

The Seven Sacraments

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

The Latin word sacramentum means “a sign of the sacred.” The seven sacraments are ceremonies that point to what is sacred, significant and important for Christians. They are special occasions for experiencing God’s saving presence. That’s what theologians mean when they say that sacraments are at the same time signs and instruments of God’s grace.

THE SEVEN SACRAMENTS

1. Baptism
2. Confirmation
3. Reconciliation
4. Holy Eucharist
5. Matrimony
6. Holy Orders
7. Anointing of the Sick

Baptism

For Catholics, the Sacrament of Baptism is the first step in a lifelong journey of commitment and discipleship. Whether we are baptized as infants or adults, Baptism is the Church’s way of celebrating and enacting the embrace of God.

The fruits of this Sacrament are:

1. Remission of Original Sin.
2. Birth into the new life by which man becomes an adoptive son of the Father, a member of Christ, and a temple of the Holy Spirit.
3. Incorporation into the Church, the Body of Christ, and participation in the priesthood of Christ.
4. The imprinting, on the soul, of an indelible spiritual sign, the character, which consecrates the baptized person for Christian worship. Because of this character, Baptism cannot be repeated.

Confirmation

Confirmation is a Catholic Sacrament of mature Christian commitment and a deepening of baptismal gifts. It is one of the three Sacraments of Initiation for Catholics. It is most often associated with the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

The fruits of this Sacrament are:

1. An increase and deepening of baptismal grace.

2. A deepening of one's roots in the divine filiation, which makes one cry, "Abba, Father!"
3. A firming of one's unity with Christ.
4. An increase of the gifts of the Holy Spirit.
5. A strengthening of one's bond with the Church and closer association with her mission.
6. Special strength of the Holy Spirit to spread and defend the Faith by word and action as a true witnesses of Christ, to confess the name of Christ boldly, and to never be ashamed of the Cross.
7. The imprinting, as in Baptism, of a spiritual mark or indelible character on the Christian's soul. Because of this character, one can receive this Sacrament only once in one's life.

Reconciliation or Penance

The Catholic Sacrament of Reconciliation has three elements: conversion, confession and celebration. In it we find God's unconditional forgiveness; as a result we are called to forgive others.

The fruits of this Sacrament are:

1. Reconciliation with God: the penitent recovers sanctifying grace.
2. Reconciliation with the Church.
3. Remission of the eternal punishment incurred by mortal sins.
4. Remission, at least in part, of temporal punishments resulting from sin.
5. Peace and serenity of conscience, and spiritual consolation.
6. An increase of spiritual strength for the Christian battle.

Holy Eucharist

Catholics believe the Eucharist, or Communion, is both a sacrifice and a meal. We believe in the real presence of Jesus, who died for our sins. As we receive Christ's Body and Blood, we also are nourished spiritually and brought closer to God.

The fruits of this Sacrament are:

1. An increase in the communicant's union with Christ.
2. Forgiveness of venial sins.
3. Preservation from grave sins.
4. A strengthening of the bonds of charity between the communicant and Christ.
5. A strengthening of the unity of the Church as the Mystical Body of Christ.

Marriage or Matrimony

A public sign that one gives oneself totally to this other person. It is also a public statement about God: the loving union of husband and wife speaks of family values and also God's values.

The fruits of this Sacrament for the spouses are:

1. The grace to love each other with the love with which Christ has loved his Church.

2. A perfecting of their human love.
3. A strengthening of their indissoluble unity.
4. Sanctification on their way to Heaven.
5. The grace to “help one another to attain holiness in their married life and in welcoming and educating their children.”
6. An integration into God’s covenant with man: Authentic married love is caught up into divine love.

Holy Orders or Ordination

The priest being ordained vows to lead other Catholics by bringing them the sacraments (especially the Eucharist), by proclaiming the Gospel, and by providing other means to holiness.

The fruits of this Sacrament are:

1. The mission and faculty (“the sacred power”) to act in persona Christi.
2. Configuration to Christ as Priest, Teacher, and Pastor.
3. The imprinting, as in Baptism, of an indelible character that cannot be repeated or conferred temporarily.

Anointing of the Sick

Formerly known as Last Rites or Extreme Unction, it is a ritual of healing appropriate not only for physical but also for mental and spiritual sickness.

The fruits of this Sacrament are:

1. Unity with the Passion of Christ, for the sick person’s own good and that of the whole Church.
2. Strength, peace, and courage to endure as a Christian the sufferings of illness or old age.
3. Forgiveness of sins, if the sick person was not able to obtain it through the Sacrament of Penance.
4. Restoration of health, if it is conducive to the salvation of the soul.
5. Preparation for entering eternal life.