

St. Anthony of Padua R.C. Church

160 Court Street, Buffalo, New York 14202

TRADITIONALLY SPEAKING *by S. Casarotto, cs* 04/12/09

HOLY WATER

All ancient religions considered water as a sign of purification. Buddhists wash away their sins in the Ganges River and the Romans had water basins at the entrance of their temples.

The Church blesses the water during the Solemn Easter Vigil and used for Baptism of the new Christians. The congregation also renews the Baptismal vows, and the celebrant sprinkles the faithful with the new holy water. This ritual is observed every Sunday at the beginning of the mass

There are two texts for the liturgical sprinkling of water at the beginning of the Latin mass; *Vidi aquam* for the Easter Season and the *Asperges* for the rest of the year. The celebrant sprinkles holy water first on the ministers in the sanctuary and then on the faithful. It is unfortunate that in the revised order of the mass this ritual is over simplified or omitted altogether.

Vidi aquam

(I saw water coming out from the right side of the temple) refers to the fresh waters of the aqueduct of Jerusalem (see *Ez. 47,3*). Jesus presented Himself to the Samaritan woman as the "*Living Water*" and on the steps of the temple He cried out: "*He who is thirsty, let him come to me and drink.*" This ritual well describes the cleansing and regenerating waters of Baptism traditionally celebrated during the Easter Vigil.

Asperges me

(Sprinkle me, O Lord, with hyssop and I shall be clean. Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow) is a penitential ritual for the baptized who have stained their soul with sin. The words are taken from *Ps. 51* by King David who, reproached by the prophet, asked God's forgiveness for his adulterous conduct.

Holy Water is used in the administration of the Sacraments and as a sacramental. As such, it may also be used privately by the faithful in their homes. In the Latin or Western tradition, a holy water fountain is placed at the entrance of the church so that the faithful may purify (bless) themselves before they enter the sacred building and offer the Divine Sacrifice. The practice of keeping a little holy water fountain at home is commendable.