that I am quoting unless indicated otherwise.

**Q:** My question is as follows: Why do Catholics have things such as holy medals blessed by a priest? What is a blessing? (No name with question)

**A:** “Bless: to hallow or consecrate by religious rite; to invoke divine care for; to protect, preserve.”<sup>1</sup> **“Blessing means placing a thing or person under the care of God.** A liturgical blessing is one that uses a prescribed formula or ceremony, and is given by a (Catholic) priest. The simplest blessings are made with the Sign of the Cross, and sometimes are accompanied by the sprinkling of holy water. By the visible signs and formula of words of blessings, God’s benediction is invoked on persons, places, or things.”<sup>2</sup> “Benediction: From the Latin word benedicere, benediction is the general term for any kind of blessing.”<sup>3</sup>

“The Lord said to Abraham: I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you. I will make your name great so that you will be a blessing. **I will bless those who bless you** and curse those who curse you. All the communities of the earth shall find blessing in you.”<sup>4</sup> “But to you who hear I say, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, **bless those who curse you**, pray for those who mistreat you.”<sup>5</sup> **“Bless those who persecute [you], bless and do not curse them.”**<sup>6</sup> “Do not return evil for evil, or insult for insult; but, on the contrary, **a blessing, because to this you were called, that you might inherit a blessing.**”<sup>7</sup>

“Whether God blessed the people himself or through the ministry of those who acted in His name, His blessing was always a promise of divine help, a proclamation of His favor, a reassurance of His faithfulness to the covenant He had made with His people. When, in turn, others uttered blessings, they were offering praise to the one whose goodness and mercy they were proclaiming. **Whoever blesses others in God’s name invokes the divine help upon individuals or upon an assembled people.** Blessings therefore refer first and foremost to God, whose majesty and goodness they extol, and since they indicate the communication of God’s favor, they also involve human beings, whom He governs and in His providence protects. Further, blessings apply to other created things through which, in their abundance and variety, God blesses human beings.”<sup>8</sup>

“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).”<sup>9</sup> “Every blessing praises God and prays for His gifts.”<sup>10</sup>

So, Catholics have things such as religious medals blessed to invoke God’s protection on the person who uses the medal and to praise God

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<sup>1</sup> Webster’s Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary, (1965), G. & C. Merriam Co., Springfield, MA., P. 90

<sup>2</sup> A Handbook of Catholic Sacramentals, ISBN: 0-87973-448-5, (1991), Ann Ball, Our Sunday Visitor, Inc., Huntington, IN., P. 25

<sup>3</sup> Our Sunday Visitor’s Catholic Encyclopedia, ISBN: 0-87973-669-0, (1998), Rev. Fr. Peter M.J. Stravinskias, Ph.D., S.T.D., - Editor, Our Sunday Visitor, Inc., Huntington, IN., P. 137

<sup>4</sup> The New American Bible – St. Joseph Edition, (1970), Catholic Book Publishing Co., New York, NY., Gen. 12:2-3, P.P. 14-15

<sup>5</sup> The New American Bible – St. Joseph Edition, (1970), Catholic Book Publishing Co., New York, NY., Luke 6:27-28, P. 109

<sup>6</sup> The New American Bible – St. Joseph Edition, (1970), Catholic Book Publishing Co., New York, NY., Rom. 12:14, P. 237

<sup>7</sup> The New American Bible – St. Joseph Edition, (1970), Catholic Book Publishing Co., New York, NY., 1 Pet. 3:9, P. 366

<sup>8</sup> Book of Blessings, ISBN: 0814620892, (1992), The Liturgical Press, Collegeville, MN., Paragraphs 6-7, P.P. xxii-xxiii

<sup>9</sup> Catechism of the Catholic Church, ISBN: 0-932406-23-8, (1994), Apostolate for Family Consecration, Bloomington, OH., Paragraph 1669, P. 416

<sup>10</sup> Catechism of the Catholic Church, ISBN: 0-932406-23-8, (1994), Apostolate for Family Consecration, Bloomington, OH., Paragraph 1671, P. 416