

A close-up photograph of water splashing, with numerous droplets captured in mid-air. The background is dark and out of focus, featuring warm, golden-brown bokeh lights from what appears to be a chandelier or similar light fixture. The water has a deep blue-green hue.

The Sacraments of Initiation

OCIA Class
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Recap About the Sacraments: What Comes to Mind?

- ❖ When you hear the word “Sacrament” what comes to your mind?
- ❖ What associations do you have?
- ❖ What captures your heart or imagination?



Sacraments: The Beating Heart of the Church and of our Life

- ❖ Evangelical foundations: Read Mark 7:32-35
- ❖ Four essential elements of a sacrament:
 - ❖ A specific outward, physical sign: water, oil, bread/wine, laying on of hands (“**matter**”);
 - ❖ Specific words (prayer) spoken (“**form**”);
 - ❖ Inward (invisible) **grace** flowing *from Christ* to the recipient *through the sign*;
 - ❖ Healing and/or internal change by receiving the grace of the sacrament in faith (**effect**).



Sacramental Healings in the Gospel (sign ⇔ grace ⇔ effects)

Gospel Story of Healing	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
Healing Simon Peter's Mother-in-Law	8:14-15	1:29-31	4:38-39	
Cleansing a Leper	8:1-4	1:40-45	5:12-16	
Healing the Centurion's Servant	8:5-13		7:1-10	
Healing the Paralytic	9:1-8	2:1-12	5:17-26	[cf. 5:1-18]
Restoring a Man's Withered Hand	12:9-14	3:1-6	6:6-11	
Healing a Woman's Hemorrhage	9:19-22	5:25-34	8:43-48	
Restoring Sight to Two Blind Men	9:27-31			
Healing the Canaanite Girl	15:21-28	7:24-30		
Healing the Deaf Mute		7:31-37		
Giving Sight to the Blind Man at Bethsaida		8:22-26		
Restoring a Woman Crippled for Eighteen Years			13:10-17	
Healing the Man with Dropsy			14:1-6	
Cleansing Ten Men of Leprosy			17:11-19	
Healing the Blind Man (or 2 Men) at Jericho	20:29-34	10:46-52	18:35-43	[cf. 9:1-41]
Healing the Royal Official's Son at Cana				4:46-54
Healing the Man at the Pool of Bethesda				5:2-47



What is a Sacrament of the Church? (words for a mystery)

- ❖ Classic definition: “a sign of a holy thing that makes men holy” (Aquinas, ST III.60.2)
- ❖ Simple definition: a visible sign through which we can enter into an invisible/supernatural reality of salvation (Greek: *mysterion*)
- ❖ Detailed definition: A Sacrament is an *efficacious* outward/physical/visible sign of inward/invisible grace, instituted by Christ and entrusted to the Church, which *makes present what it signifies*, and by which divine life (grace) is dispensed to us through the work of the Holy Spirit (cf. CCC #1131)
- ❖ *Sacramentum* (Latin): **OATH**; Sheva (Hebrew): 7 or OATH



Sacraments in the Center of Faith-Life in the Early Church

- ❖ *“Gather together each Sunday, break bread and give thanks, first confessing your sins, that your sacrifice may be pure.”* (Didache, 1st Century AD)
- ❖ *“They [the Gnostics] abstain from the Eucharist and from prayer, because they do not confess that the Eucharist is the flesh of our Savior Jesus Christ.”* (St. Ignatius of Antioch, c. 110 AD)
- ❖ *“So also with us, the unction [of Confirmation] runs on the body and profits us spiritually.”* (Tertullian, 203 AD)
- ❖ *“Water [...] touches the body and cleanses the soul.”* (St. Augustine, Tractate 80, c. 410 AD)



The Catholic Lens to Everything: A Sacramental Worldview

- ❖ The “**Via Antiqua**” (old way of knowing): Supernatural reality is united with the natural/material reality (Gr: *syn-bolon*)
- ❖ The “**Via Moderna**” (starting in the Renaissance): The supernatural is first separated from the natural and later it disappears (materialism/atheism)
- ❖ Separation of theology & philosophy, faith & reason, logic & science



