

SACRAMENTS

There are seven sacraments of the Catholic Church, which according to Catholic theology were instituted by Jesus and entrusted to the Church. Sacraments are sacred moments celebrated through visible rites which are seen as signs and efficacious channels of the grace of God to all those who receive them with the proper disposition. The sevenfold list of sacraments is often organized into three groups:

- the sacraments of initiation (into the Church, the body of Christ), consist of Baptism, Confirmation, and the Eucharist
- the sacraments of healing, consist of Penance and Anointing of the Sick
- the sacraments of service: Holy Orders and Matrimony.^[1]

For Catholics, these seven sacraments are the key signs and symbols through which we encounter Jesus Christ. Our celebrations of the sacraments are signs of Jesus' presence in our lives and a means for receiving his grace. They show Christ's presence in all the key moments of life: birth, death, coming of age, community leadership, the most basic relationships of family, our daily struggle to love better, and in the Eucharist; our daily life in communion with the God we worship.

Rite of Christian Initiation

This rite is for preparing and welcoming adults into the Catholic Church. The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) was restored after the Second Vatican Council and has been mandated in the United States since 1988. The normal procedure is as follows:

- † A period of evangelization and pre-catechumenate. What is God calling me to acceptance into the order of catechumens in a liturgical rite in which the candidates express a desire to respond to God's call and the Church accepts their expression
- † A period of the catechumenate – Learning about our Catholic Faith a liturgical rite of election or enrollment of names, celebrated on the First Sunday of Lent
- † A period of purification and enlightenment, during the Lenten season. Faith Sharing. the celebration of the Sacraments of Initiation during the Easter Vigil
- † A period of postbaptismal catechesis, known as mystagogy. (Living out of the Christian Life)

If you feel a calling to know more about our Catholic tradition – Please contact your local Church

Sacraments of Initiation

These sacraments lay the foundation of every Christian life.

Baptism:

In Baptism, we receive new life in Christ. Baptism takes away original sin and gives us a new birth in the Holy Spirit. The sign of this sacrament is the pouring of water.

Eucharist:

The Eucharist nourishes our life of faith. Its signs are the bread and wine we receive—the Body and Blood of Christ. It is our Tradition to celebrate the “real” presence of Jesus, each and every time we gather as a community in his name. It is here that he nourishes us both in the Scriptures and the Blessed Sacrament. Eucharist is a serious obligation of our faith in which we are drawn by Christ to be his sacred presence in the world, in our lives.

Confirmation:

This sacrament seals our life of faith in Jesus. Its signs are the laying on of hands on a person’s head, most often by a bishop, and the anointing with oil. Like Baptism, Confirmation is received only once. Confirmation is a fuller desire by the candidate to invite the Holy Spirit as a more active part of their faith life.

Sacraments of Healing

These sacraments celebrate the healing power of Jesus.

Penance:

Through Penance we receive God’s forgiveness. Forgiveness requires being sorry for our sins. In Penance, we receive Jesus’ healing grace through absolution by the priest. The signs of this sacrament are our confession of sins and the words of absolution.

Anointing of the Sick:

This sacrament unites a sick person’s suffering with that of Jesus and brings forgiveness of sins. Oil, a symbol of strength, is the sign of this sacrament. A person is anointed with oil and receives the laying on of hands from a priest.

Sacraments at the Service of Communion

These sacraments help members serve the community.

Matrimony:

In Matrimony, a baptized man and woman are united with each other as a sign of the unity between Jesus and his Church. Matrimony requires the consent of the couple, as expressed in the marriage promises. The couple and their wedding rings are the signs of this sacrament.

Holy Orders:

In Holy Orders, men are ordained as priests, deacons, or bishops. Priests serve as spiritual leaders of their communities, and deacons serve to remind us of our baptismal

call to help others. Bishops carry on the teachings of the apostles. The signs of this sacrament are the laying on of hands and anointing with oil by the bishop.

To live the sacrament life is to be one with Christ. St. Patrick's fabulous prayer, "the Breast Plate," sums up the sacramental life admirably. Toward the end of his prayer, he says:

*Christ with me, Christ before me, Christ behind me, Christ within me
Christ beneath me, Christ above me, Christ at my right, Christ at my left*

To live the life of the sacraments is always to be running to Christ, and to know that it is Christ himself who has given you the grace to run to him. Christ before me. Christ behind me. Christ who lives within me.