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**The Seven Sacraments**

**Sacraments of Initiation**

1. **Baptism**
2. **Confirmation**
3. **Eucharist**

**Sacraments of Healing/Mercy**

1. **Confession**
2. **Anointing of the Sick**

 **Sacraments of Vocations**

1. **Matrimony**
2. **Holy Orders**

In *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* 1131:

“The sacraments are efficacious signs of grace, instituted by Christ, and entrusted to the Church, by which the divine life is dispensed to us. The visible rites by which the sacraments are celebrated signify and make present graces proper to each sacrament. They bear fruit in those who receive them with the required dispositions.”

In the *Baltimore Catechism,* the sacraments are defined as ”outward signs instituted by Christ to give us grace”.

There are **2 kinds of grace**

1. **Sanctifying grace**. We can receive sanctifying grace by good actions (random acts of kindness), prayer, practicing the virtues, and the gifts of the Holy Spirit, receiving the sacraments. Sanctifying grace can be lost by mortal sin.

**Mortal sin** is a sin that keeps us from getting into heaven. It destroys a life of grace in one’s soul. A sincere Confession can clean this up.

**A Venial sin** meets one or two of the criteria for Mortal sin.

**A Mortal Sin** meets all the following

a) is ***serious*** or gravely wrong,

b) is committed with ***full knowledge*** of what you are doing,

c) is ***chosen freely*** to commit the sin.

1. **Actual grace** is freely given by God. This helps us persevere in temptation, suffering, and illness. It helps us heal from sin.

Life is a journey. The sacraments help us stay faithful to God so we don’t lose our way. We receive graces and strength through receiving the sacraments.

Sacraments are not magic or automatically given out.

* They must be given by a qualified person
* The one receiving must be prepared and capable.

All sacraments have a material such as water, oil, bread, wine and an external act such as pouring, anointing, laying on of hands, singing or speaking sacred words, eating.

We, as Catholics, use all of our senses. We see our crucifix, statues, colors of the liturgy, smoke rising. We smell our incense, chrism oil. We taste our bread and wine. We feel the waters of baptism, the laying on of hands. We hear the bells, music, and scripture. This helps make things more real for us in Mass as we receive the Sacraments.

Sacraments of Initiation

Baptism

This is the one sacrament that all Christian denominations share in common. With baptism, all Christians are brothers and sisters in Christ. Any baptized person is a Christian.

 Baptism, Confirmation, and Holy Orders leave an indelible mark on your soul so these cannot be repeated or taken away. In the Nicene Creed we say we believe in “one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.” No need to be re-baptized, re-confirmed, or re-ordained.

Are you “born again”? We are “born again” in water and the Spirit and we become adopted children of God. John 3-7.

Baptism washes away ***original sin*** *(the sins of Adam and Eve).* Adam and Eve sinned when they disobeyed Garden of Eden. Think of Original sin as the birth of a newborn. The infant has no immunity against polio, measles, mumps, etc. until he/she receives their immunizations. Baptism rids us of Original Sin which is the first” immunization”.

Baptism gives you a ***sanctifying grace***, a special free gift from God.

As Catholics we baptize our infants. Parents want their children to receive salvation in Jesus Christ through the Church. The parents and godparents promise to raise their children in the Catholic Faith. Protestants often “dedicate” their babies during a church service, but Baptism for us brings us salvation and demonstrates the parents and godparents are committed to the Church.

Holy Eucharist

We believe the Eucharist is the body, blood, soul and divinity of our Savior, Jesus Christ. **It is the most important and central of all the sacraments** because we trulybelieve the consecrated bread and wine are actually the Presence of Christ in the Eucharist. This miracle occurs during the Eucharistic Prayer of the Mass. ***Transubstatiation* is the scholastic or theological word used to designate the unique changing of the Eucharistic bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ.**

This is as close to Christ as we can get. Receiving Communion is a sacred event. Only the ones who are united in this belief should receive.

Confirmation

This sacrament completes the process of initiation into the Christian community and matures the soul for your work ahead. You will become a grown up in the church. You are accepting responsibility for your faith and your own destiny of getting yourself and others into heaven.