The “Sacramental Economy” of Life-Giving Grace

The Church’s 7 Sacraments
 (“Sacred Mysteries” Celebrated in Liturgy)



- * These Sacraments confer an un-erasable mark/character (of Christ) on the soul
- ❖ The 7 Sacraments are not the only sources of God’s grace, but they are the most effective and necessary founts of our Salvation (special sacramental grace)
- ❖ The Sacraments are BY the Church but also FOR the Church (make the Church)



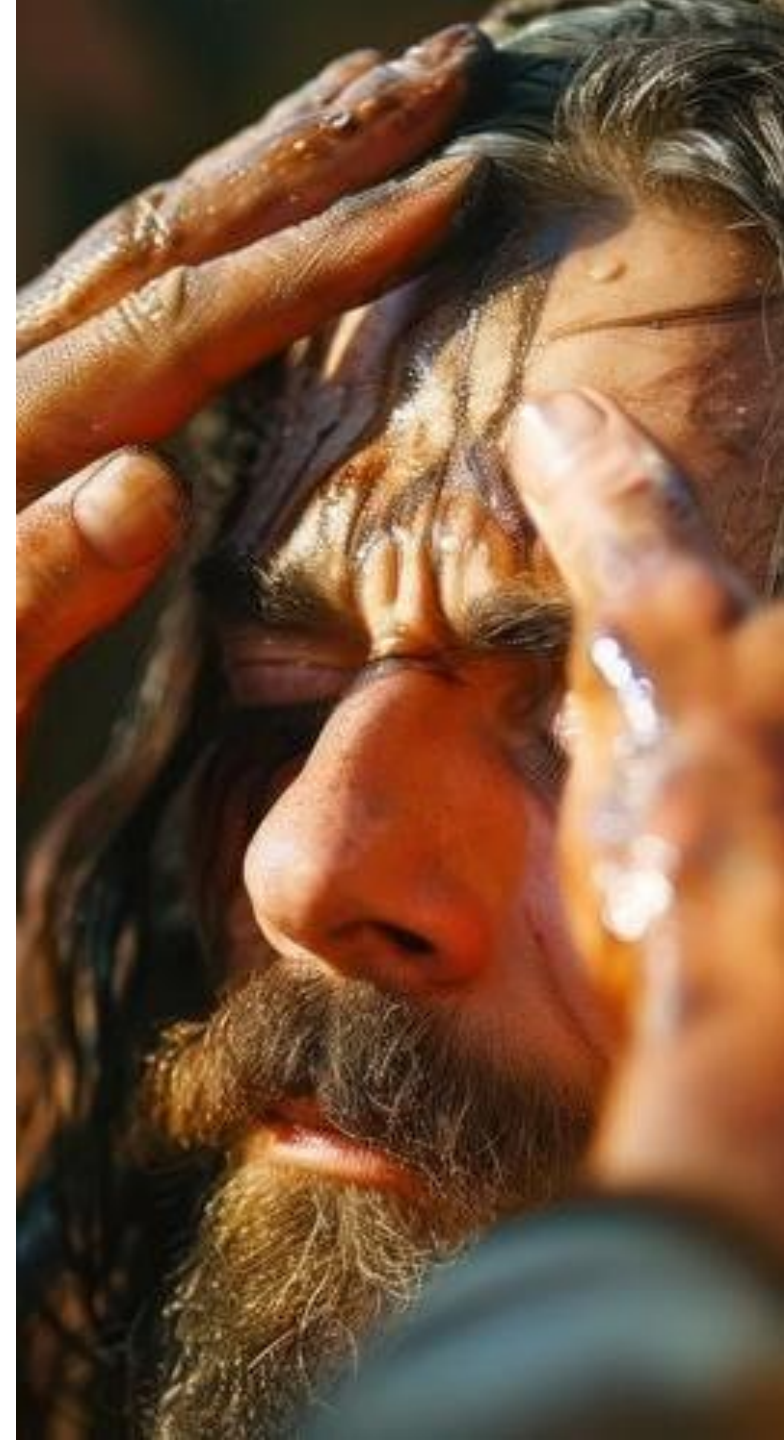
Prompts Before We Pause: The Sacraments & You

