

LESSON 30: SACRAMENTS (INTRODUCTION)

Instruction for Faith Educators

For Basic Level / Age 8	:	Cover points 1 to 6
For Intermediate Level / Age 11	:	Cover points 1 to 8
For Advanced Level / Age 14	:	Cover points 1 to 10

Revision from previous lesson:

In the past couple of lessons, we have been learning about the Creeds, which are statements by the People of God expressing what we believe as Christians. We profess these Creeds because we are a part of Christ's Holy Church. In addition to being the custodian of these beliefs, the Church is also the custodian to some very important actions, that is, the Sacraments. In this lesson and in the next few lessons to come, we will learn about the Sacraments.

Current lesson:

1. The Seven Sacraments of the Holy Catholic Church are:

- Baptism
- Confirmation
- The Eucharist
- Penance and Reconciliation
- Anointing of the Sick
- Holy Orders
- Holy Matrimony

2. The word "sacrament" comes from the Latin word *sacramentum*, which means "to make holy". God uses visible material in order to communicate His divine life to the recipient of a Sacrament. When God became man, that is Jesus Christ, the material order has been sanctified and made worthy as an instrument to communicate divine grace.
3. The Sacraments were instituted by Christ Himself. According to the Council of Trent (1545-63), if Christ did not institute them, then they could not be Sacraments. They are instituted by Christ in the sense that we see Christ administering these things in His own life by either acting them out or speaking about them.
4. The Gospel of John records that Jesus exclaimed on the cross before his death, "τετέλεσται" (*tetelestai*). These words were translated by Saint Jerome into Latin in the 4th century as *consummatum est* ("It is consummated"). This means that on the cross, Jesus took the Church as His Holy Bride. The cross, more than being a place of sacrifice, was the nuptial bed between Christ and His Bride: the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church.

St Augustine of Hippo (*Sermo Suppositus* 120): "Like a bridegroom Christ went forth from his chamber.... He came to the marriage-bed of the cross, and there in mounting it, he consummated his marriage. And when he perceived the sighs of the creature, he lovingly gave himself up to the torment in place of his bride, and joined himself to [her] forever."



5. The Catholic Church, because we understand our union with Christ literally, understands the Church to literally be an intimate part of Christ Himself. This was also how St Paul understood the Church (*1 Corinthians 12:27*: “Now you are the Body of Christ and each of you is a part of it”). Saint Augustine calls the Church together with Christ the *Totus Christus* (“Total Christ”). And because the Church and Christ are one (as Groom and Bride), Christ has given the Church the responsibility to communicate His life to her children through the Sacraments.

Lumen Gentium 1: “By her relationship with Christ, the Church is a kind of sacrament, an intimate union with God, and of the unity of all mankind, that is, she is a sign and instrument of such union and unity.”

Lumen Gentium 48: “Christ ... through his Spirit, has established his body, the Church, as the universal sacrament of salvation.”

6. The seven Sacraments are signs of God’s physical presence in the life of the Church. They can be considered nuptial acts that Jesus performs for His Bride. In a way, it can be said that the Sacraments are the actions of Christ as the Groom. They are the very means by which Christ makes Himself present in the life of His Church. The main purpose of Jesus giving these Sacraments through His Church is to make us holy, and for the Church to be strengthened in her witness of the faith.

CCC 1084: “‘Seated at the right hand of the Father’ and pouring out the Holy Spirit on his Body which is the Church, Christ now acts through the sacraments he instituted to communicate his grace. The sacraments are perceptible signs (words and actions) accessible to our human nature. By the actions of Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit they make present efficaciously the grace that they signify.”

CCC 1127: “Celebrated worthily in faith, the sacraments confer the grace that they signify. They are efficacious because in them Christ himself is at work: it is he who baptizes, he who acts in his sacraments in order to communicate the grace that each sacrament signifies.”

CCC 1131: “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.”

CCC 1134: “The fruit of sacramental life is both personal and ecclesial. For every one of the faithful on the one hand, this fruit is life for God in Christ Jesus; for the Church, on the other, it is an increase in charity and in her mission of witness.”

7. The ministerial priesthood is a Sacrament of Christ the Bridegroom, and through the priesthood, He performs these actions called Sacraments through which He purifies His Bride and imparts His holiness to her.

8. The seven Sacraments can be divided into three clusters (types):

Sacraments of Initiation

- Baptism (incorporation into the Church/Bride)
- Confirmation (being more closely bonded to Christ and His Church)
- Eucharist (Jesus feeding His Bride with His own Body and Blood)

Sacraments of Healing

- Penance & Reconciliation (Jesus forgives His Bride)
- Anointing of the Sick (Jesus heals His Bride)

Sacraments of Service

- Holy Orders (Men called from the Church to act in the person of Christ)
- Holy Matrimony (Husband & wife reflecting Christ's union with His Church)

9. Sacraments are outward signs of an inward grace. Jesus uses specific acts and objects as visible signs. His use of outward signs can be observed in Scripture: water (Mk 1:9-10), wine (Jn 2:1-11), bread and fish (Mt 6:41-44), touch (Mk 1:41), spit (Mk 8:23), breath (Jn 20:22), bread and wine (Mk 14:22-23), oil (Mk 6:13), laying of hands (Acts 6:6, 8:17).

10. All sacraments have matter (material or tangible elements) and form (words or prayers):

SACRAMENT	MATTER	FORM
Baptism	water	"I baptise you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."
Confirmation	oil	"Be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit!"
Eucharist	bread & grape wine	"This is my body... This is my blood..."
Penance & Reconciliation	sin	"I absolve you from all your sins in the name of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit."
Anointing of the Sick	oil	"Through this holy anointing, may the Lord in his love and mercy help you with the grace of the Holy Spirit ... May the Lord who saves you from sin save you and raise you up."

Holy Orders	laying of hands/oil	Prayer of consecration
Holy Matrimony	exchange of vows	“I do.” (consent)



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