

# Sacraments of Initiation

OCIA Class  
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## Recap on the Sacraments: The Beating Heart of the Church and of our Life

- ❖ Evangelical foundations: read the healing miracle from Mark 7:32-35
- ❖ Observe in the story the four essential elements of a sacrament:
  - A specific outward, physical sign: e.g., 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**).

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

- ❖ 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)

## The Catholic Lens to Everything: A Sacramental Worldview

- ❖ The "Via Antiqua" (old way of knowing): Supernatural reality (mystery) is **united** with the natural/material reality (Greek: *syn-bolon* – the supernatural is present through the natural)
- ❖ The "Via Moderna" (starting in the Renaissance): The supernatural is first **separated** from the natural and later it disappears (e.g., in materialism and atheism)
- ❖ Destructive separations between theology & philosophy, faith & reason, logic & science

## The "Sacramental Economy" of Life-Giving Grace



- \* 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)

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- ❖ *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?*
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## 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 (the first so we can receive the others)
- ❖ The “washing of regeneration:” we become a **new creation** by water & the Holy Spirit (John 3:5)
- ❖ A Sacrament of faith (even if imperfect; Mk 16:16)
- ❖ Necessary for salvation: Jn 3:5; Mk 16:16; Mt 28:19; Acts 2:38-41; Rom 6:3-4; Tit 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; sharing in divine nature 2 Pet 1:4);
  - We are incorporated **into the Body of Christ** (the Church), not just become “Christian”.

## 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. Council of 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

## The Sacrament of Confirmation: Completion of Baptismal Grace

- ❖ Confirmation **completes** (“firms up”) our Baptism
- ❖ We are “sealed with the Holy Spirit” (with a second indelible mark)
- ❖ We receive God’s grace and strength to:
  - Experience the full **outpouring** of the Holy Spirit (Pentecost is perpetuated in the Church)
  - 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 2<sup>nd</sup> Century AD)

- ❖ Sacred Chrism: oil consecrated annually by the Bishop which effects consecration, healing, and "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 All Sacraments - the Eucharist: Source and Summit**

- ❖ *Eukharistia* (Greek) - Thanksgiving: completes initiation
- ❖ Christ's **Real Presence** (Body and Blood of Christ / His Body, Soul & Divinity)
- ❖ The Chief Sacrament (Christ Himself is substantially present under the material appearances)
- ❖ All other Sacraments are oriented toward the Eucharist (it is Christ Himself, THE Sacrament)
- ❖ "The source and summit of the Christian life." (Lumen Gentium, 11)
- ❖ **Actualizes** (and perpetuates) the one Sacrifice of the Cross (the Mass makes Calvary present)
- ❖ Last Supper ≡ Sacrifice of the Cross on Calvary ≡ Eucharist (Mass)
- ❖ Eucharistic Sacrifice (Mass) ≡ Heavenly Liturgy (see e.g., Book of Revelation)
- ❖ The effects of the Holy Eucharist (Holy Communion):
  - **Sign** of the New Covenant: Blood of Christ "in our veins" (making us His brothers/sisters)
  - Cleanses us from venial sins and **strengthens** us to avoid sin (can't be received in mortal sin)
  - A sign of **Unity**! (we are in one Body in Christ - can't be received in disunity with the Church)
  - "The Church makes the Eucharist, and the Eucharist makes the Church" (de Lubac, SJ)
  - Commits us to charity and **mission** to go out and 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 the Commandment of Jesus (Institution)**:
  - 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 – Sacrosanctum Concilium, 2)