

Catholic 101, Holy Water

Water is a fascinating element. It can be hot or cold, salty or fresh, soft as mist or hard as ice. Water is a precious resource that no one can live without. But water can also kill and destroy. In our tradition water is absolutely essential because Christians are made, not born; made through the waters of baptism. Water becomes holy when it is sanctified (blessed) by a priest or deacon. The primary sacramental use of holy water is obviously for baptism. But holy water itself is a sacramental and is used to bless persons, animals, homes, things and places. It also is used to ward off evil. St. Theresa of Avila was a firm believer in the power of holy water, she wrote: *I know by frequent experience that there's nothing which puts the devils to flight like holy water.* Holy water is kept in every church, and is blessed every year at the Easter Vigil. Here at St. Pat's all the holy water is kept in the font which is seen and heard the minute you walk into the church. The water is there at the door (indeed of every Catholic church) so that as we enter to pray we can dip our fingers into the baptismal waters and bless ourselves in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit calling to mind that we are living our baptismal vows. Some people will take some of the holy water from church (which is encouraged) and pour it into a little holy water font in their home to bless themselves when they come home or before they go out. To properly dispose of holy water it should be poured into the earth, not down a sink.