

## THE SACRAMENTS IN GENERAL

### GETTING INTO HEAVEN IS THE ONLY THING THAT MATTERS

“Therefore I say to you, be not solicitous for your life, what you shall eat, nor for your body, what you shall put on. Is not the life more than the meat: and the body more than the raiment? Behold the birds of the air, for they neither sow, nor do they reap, nor gather into barns: and your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are not you of much more value than they? And which of you by taking thought, can add to his stature one cubit? And for raiment why are you solicitous? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they labor not, neither do they spin. But I say to you, that not even Solomon in all his glory was arrayed as one of these. And if the grass of the field, which is today, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, God doth so clothe: how much more you, O ye of little faith?”

“Be not solicitous therefore, saying, What shall we eat: or what shall we drink, or wherewith shall we be clothed? For after all these things do the heathens seek. For your Father knoweth that you have need of all these things. Seek ye therefore the kingdom of God, and His justice, and all these things shall be added unto you.” (Matthew 6:25-33)

What is absolutely necessary to get to Heaven?

You have to have Sanctifying Grace in your soul when you die. Sanctifying Grace is God's life in the soul.

How do you obtain Sanctifying Grace?

One of the chief ways of obtaining Sanctifying Grace is by receiving the Sacraments.

What is a Sacrament?

An outward sign made by Jesus Christ to give you grace. "I am come that they may have life, and may have it more abundantly." (John 10:10)

What is an "outward sign"?

Anything which you can see (or hear or feel), which tells you about something you cannot see. For example, a barber pole is an outward sign which you can see in front of a store. It tells you that there is a barber inside, whom you cannot see.

How are the Sacraments outward signs?

The outward sign of the Sacrament of Baptism, for example, is the pouring of water on your head and saying the words, "I baptize thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." You can see the priest pour the water, and you can hear him say those words. This is the outward sign that you are receiving Sanctifying Grace, which you cannot see or hear or feel.

.How are the Sacraments different from other outward signs?

The Sacraments not only tell you that you have Grace in your soul, but they actually put the Grace into it. All other signs only tell you about something you cannot see. A barber pole cannot give you a haircut; it only tells you that there is a barber inside the shop.

The Seven Sacraments:

Baptism, Confirmation, Holy Eucharist, Penance, Extreme Unction, Holy Orders, and Matrimony.

Describe the Seven Sacraments.

BAPTISM Takes away Original Sin and gives you Sanctifying Grace for the first time.

CONFIRMATION Gives you the Holy Ghost and makes you a strong Catholic.

HOLY EUCHARIST Is the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ

PENANCE (or Confession) Takes away sins committed after Baptism.

EXTREME UNCTION Prepares you for death.

HOLY ORDERS Gives a man the powers of priesthood.

MATRIMONY Unites a couple in Christian marriage and gives them the graces they need to obey God's laws on marriage.

Do the Sacraments always give grace?

Yes, if you receive them worthily.

Give some examples of receiving Sacraments unworthily.

Receiving Holy Communion, Marriage, Holy Orders with a mortal sin on your soul. Not telling all your mortal sins in Confession.

What kind of sin is it to receive a Sacrament unworthily?

A mortal sin and a sacrilege.

Where do the Sacraments get the power to give grace?

From God, because only God can make an outward sign (like the pouring of water) able to put grace into the soul. "I am the way, and the truth, and the life." (John 14:6)

What else do the Sacraments give besides Sanctifying Grace?

Special help called "sacramental grace." For example, Confirmation gives you the strength to be a loyal Catholic; Matrimony gives you the special help to live your married life according to God's laws (such as having as many children as you can).

How many times can you receive Baptism, Confirmation, and Holy Orders?

You can receive these Sacraments only once. Moreover, only qualified Catholic men can receive Holy Orders.

Why can you receive these Sacraments only once?

Because they imprint on the soul a spiritual mark called a character. This mark stays on the soul after death for the glory of those who are saved and for the shame of those who are lost.

How many times may you receive Holy Communion and Penance?

Every day, if you want. Many Catholics receive these Sacraments once a week.

How often can you receive the Sacrament of Matrimony?

Only once, unless your spouse dies.

How often can you receive Extreme Unction?

Any time you are in danger of death from sickness, old age or accident.

How do we know there are seven Sacraments and no more or less?

We know there are seven Sacraments and no more or less because the Church always taught that truth. The number of the Sacraments is a matter of faith, and the Church cannot be mistaken in matters of faith.

Why have the Sacraments been instituted?

The Sacraments have been instituted as a special means through which we are to receive the grace merited for us by Christ. As Christ is the giver of the grace, He has the right to determine the manner in which it shall be given, and one who refuses to make use of the Sacraments will not receive God's grace.

Do the Sacraments recall in any way the means by which Our Lord merited the graces we receive through them?

The Sacraments recall in many ways the means by which Our Lord merited the graces we receive through them. Baptism recalls His profound humility; Confirmation His ceaseless prayer; Holy Eucharist His care of the needy; Penance His mortified life; Extreme Unction His model death; Holy Orders His establishment of the priesthood, and Matrimony His close union with the Church.

Do the needs of the soul resemble the needs of the body?

The needs of the soul do resemble the needs of the body; for the body must be born, strengthened, nourished, healed in affliction, helped at the hour of death, guided by authority, and given a place in which to dwell. The soul is brought into spiritual life by Baptism; it is strengthened by Confirmation; nourished by the Holy Eucharist; healed by Penance; helped at the hour of our death by Extreme Unction; guided by God's ministers through the Sacrament of Holy Orders, and it is given a body in which to dwell by the Sacrament of Matrimony.

