

RITUALS: CELEBRATING WITH SYMBOLS

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF RITUALS

1. Rituals are symbols in action. Shaking hands, kissing, waving goodbye, and clapping hands at a performance are all examples of simple rituals. They are acted out, and they have meanings beyond what they express as literal actions. That is, applause is not just about making a noise; it celebrates a good performance.
2. Rituals are also actions that are often repeated. As symbols they are actions worth repeating because they are rich in meaning for us. For example, our birthday.
3. Rituals are celebrations. They are closely tied to the playful lively feelings behind celebrations. Even simple rituals, such as prayer, can be seen as celebrations. In prayer, we are taking time out to celebrate God's presence in our lives.
4. Rituals celebrate important events. For instance, rituals often formalise our "firsts". The first ball of the football season. For example, is always kicked by someone special. This is a "new-beginning" ritual. Did you celebrate your thirteenth birthday-your first day as a teenager- Baptism is yet another example. How?
5. Rituals often include words that underline the significance of the action. Drinking a toast is one example of words combining with a gesture to make a symbolic statement. Rituals are not always accompanied by words. In rituals, words are secondary and supportive to the action.
6. Rituals link people with their past. There are certain activities, which say, "my country". For example. Australia Day. As Catholics, we also have rituals- the sacraments that serve a similar purpose.
7. Rituals are also often, communal actions. That is, they involve a whole group of people all at once. An example of this is standing to sing or recite the national anthem of your country.
8. Rituals call for participation. Fans at a sporting event are not just spectators, they are actual participants. Sport analysts talk about "home crowd advantage" in most sports. What they actually mean is that an enthusiastic crowd can actually improve a team's performance.