At Confirmation the focus is on the Holy Spirit who ”confirmed” the Apostles at Pentecost. (Acts 2:1-4). The Holy Spirit gave the Apostles the courage to spread the word about Jesus. You will receive the Gifts of Holy Spirit at your Confirmation. Someday you will need to defend your faith just as the Apostles and other disciples or the Early Church. That is why we teach or review the basics of the Church during preparation for Confirmation.

Sacraments of Healing and Mercy

 Penance

We believe our soul is healed in the Sacrament of Penance also called Confession or Reconciliation. This heals our spiritual wounds called sin. Sin is like a bacteria or virus of the soul. When we sin, either small or big, we have infected our soul with germs. The longer we leave it untreated, the more it spreads in our soul and the souls of others. This infection harms and may even kill our life of grace and can keep us from heaven.

Jesus gave the Apostles authority to give the sacrament of Penance after His Resurrection. (John 20:22-23). Those ordained by the Apostles were in turn given authority to forgive sins “in the person of Christ**” In Persona Christi**.

We must confess all mortal sins to a priest. You should never receive the Eucharist with a mortal sin on your soul. This is disrespectful to the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist.

The ***Seal of Confession*** is an oath the priest takes at his ordination. He is bound to absolute secrecy and confidentially known to mankind. He must be willing to endure torture, prison, or even death never to tell anything told to him in the Confessional. In over 2000 years, no priest has ever revealed what has been revealed in Confession. Even immoral, unethical, and unscrupulous priests and popes, excommunicated priests, and priests who have left the priest hood have never revealed confessed sin. Priests have also been martyrs in their commitment to the Seal of Confession. This shows the strength of the Holy Spirit.

Anointing of the Sick

St. James’ Epistle is the biblical basis for this sacrament. (James 4:14).

Anointing of the Sick is for anyone who is very sick with or without the possibility of death. It offers prayers for possible recovery and strength to help the soul of the sick person as well as offers a special grace to calm the spirit. It absolves all of the sins that have not confessed. Chrism blessed during Holy Week is used to anoint the recipient.

 We also believe in *redemptive suffering* which means a person who is suffering can offer up personal pains, trials and tribulations with Christ on the Cross. Suffering is seen as being personally kissed and embraced by Jesus who suffered for us on the Cross.

Sacraments of Vocations

 Marriage

There is a difference between a legal or civil marriage and the Sacrament of Marriage. A civil marriage is seen as legal in the eyes of the government, but we see Marriage as a sacred commitment or covenant through God between and a man and a woman. This is a vocation. We are called by God to be married. The couple must see their marriage as permanent, faithful, and fruitful.

Holy Orders

Only **baptized men** can receive Holy Orders and they become a priest.

 A bishop is the highest level of Holy Orders. Bishops are in the **“fullness of the priesthood”** because they alone can confer all 7 sacraments. Priests cannot confer Confirmation unless given permission ahead of time, nor can they confer Holy Orders. Deacons can perform Baptism and Marriage without a Nuptial Mass. Priests must go to school for a long time--- up to 8 years.

 **Sacramentals**

 **Sacramentals are images and objects to help us pray which help us feel closer to God**. One example of a sacramental is the Holy Water in the font as we come into church. We dip our fingers in the Holy Water and make the Sign of the Cross. The Holy Water reminds us of our Baptism and the sign of the Cross reminds us of the Holy Trinity. **Water, oil, fire, smoke bread, wine, statues, holy cards, rosaries, crucifixes and other sacred images sacramental that bring our attention to God.** We use sacramentals to help us to remember God’s grace and feel closer to Him. We do not worship them.

Our sacramental help us pray, but we also use a kind of “Catholic sign language”. Making the sign of the cross, genuflecting as we enter and leave a pew, bowing or genuflecting in front of the Tabernacle, the sign of peace, crossing our forehead, lips and heart before hearing the Gospel are all our sign language. As Catholics we use actions as a kind of form of prayer. These are also signs of Reverence in our churches.