Does the effect of the Sacraments depend on the worthiness or unworthiness of the one who administers them?

The effect of the Sacraments does not depend on the worthiness or unworthiness of the one who administers them, but on the merits of Jesus Christ, who instituted them, and on the worthy dispositions of those who receive them.

Which are the Sacraments that give sanctifying grace?

The Sacraments that give sanctifying grace are Baptism and Penance; and they are called Sacraments of the dead.

May not the Sacrament of Penance be received by one who is in a state of grace?

The Sacrament of Penance may be and very often is received by one who is in a state of grace, and when thus received it increases -- as the Sacraments of the living do -- the grace already in the soul.

Which are the Sacraments that increase sanctifying grace in our soul?

The Sacraments that increase sanctifying grace in our souls are: Confirmation, Holy Eucharist, Extreme Unction, Holy Orders, and Matrimony; and they are called Sacraments of the living.

What do we mean by Sacraments of the dead and Sacraments of the living?

By the Sacraments of the dead we mean those Sacraments that may be lawfully received while the soul is in a state of mortal sin. By the Sacraments of the living we mean those Sacraments that can be lawfully received only while the soul is in a state of grace -- i.e., free from mortal sin. Living and dead do not refer here to the persons, but to the condition of the souls; for none of the Sacraments can be given to a dead person.

Why are Confirmation, Holy Eucharist, Extreme Unction, Holy Orders, and Matrimony called Sacraments of the living?

Confirmation, Holy Eucharist, Extreme Unction, Holy Orders, and Matrimony are called Sacraments of the living because those who receive them worthily are already living the life of grace.

What sin does he commit who receives the Sacraments of the living in mortal sin?

He who receives the Sacraments of the living in mortal sin commits a sacrilege, which is a great sin, because it is an abuse of a sacred thing.

What is sacramental grace?

Sacramental grace is a special help which God gives, to attain the end for which He instituted each Sacrament.

Is Sacramental grace independent of the sanctifying grace given in the Sacraments?

Sacramental grace is not independent of the sanctifying grace given in the Sacraments; for it is the sanctifying grace that gives us a certain right to special helps -- called Sacramental grace -- in each Sacrament, as often as we have to fulfill the end of the Sacrament or are tempted against it.

Example of how the Sacramental grace aids us, for instance, in Confirmation and Penance:

The end of Confirmation is to strengthen us in our faith. When we are tempted to deny our religion by word or deed, the Sacramental Grace of Confirmation is given to us and helps us to cling to our faith and firmly profess it. The end of Penance is to destroy actual sin. When we are tempted to sin, the Sacramental Grace of Penance is given to us and helps us to overcome the temptation and persevere in a state of grace. The sacramental grace in each of the other Sacraments is given in the same manner, and aids us in attaining the end for which each Sacrament was instituted and for which we receive it.

The right dispositions for Penance are:

1. To confess all our mortal sins as we know them;
2. To be sorry for them, and
3. To have the determination never to commit them or others again.

The right dispositions for the Holy Eucharist are:

1. To know what the Holy Eucharist is;
2. To be in a state of grace, and
3. -- except in special cases of sickness -- to be fasting from midnight.

Can we receive the Sacraments more than once?

We can receive the Sacraments more than once, except Baptism, Confirmation, and Holy Orders.

Why can we not receive Baptism, Confirmation, and Holy Orders more than once?

We cannot receive Baptism, Confirmation, and Holy Orders more than once, because they imprint a character in the soul.

What is the character which these Sacraments imprint in the soul?

The character which these Sacraments imprint in the soul is a spiritual mark which remains forever.

Does this character remain in the soul even after death?

This character remains in the soul even after death; for the honor and glory of those who are saved; for the shame and punishment of those who are lost.

Can the Sacraments be given conditionally?

The Sacraments can be given conditionally as often as we doubt whether they were properly given before, or whether they can be validly given now.

What do we mean by giving a Sacrament conditionally?

By giving a Sacrament conditionally we mean that the person administering the Sacrament intends to give it only in case it has not been given already or in case the person has the right dispositions for receiving it, though the dispositions cannot be discovered.

Example of how a Sacrament is given conditionally:

In giving Baptism, for instance, conditionally -- or what we call conditional Baptism -- the priest, instead of saying absolutely, as he does in ordinary Baptism: "I baptize thee," etc., says: "If you are not already baptized, or if you are capable of being baptized, I baptize thee," etc., thus stating the sole condition on which he intends to administer the Sacrament.

What is the difference between the powers of a bishop and of a priest with regard to the administration of the Sacraments?

The difference between the powers of a bishop and of a priest with regard to the administration of the Sacraments is that a bishop can give all the Sacraments, while a priest cannot give Confirmation or Holy Orders.

Can a person receive all the Sacraments?

A person cannot, as a rule, receive all the Sacraments; for a woman cannot receive Holy Orders, and a man who receives priesthood is forbidden to receive the Sacrament of Matrimony.

#### PRACTICAL POINTS

1. Except in the case of babies being baptized (they receive the smallest amount of grace), the better you prepare yourself to receive the Sacraments, the greater the amount of grace you will obtain.
2. Christ gave His Church only the essential parts of each Sacrament, but the Church has surrounded each Sacrament with beautiful ceremonies, which together with the administration of the Sacraments themselves and the Mass ceremonies, form what is called the Liturgy of the Church.
3. The Sacraments give grace automatically, as long as the priest or bishop and the one receiving the Sacraments fulfill all the required conditions. It is really Jesus Christ who gives the Sacrament.
4. The Bible speaks about the Sacraments, grace, the Mass, etc., but it uses different words for these things. (For example, in one place Our Lord calls Sanctifying Grace "living water.")