

The SEVEN SACRAMENTS of the Catholic Church



A sacrament is a festive action in which Christians assemble to celebrate their lived experience and to call to heart their common story. The action is a symbol of God's care for us in Christ. Enacting the symbol brings us closer to one another in the Church to the Lord who is there for us.

*Tad W. Guzie, **The Book of Sacramental Basics**, Paulist Press 1981.*

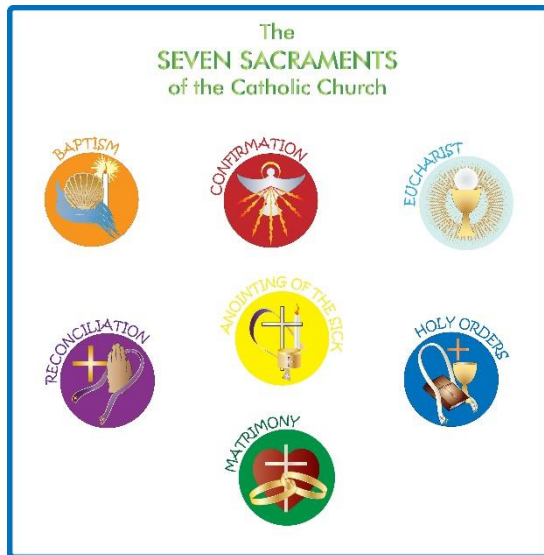




THE BIBLE AND SACRAMENTS.

Catholics have **seven Sacraments** which all have a biblical basis.

Sacraments are divided into three groups to express their purpose, comprising those of *initiation*, *service* and *healing*.



Sacraments of Christian Initiation

Baptism
Confirmation
Holy Eucharist

Sacraments at the Service of Communion

Marriage
Holy Orders

Sacraments of Healing

Reconciliation
Anointing of the Sick

The purpose of the seven Sacraments is to enrich our Christian faith and spiritual life, to build up and affirm the body of Christ, to praise and worship God, and to practice compassion and charity to all whom we meet.

Since Sacraments are also signs, they have a teaching function. They not only assume or invite faith, but by their words, actions and intentions, they nourish, strengthen, and express our faith visibly.

All celebrations of the Sacraments include the proclaiming of Scripture, and so the receiving of the Sacrament is in response to God's invitation within his word. It is from the hearing of the word of God that the dynamic work of the Holy Spirit flows out upon the Church, and upon each one of the baptized or confirmed, to inspire us to serve God throughout our lives.

All seven Sacraments have a number of other common elements:

1. They are places of encounter - between us and God, and us and the rest of the world.
2. They point to God's saving presence, and to Jesus' love for us within the family of God.
3. They point towards a deeper meaning and purpose than what they immediately reveal.
4. They are mediated to us by persons, places and things.
5. They involve and inspire transformation in, and for, individuals and communities.





INITIATION: BAPTISM AND KEY BIBLE TEXTS.

John 3:5

Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. (ESV)

Baptism enables entry into the Church and freedom from Original Sin. We usually receive this Sacrament as a baby unless we become a member of the Church as an adult, when we receive all three Sacraments of Initiation at the celebration of the Easter Vigil.

In the Early Church, baptism became a powerful set of symbolic ritual actions initiating new believers into a radically different view of the world and themselves. It gave them a profound sense of belonging to Jesus and to his way of life.

Baptism is pre-figured in the Old Testament through the saving of Noah and his family in the Ark during the Flood in **Genesis 7:12-23**. And, through Moses' crossing of the Red Sea during the Exodus, liberating Israel from Egyptian slavery for the Promised Land in **Exodus 14:1-22**.

Matthew 3:13-17

The Baptism of Jesus

Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John, to be baptized by him. John would have prevented him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" But Jesus answered him, "Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then he consented. And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him; and behold, a voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased."

Matthew 28:18-20

And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 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. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

1 Peter 3:21-22

Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to him.





INITIATION: CONFIRMATION AND KEY BIBLE TEXTS.

