

miracle all the more impressive, since one would expect the opposite effect. This first miracle of Elisha is the primary Scriptural basis for the sacramental use of blessed salt today, as the Roman Ritual indicates.

As a Catholic sacramental, salt blessed by the liturgical prayer of a priest may be used by itself, unmixed, as in exorcisms, and formerly in the exorcistic prayer at baptism, or it may be mixed with water to make holy water, as the Ritual prescribes (reminiscent of Elisha's miracle). In whichever form, it is intended to be an instrument of grace to preserve one from the corruption of evil occurring as sin sickness, demonic influence, or other manifestation.

As in the case of all sacramentals, its power comes not from the sign itself, but by means of the Church's official (liturgical, not private) prayer of blessing—a power the Church derives from Christ himself (see Matt. 16:19 and 18:18). As the Vatican II document on the Liturgy states (art. 61), both Sacraments and sacramentals sanctify us, not of themselves, but by power flowing from the redemptive act of Jesus, elicited by the Church's intercession to be directed through those external signs and elements. Hence sacramentals like blessed salt and holy water are not to be used superstitiously as having self-contained power, but as "focus-points" funneling one's faith toward Jesus, just as a flag is used as a "focus-point" of patriotism, or as handkerchiefs were used to focus faith for healing and deliverance by Paul (Acts 19:12).

Thus used non-superstitiously, modest amounts of salt may be sprinkled in one's bedroom, or across thresholds to prevent burglary, in cars for safety, etc. A few grains in drinking water or used in cooking or as food seasoning often bring astonishing spiritual and physical benefits, as I have personally witnessed many times. As with the use of Sacraments, much depends on the faith and devotion of the person using salt or any sacramental. This faith must be Jesus-centered, as was the faith of the blind man in John 9; he had faith in Jesus, not in the mud and spittle used by Jesus to heal him.

In light of this, we can see why Vatican II states that "there is hardly any proper use of material things which cannot thus be directed toward the sanctification of persons and the praise of God." (art. 61 of Liturgy document). Hence new sacramentals may also be added when rituals are revised (art. 79). Blessed salt is certainly not a new sacramental, but the Holy Spirit seems to be leading many to a new interest in its remarkable power as an instrument of grace and healing.

Any amount may be presented to a priest for his blessing, using the following official prayer from the Roman Ritual:

"Almighty God, we ask you to bless this salt, as once you blessed the salt scattered over the water by the prophet Elisha. Wherever this salt (and water) is sprinkled, drive away the power of evil, and protect us always by the presence of your Holy Spirit. Grant this  
*through Christ our Lord Amen*"