

The Sacraments

Seven ways Christ meets us.

In short. The Church teaches that the sacraments are efficacious signs of grace, instituted by Christ and entrusted to the Church, by which divine life is dispensed to us.¹ There are seven, and they touch all the stages and important moments of Christian life.²

Key points

- A sacrament is an efficacious sign of grace instituted by Christ.¹
- In the sacraments Christ himself is at work.³
- There are seven: Baptism, Confirmation, the Eucharist, Penance, Anointing of the Sick, Holy Orders and Matrimony.²
- The Eucharist is the source and summit of the Christian life.⁴

Try this, this week

1. **Read John 6:48–69.** Notice how the crowd reacts, and what Peter answers.
2. **Go to one Mass and watch.** You do not need to know the responses. If you are not Catholic, you are welcome to stay seated during Communion.
3. **Find your baptism record, if you were baptized.** Your parish will ask for it when you are ready.
4. **Ask a priest about the sacrament you understand least.**

“And taking bread, he gave thanks and brake and gave to them, saying: This is my body, which is given for you. Do this for a commemoration of me.”

Luke 22:19, Douay–Rheims

Watch out: what this does not mean

- Sacraments are not magic: their fruits also depend on the disposition of the one who receives them.⁵
- Baptism, Confirmation and Holy Orders confer an indelible character, so these sacraments can never be repeated.⁸

Common questions

Are the sacraments just symbols?

The Church teaches that they are efficacious: celebrated worthily in faith, they confer the grace that they signify, because Christ himself is at work in them.³ They act by the power of Christ’s saving work, not by the personal holiness of the minister.⁵

Is the Eucharist really Jesus?

The Church teaches that in the Eucharist “the body and blood, together with the soul and divinity, of our Lord Jesus Christ and, therefore, the whole Christ is truly, really, and substantially contained.”⁶ Jesus said, “For my flesh is meat indeed: and my blood is drink indeed.”⁷

Remember: Christ meets us in signs we can see and touch.

Sources

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| 1. CCC 1131 | 5. CCC 1128 |
| 2. CCC 1210 | 6. CCC 1374 |
| 3. CCC 1127 | 7. John 6:56 (Douay–Rheims) |
| 4. CCC 1324 | 8. CCC 1121 |

Quotation above: Luke 22:19, Douay–Rheims. Catechism: official text on vatican.va.

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