John 3:3-5

Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." Nicodemus said to him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?" Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. (ESV)

Confirmation enables Catholics to be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit by the bishop, and so strengthened in our Christian life.

Confirmation celebrates the fullness of the Holy Spirit in the Church. The Spirit of Jesus, the same Spirit that transformed the apostles, comes upon the members of the Church. Confirmation seals believers in the Spirit, anointing them and empowering them to carry on the mission of Christ.

In the Old Testament, the hands were used to call down a blessing on specially chosen people such as in Genesis **48:13-16**, and to designate individuals for a special role as in **Numbers 8:10**. Anointing with oil, especially perfumed oil, was one of the rituals of celebration of the Old Covenant in **Amos 6:6**. There were also prophecies of a future outpouring of the Holy Spirit, such as that of **Joel 2:28** and the prophet Isaiah.

Isaiah 11:2

And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him,
the Spirit of wisdom and understanding,
the Spirit of counsel and might,
the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord.

Acts 2:4

And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.

Acts 8:14-17

Now when the apostles at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent to them Peter and John, who came down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit, for he had not yet fallen on any of them, but they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they laid their hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit.





INITIATION: HOLY EUCHARIST AND KEY BIBLE TEXTS.

John 6:51

I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh. (ESV)

Holy Eucharist also known as Mass or Holy Communion is the central focus of our Catholic life from which we draw sustenance week by week. It unites receiving and giving, contemplation and action, gathering and sending. It reveals to us our own inner mystery, who we truly are.

Holy Eucharist is Christ's body and blood given to us as our spiritual food and in memory of his death on the cross for us. Through Jesus we are nourished by Word and Sacrament.

The celebration of the Sacrament of First Holy Communion is received from about 7 years old unless we become a member of the Church as an adult.

In **Exodus 12:1-22**, the Israelites, to avoid the slaying of their firstborn by the "Angel of Death", were commanded by God to take an unblemished male lamb and slaughter it. Then they had to apply its blood to the two doorposts, and the lintels of every household and to eat the Lamb as well.

Matthew 26:26-29

Institution of the Lord's Supper (See also Luke 22:14-20.)

Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is my body." And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, "Drink of it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom."

Acts 2:42 - The Fellowship of the Believers

And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

1 Corinthians 11:23-27

For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.





SERVICE: MARRIAGE AND KEY BIBLE TEXTS.

Mark 10:9

What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate. (ESV)

Marriage enables the sacramental union between a man and a woman until death. The call to marriage and the desire for this relationship are written in the very nature of man and woman as they came from the hand of God.

Sacred Scripture begins with the creation of man and woman in the image and likeness of God and concludes with a vision of "the wedding-feast of the Lamb" in Revelation 19: 7; 9.

According to the Bible, God instituted marriage as the pinnacle of creation. On the sixth day, in the first creation story, in **Genesis 1:27-28a** it tells us:

So God created man in his own image,
in the image of God he created him;
male and female he created them.

And God blessed them. And God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth...'

Genesis 2:18

Then the Lord God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him."

Genesis 2:24

Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.

Matthew 19:6

So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.

Ephesians 5: 31-33

Therefore, a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.





SERVICE: HOLY ORDERS AND KEY BIBLE TEXTS.

Acts 13:2-3

While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off. (ESV)

Holy Orders are the rites where disciples of Jesus are consecrated to the service of the Church as Bishops, Priests and Deacons. The Bishops serve the unity of their parishes and keep their Diocese in unity with the Pope and the world College of Bishops. The priests minister to the people of their parish and collaborate with their fellow priests in unity with their Bishop. The Deacons, through their service of preaching and charity, serve the life of the parishes and the diocese.

Priests are at the service of the whole communion of people: at the local, regional and universal levels of the church. They are central to the apostolic witness of the church to the world and always act in Christ's name.

Everything that the priesthood of the Old Covenant pre-figured finds its fulfillment in Christ Jesus. Thus, in the Letter to the **Hebrews 5:5-6**, it quotes **Psalm 110:4** that Jesus is a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek of old. These words were written long after the establishment of the Levitical priesthood in the Old Testament. God is saying that there will be a re-establishment of the priesthood prior to Aaron and the Levites.