- ❖ How are your encounters with the Sacraments **influencing your journey** of faith (back) to the Catholic Church?
- ❖ What grabs your heart and imagination or **what is inviting** about the Sacraments?
- ❖ What will be **the place** of the Sacraments in your renewed life in the Catholic Church?

“The Eucharist changed my life...” (testimony)



Part 2: Brief Sharing & Reflection



Sacraments of Initiation: Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist

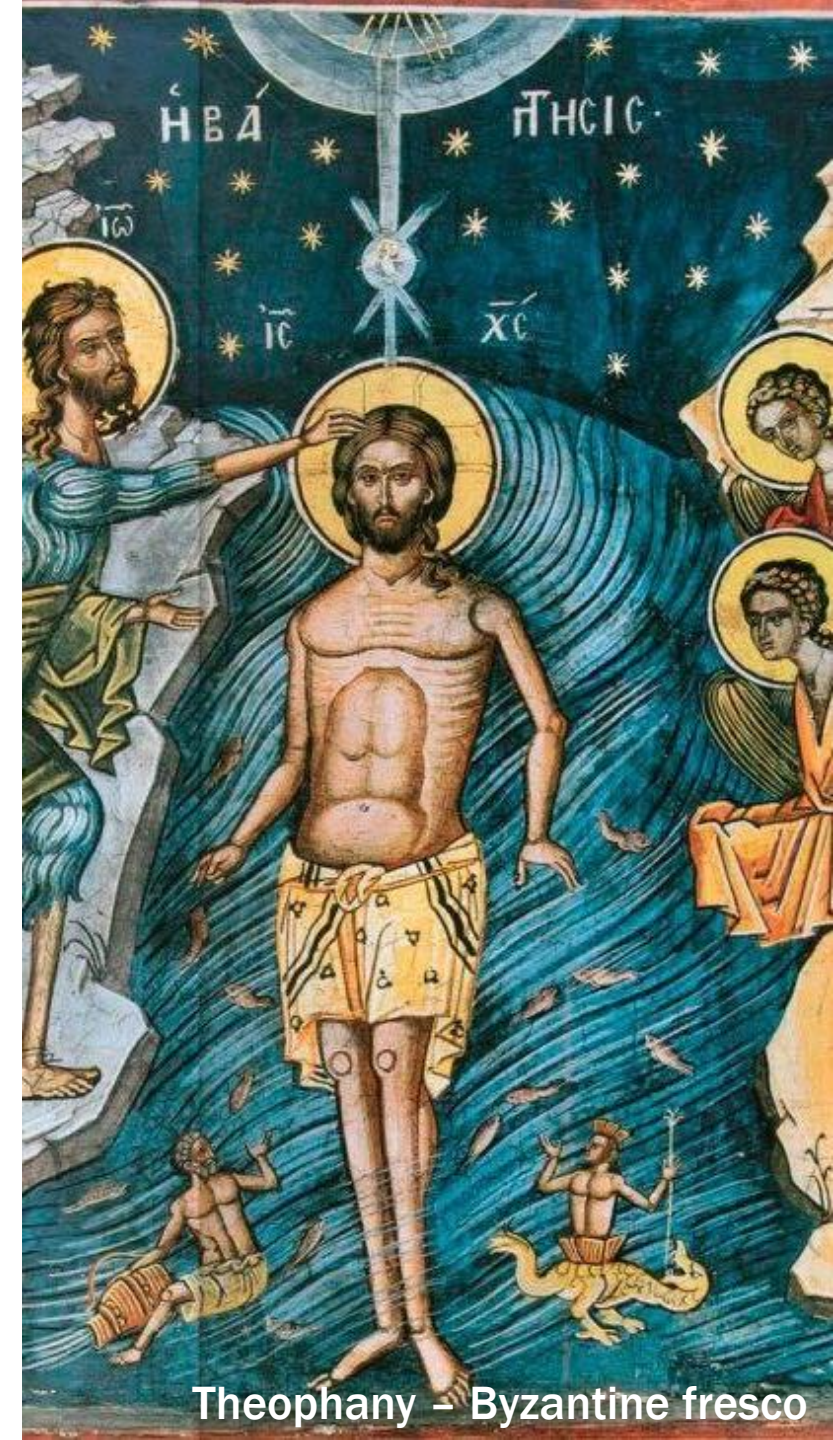
- ❖ “The sacraments of Christian initiation—Baptism, Confirmation, and the Eucharist—lay the **foundations** of every Christian life.” (CCC #1212)
- ❖ Sacramental support for an “**organic life**” in the Spirit: birth anew (Baptism); growth and strengthening (Confirmation); and food for the journey to eternal life (Eucharist)
- ❖ The goal is advancement in divine life and the **perfection of charity**



