Defining Ritual

Definitions:

“Rituals are enactments or systems of actions and beliefs that each have a beginning, a middle and an end.” Living Religion by Janet Morrissey, Peter Mudge, Adam Taylor, Greg Bailey, Paul Rule.

“In all religions people come together for different purposes, and when they do the words they say and the things they do, tend to follow a certain pattern each time. This formalised behaviour is what was mean by ritual” Finding a Way, Crotty et al.

“Sacred ritual is a private or community action which has a sacred purpose or meaning. That is, through this action, contact is set up between the ordinary world and the spiritual world.” New Studies in Religion, Terence Lovat and John McGrath

Religious Ritual: “The repetition of an ordered special kind of behaviour, particularly relating to the religious beliefs of the Community” My Story, Our Stories; Religion and Identity in Australia, Paul Rule and Kath Engebretson.

Types of Rituals:

Rites of Passage
Rites of Communication
Rites of Demarcation
Rites of Cleansing
Rites of Memorial
Rites of Personal Devotion
Rites of Public Worship

Common Features of Rituals:

Stories/beliefs behind the ritual
Structure
Symbols