

Sacraments

During the weekends we talk a lot about Sacraments and grace. As Catholics we sure seem to think the Sacraments are a really big deal.

And yes we do. It's impossible to minimize the important role of Sacraments in the life of the church in continuing the mission of Jesus. Aside from the specific sacraments, we should be able to know about the sacraments in general.

Why are sacraments so important? They sanctify us, build up the Body of Christ, and give glory to God.

I'll talk about sacraments in general and not so much about specific sacraments as we'll have sessions on each of them later in the year.

Definition

Visible sign of invisible reality

Instituted by Christ

to give Grace

Sign: Points to something else. Gives a representation of a reality that isn't easily sensed.

Sacraments appeal to our senses. Jesus by His presence in the world is the sign of the reality of the redemptive grace of God. We could see in Him through our senses the invisible God. Col 1:15

A sacrament requires visible sign and the invisible transcendent reality.

After the resurrection Jesus is no longer visible to us. After the resurrection the church takes on the visible role of God's continuing presence. The sacraments continue the Incarnation across all time. Spiritual <-> Physical. From Christ the church has a fundamental sacramental structure.

Sign: Let's delve a bit more into a sign. Stop sign is physical but it has no ability to change things. It points to a reality that we could get a ticket or be in an accident. There is a real danger there and the sign appeals to our sense about this reality.

Yet let's envision a hug. If we see a hug in a picture or in real life that hug is a visible sign of the invisible reality of affection or love. But a hug can actually affect and increase the reality of affection or love. The hug is more than a sign as it actually does something. Sacraments are more like a hug than a stop sign. . A birthday party celebrates a previous birth but it doesn't cause a birth to actually happen again. Sacraments actually do something. They are not merely symbolic or celebratory. The sacraments confer the grace that they signify. They are effective because in them Christ himself is at work: it is he who baptizes, he who acts in his sacraments.

We are physical people and we come to understand through our senses. The sacraments confer truths to us in ways that we can understand.

By Christ: Church continues the mission of Jesus by Sacraments. Jesus is the fundamental sacrament of the church.

Mystical Body of Christ. Church. Look at how Jesus is identified with the Mystical Body.

St Paul on the road to the road to Damascus. Saul, Saul why do you persecute me?

Grace: Sacraments are not symbolic. They do something. Something happens.

Grace: God shares His divine life. It's real.

We need grace to have eternal life. Known as sanctifying grace that we receive in baptism, reconciliation, and anointing sick. Actual Grace helps us to live a life of holiness and we receive this in confirmation, matrimony, holy orders, and most especially in the Eucharist.

Jesus did not leave us abandoned. He gave us the church to continue to be with us. Can we see why the sacraments are so important? It's a big part of how Jesus remains with us.

Holy Spirit: The sacraments are actions of the Holy Spirit at work in his Body, the Church. "Sacramental grace" is the grace of the Holy Spirit, given by Christ and proper to each sacrament. The fruit of the sacramental life is that the Spirit of adoption makes the **faithful partakers in the divine** nature

Word: You won't find the word sacrament in the Bible, but sacrament comes from the word that means mystery and you'll find mystery 27 times in the NT.

The church describes itself as a mystery showing its sacramental nature. We understand the church only as it relates to Christ. MOON. The Church "is the visible plan of God's love for humanity, She is the sacrament of the Holy Trinity's communion with men. The Church's first purpose is to be the sacrament of the inner union of men with God.

Sacraments: There are seven sacraments in the Catholic church. I'm going to give them to you in three groups.

Initiation

Baptism: Takes away original sin and enters the person into the family of God. 1st sacrament.

Confirmation: Strengthens your baptism to be able to bring God's beauty, goodness, and truth to others.

Eucharist: The sharing of Jesus's actual body, blood, soul, and divinity

Healing

Reconciliation: Restores the bruised or broken relationship with God. Absolution of sins.

Anointing Sick: Prepares a person for the end of earthly journey.

Service

Matrimony: The joining of one man and one woman in marriage

Holy Orders: Giving authority to teach, minister, and govern

Structure: All sacraments have three things that make up the sacrament. They are form, matter, and the minister.

Sacrament	Matter	Form	Minister
Baptism	Water	I baptize ...	Bishop, priest, deacon, or anyone (emergency)
Confirmation	Oils	Be sealed ...	Bishop (can be delegated to priest)
Eucharist	Bread & Wine	This is my body...	Bishop or priest
Reconciliation	Sins	Words of absolution	Bishop or priest
Anointing	Oil	Priest's prayer	Bishop or priest
Matrimony	Consent	Words of Consent	The Couple
Holy Orders	Laying Hands	Prayer by Bishop	Bishop

Marks: Baptism, Confirmation, Holy Orders.

Not the minister. The validity of a sacrament does not depend on the sanctity of the minister.

Sacraments from the words of the Early Church Fathers:

St Cyprian: In the saving sacraments, when God bestows his pardon, divine benefits are bestowed fully upon believers.

St Stephen: Whoever has been baptized in the name of Christ immediately receives the grace of Christ.

St Ephraim: By means of the oil, the Holy Spirit, impresses His seal upon the sheep. So the invisible seal of the Spirit is impressed on our bodies with the oil with which we were anointed in baptism whereby we bear His seal.

St Cyril of Jerusalem: He gives the wondrous and salvific seal at which demons tremble and angels recognize. The demons are put to flight and the angels gather about it. It is God's part to confer grace, but ours to accept it and guard it. It is freely given but should be guarded religiously.

St Cyril: Water flows around the outside but the Spirit baptizes also the soul within and that completely. Why should you marvel that the Holy Spirit enters into the inmost recesses of the soul?

Tertullian: When the soul is instructed by God, it is the flesh that makes it able to carry out that commission. The flesh then is washed so that the soul might be made clean. The flesh is anointed so that the soul may be dedicated to holiness. The flesh is shaded by the imposition of hands so that the soul may be illuminated by the Spirit. The flesh feeds on the body of Christ so that the soul may fatten on God.