

The Seven Sacraments of the Catholic Church

The Catholic Church has seven Sacraments instituted by Christ and entrusted to the Church. The seven sacraments are Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist, Penance, Anointing of the Sick, Holy Orders and Matrimony (C.C.C.1113). Baptism, Confirmation and the Eucharist are sacraments of initiation. Penance and Anointing of the Sick are sacraments of healing. Holy Orders and Matrimony are sacraments of service. God promised he would not leave us orphans (John 14:18) but would send the Holy Spirit to guide and protect us (John 15:26). The Sacraments are signs that actually convey God's grace and love to heal, feed, and strengthens us.

Sacraments of Initiation: Baptism, Confirmation and Holy Eucharist. The faithful are born anew by Baptism and the Sacrament of Confirmation strengthens him. In the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist, the faithful receives food for eternal life (C.C.C. # 1212).

1. **SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM:** (C.C.C. 1213-1284)

The Lord himself affirms that Baptism was necessary for salvation (C.C.C. 1257). "No one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit" (John 3:5). Jesus commissioned the Apostles to preach the Gospel to all nations and baptize, telling them, "Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved" (Mark 16:16). Baptism erases original sin (the sin imparted to all mankind by the Fall of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden) and personal sins (sins committed by the person prior to receiving the Sacrament if adults). Through Baptism we are freed from sin and reborn as sons of God. Holy Baptism is the basis of our whole Christian life, the gateway to life in the spirit, the door which gives us access to the other sacraments. Baptism is a sacrament of regeneration through water in the word. The rite of Baptism consists in immersing the candidate in water, or pouring water on the head, while pronouncing the invocation of the Most Holy Trinity: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit."Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you" (Mt 28:19-20).

2. **SACRAMENT OF CONFIRMATION:** (C.C.C. 1285-1321)

Confirmation is necessary for the completion of baptismal grace. The Sacrament of Confirmation confers special graces of the Holy Spirit upon the person being confirmed; just as such graces were granted to the Apostles on Pentecost. Like Baptism, it can only be performed once, and Confirmation increases and deepens all of the graces granted at Baptism. The rite of Confirmation is anointing the forehead of the baptized with sacred chrism together with the laying on of the bishop's hand and the words, "Be sealed with the Holy Spirit". Confirmation gives us a special strength of the Holy Spirit to spread and defend the faith by word and action as true witnesses of Christ, to confess the name of Christ boldly. The celebration of Confirmation during the Eucharist helps underline the unity of the sacraments of Christian initiation.

3. **SACRAMENT OF HOLY EURCHARIST:** (C.C.C. 1322-1419)

The Holy Eucharist completes Christian initiation. At the Last Supper, on the night Jesus was betrayed, our Savior instituted the Eucharist sacrifice of his Body and Blood. In Holy Communion we are eating the True Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. "Unless you eat my flesh and drink my blood you have no life within you" (John 6:53). It is a sacramental action of thanksgiving to God which constitutes the principal Christian liturgical celebration of and communion in the paschal mystery of Christ. The liturgical action called the Eucharist is also traditionally known as the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. The Sunday celebration of the Eucharist is at the heart of the Church's life. Those who receive Communion should be prepared to receive so great a gift. Fasting is required for one hour before receiving the Eucharist and one should be in a state of grace. The priest or minister offers the Eucharist to each person prepared to receive it by saying, "The Body of Christ" and the person responds by saying, "Amen".

The Sacraments of healing: Penance and Anointing of the sick.

4. SACRAMENT OF PENANCE/RECONCILIATION/CONFESSION: (C.C.C, 1422-1498)

The Sacrament of Penance is the conversion from sin and turning to God. Sin harms our relationship with God. Jesus gave his apostles power and authority to reconcile us to the Father. “Receive the Holy Spirit, whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained” (John 20:22-23). The acts of the penitent---contrition and the confession of sins with the prayer of absolution by the priest, constitute the essential elements of the Sacrament of Penance. Through confession to a priest, God’s minister, we have our sins forgiven, and we receive grace to help us resist future temptations. Sin harms our relationship with God. Conversion of heart and change of actions occurs with God’s grace.

5. SACRAMENT OF ANOINTING OF THE SICK: (C.C.C. 1499-1532)

This sacrament is known as the “sacrament of the dying” administered by a priest or bishop to a baptized person who begins to be in danger of death because of illness or old age, through prayer and the anointing of the body with the oil of the sick. The priest lays his hands on the head of the sick person and anoints with the blessed Oil of the Sick with these words, “Through this holy anointing may the Lord in his love and mercy help you with the grace of the Holy Spirit. May the Lord who frees you from sin save you and raise you up.” (C.C.C. 1513). The proper effects of the sacrament include a special grace of healing and comfort to the Christian who is suffering the infirmities of serious illness or old age, and the forgiving of the person’s sins. The Sacrament may be repeated if the sick person recovers after the anointing and becomes sick again. The Church offers the dying Penance, Anointing of the Sick and the Eucharist as food for their journey at the end of life to prepare for heaven. These sacraments are very powerful to the Catholic faith.

The Sacraments of at the service of communion: Holy Orders and Matrimony

These two sacraments are directed towards the salvation of others; if they contribute as well to personal salvation, it is through service to others that they do so. They confer a particular mission in the Church and serve to build up the People of God.

6. SACRAMENT OF HOLY ORDERS: (C.C.C. 1536-1600)

The Sacrament of Apostolic Ministry by which the mission entrusted by Christ to his Apostles continues to be exercised in the Church through the laying on of hands. This sacrament has three distinct degrees or “orders”: deacon, priest, and bishop. All three confer a permanent sacramental character. Those who receive the sacrament of Holy Orders are consecrated in Christ’s name “to feed the Church by the word and grace of God.”

7. SACRAMENT OF MATRIMONY: (C.C.C. 1601-1666)

The Sacrament of marriage is a covenant between a man and woman. When validly contracted between two baptized people, marriage is a sacrament presided by a priest. A consummated marriage is permanent, only death can break it (Mark 10:1-12). This holy union is a living symbol of the unbreakable relationship between Christ and his Church (Eph. 5:21-33). The celebration of marriage is a liturgical act held at church. One of the Nuptial Blessings in the liturgical celebration says, “Father, you made the union of man and wife so holy a mystery that it symbolizes the marriage of Christ and his Church.”