The Sacrament of Baptism: A Gateway to Life in the Spirit

"Ianua vitae spiritualis"

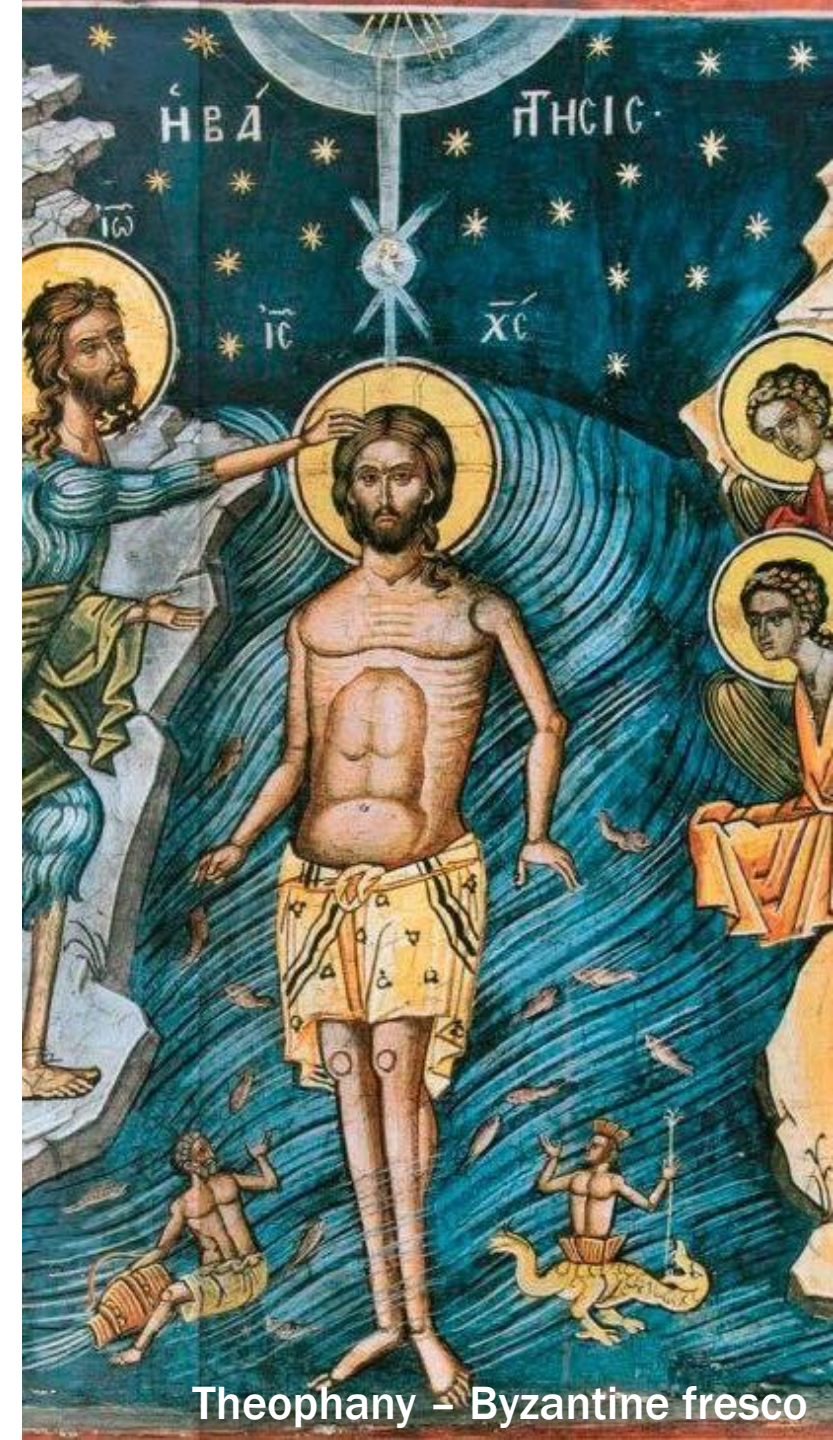
- ❖ “Baptism is the basis of the whole Christian life, the **gateway to life in the Spirit**.” (CCC #121)
- ❖ Baptism is the “**door**” to the other Sacraments
- ❖ It is the “washing of regeneration:” we become a **new creation** by water and the Holy Spirit (John 3:5)
- ❖ A Sacrament of **faith** (even if imperfect; Mk 16:16)
- ❖ It is **necessary for salvation**: Jn 3:5; Mk 16:16; Mt 28:19; Acts 2:38-41; Rom 6:3-4; Titus 3:5; 1 Pet 3:21
- ❖ The **effects** of Baptism:
 - ❖ All sin are wiped away (Original Sin and personal sins);
 - ❖ We become a new creation (“children of God”-1 Jn 3:1);
 - ❖ We are incorporated into the Body of Christ (Church).