These prefigurations reach their fulfillment in Christ, beginning in the Upper Room in **Matthew 26:26-28**. Here, Jesus begins his priestly act of self-sacrifice under the signs of bread and wine, of which he blesses and says, "Take, eat; this is my body." And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, "Drink of it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins." His body is then given and his blood shed on Calvary, thus continuing his once-and-for-all sacrifice, and continuing his priesthood forever, in heavenly glory.

Acts 6:3-6

Therefore, brothers and sisters, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty. But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word." And what they said pleased the whole gathering, and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolaus, a proselyte of Antioch. These they set before the apostles, and they prayed and laid their hands on them.

2 Timothy 1:6-7

... I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands, for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.





HEALING: RECONCILIATION AND KEY BIBLE TEXTS.

John 20: 23

“If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld.” (ESV)

Reconciliation also known as *Confession* is the recounting of sins to a priest for healing and absolution. Catholics go to Reconciliation or Confession before they are allowed to take Holy Communion for the first time.

Forgiveness of sin is central to the Christian message. Reconciliation of men and women with God and each other is the fundamental ministry entrusted to the Church.

Forgiveness and reconciliation were central to Jesus ministry, often accompanying healing. Jesus deliberately passes on this ministry of forgiveness to his disciples. In Luke 15:11-24 he describes the process of reconciliation and penance in the *Parable of the Prodigal Son*.

After the Fall in the book of Genesis, God desired Adam and Eve to show sorrow and repentance by confessing their sins. God tries to draw out a confession from them when he calls to them: “Where are you?” in Genesis 3:9. This is not a question of physical location, but of spiritual condition.

God then uses his Old Testament priests as his instruments of reconciliation. In **Leviticus 4:35b** it says that ‘the priest shall make atonement for him for the sin which he has committed, and he shall be forgiven.’ We also read in **Numbers 5:5-7** a clear model of confession and reconciliation:

And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, “Speak to the people of Israel, when a man or woman commits any of the sins that people commit by breaking faith with the Lord, and that person realizes his guilt, he shall confess his sin that he has committed, And he shall make full restitution for his wrong, adding a fifth to it and giving it to him to whom he did the wrong.”

King David in **Psalms 51: 3** echoes our awareness of sin and our cry for forgiveness:

*For I know my transgressions,
and my sin is ever before me.*

John 20:19-23

On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being locked where the disciples were for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, “Peace be with you.” When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.” And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld.”





HEALING: ANOINTING of THE SICK AND KEY BIBLE TEXTS.

James 5:14-15

Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. (ESV)

Anointing of the Sick includes prayers for both the very ill, including those going for an operation where they are expected to recover, and for accompanying a dying person as they go to meet God.

Throughout his ministry, Jesus was always keen to include the excluded. This very often focused on taking up a position on behalf of the sick, being alongside the wounded (mentally and physically) and in challenging many of the purity laws in order to heal the vulnerable. While throughout the Old Testament, God helps us to understand what he will reveal fully in the New Testament regarding suffering and healing.

Job 19:25-26

For I know that my Redeemer lives,
and at the last he will stand upon the earth.
And after my skin has been thus destroyed,
yet in my flesh I shall see God...

Isaiah's prophecy about the forthcoming innocent 'Suffering Servant' in **Isaiah 53:3, 5, 12b** who will bring about salvation, underpins humanity's need for healing:

He was despised and rejected by men,
a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief;
and as one from whom men hide their faces
he was despised, and we esteemed him not...

...But he was pierced for our transgressions;
he was crushed for our iniquities;
upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace,
and with his wounds we are healed...

...he poured out his soul to death
and was numbered with the transgressors;
yet he bore the sin of many,
and makes intercession for the transgressors.

Mark 6.13

And they cast out many demons and anointed with oil many who were sick and healed them.