Theophany – Byzantine fresco

The Sacrament of Baptism: Being Configured to Christ

- ❖ One of 3 Sacraments that impress on our soul an inerasable mark/sacramental character which **configures us to Christ** (makes us Christ-like; cf. Trent)
 - ❖ Baptism is permanent, it can't be removed or repeated
 - ❖ We belong to Christ and share in the **common/royal priesthood** of believers (not ministerial): we unite our life to the Eucharist
 - ❖ We are **made capable of worship** that is pleasing to God
 - ❖ We receive sanctifying or **habitual grace** (which remains in the soul unless we expel it with mortal sin)
- ❖ Baptism establishes a “sacramental **bond of unity** among all who through it are reborn” (i.e., all validly baptized Christians; *Unitatis Redintegratio* 22,2)
- ❖ *Baptidzein* (Gr): “to plunge” – dying & rising with Christ
- ❖ Ancient Jewish foreshadowing: the “mikveh” tradition



Theophany – Byzantine fresco

The Sacrament of Confirmation: Completion of Baptismal Grace

- ❖ Confirmation **completes** (“firms up”) our Baptism
- ❖ We are “**sealed** with the Holy Spirit” (indelible mark)
- ❖ We receive God’s grace and strength to:
 - ❖ Experience the **outpouring** of the Holy Spirit (Pentecost is perpetuated in the Church – it is our “Pentecost”)
 - ❖ Be more perfectly **bound to Christ** and His Body, the Church
 - ❖ Be a bold and authentic **witness of Christ** (evangelization)
- ❖ Conferred by **laying on of hands** (cf. Acts 8:14-17 and 2 Tim 1:6) and **chrismation** (practiced since the 2nd Century AD)
- ❖ Sacred **Chrism**: oil consecrated annually by the Bishop and it effects consecration, healing, & “limbering” or strengthening
- ❖ The **recipient must be**: in the state of grace, well prepared, and be committed to bring about the fruits of the Holy Spirit



The Rite of Confirmation and the Gifts of the Holy Spirit

*"All-powerful God, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, by **water and the Holy Spirit** you freed your sons and daughters from sin and gave them new life.*

*Send your Holy Spirit upon them to be their helper and guide. Give them the spirit of **wisdom and understanding**, the spirit of right **judgment and courage**, the spirit of **knowledge and reverence**.*

*Fill them with the spirit of **wonder and awe** in your presence." (cf. Isa 11:1-2)*



The Sacrament of the Eucharist: Source and Summit

- ❖ Eukharistia (Greek) - Thanksgiving: **completes initiation**
- ❖ Christ's **Real Presence** (Body and Blood of Christ)
- ❖ The Chief Sacrament (Christ Himself substantially)
- ❖ All other Sacraments are **oriented toward** the Eucharist
- ❖ "The **source and summit** of the Christian life." (LG, 11)
- ❖ **Actualizes** (and perpetuates) the Sacrifice of the Cross
- ❖ Last Supper ≡ Sacrifice of the Cross ≡ Eucharist (Mass)
- ❖ Eucharistic Sacrifice (Mass) ≡ Heavenly Liturgy
- ❖ The effects of the Holy Eucharist (Communion):
 - ❖ **Sign** of the New Covenant: Blood of Christ "in our veins"
 - ❖ **Cleanses** us from venial sins & strengthens us to avoid sin
 - ❖ **Unites** us as one Body in the Church (sign of unity!)
 - ❖ "The Eucharist **makes** the Church" (de Lubac, SJ)
 - ❖ **Commits** us to charity and mission to go out & evangelize



The Sacrament of the Eucharist: Scripture & Unbroken Practice

- ❖ Key **Old Testament** Prefigurations: **Ex 12:14-28 (Passover/Haggadah)**; Gen 14:18-20 (Melchizedek); Ex 16:4-6 (Manna); Psalm 116 (*todah* sacrifice); 1 Kings 19 (Elijah is fed); Lev 24:7 (Bread of Presence); Isa 7 (Isaiah's coal); Ezekiel 2 (eating the scroll)
- ❖ Key **New Testament** Teachings: **John 6 (Bread of Life Discourse)**; Mt 26:26-28; Mk 14:22-24; Lk 22:19-20; Lk 24:30; Acts 2:46-47; 1 Cor 10:16-17; 1 Cor 10:16; 1 Cor 11:26-29
- ❖ **2,000 years of unbroken obedience** to Jesus' Commandment:
 - ❖ Ignatius of Antioch (110 AD - Letter to the Romans 7:3)
 - ❖ Justin Martyr (151 AD - First Apology, 66)
 - ❖ Irenaeus of Lyons (189 AD - Against Heresies 5:2)
 - ❖ Vatican II: "Every time the Eucharist is celebrated, the work of our salvation is accomplished." (1963 - SC, 2)



Great Catholic Resources on the Sacraments

(In addition to Scripture and the Catechism)

- ❖ Touched by Christ: The Sacramental Economy by Lawrence Feingold
- ❖ The Sacraments: Discovering the Treasures of Divine Life by Fr. Matthew Kauth
- ❖ The Sacraments video series by Bishop Robert Barron
<https://www.wofdigital.org/the-sacraments>
- ❖ A Biblical Walk Through the Mass by Edward Sri
- ❖ Bishop Barron's video series on the Mass:
<https://www.wofdigital.org/the-mass>
- ❖ A great library of 82 short summaries on each part of the Mass: <https://www.eucharisticrevival.org/step-by-step-walk-through-the-mass>



Part 2 Pause Questions and Discussion

