

Understanding the Sacraments

ENCOUNTERING CHRIST THROUGH THE SEVEN SACRAMENTS

The sacraments are not just milestones we “get through.” They are gifts Christ has given the Church for a whole life of grace.



The Big Picture

The Catholic Church celebrates seven sacraments: Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist, Penance/Reconciliation, Anointing of the Sick, Holy Orders and Matrimony.

They are commonly grouped as *Sacraments of Initiation*, *Sacraments of Healing* and *Sacraments at the Service of Communion and Mission*.

CATECHISM ANCHOR

CCC 1210-1211: The seven sacraments touch the important moments of Christian life and form an organic whole centered on the Eucharist.

Baptism | New Life

Baptism is the gateway to the Christian life. We are freed from sin, reborn in Christ, incorporated into the Church and marked with an indelible spiritual character.

Visible signs: Water, the Trinitarian formula, sacred chrism, white garment and candle.

Eucharist | Christ Gives Himself

In the Eucharist, bread and wine become the Body and Blood of Christ. The Eucharist is the source and summit of Christian life and nourishes the Church in communion with Christ.

This is why Catholics treat the Eucharist with particular reverence and prepare to receive Holy Communion worthily.

Confirmation | Strengthened by the Spirit

Confirmation deepens baptismal grace and strengthens the baptized through the gift of the Holy Spirit for witness and mission.

Visible signs: The laying on of hands and anointing with sacred chrism.

Penance & Reconciliation | Mercy & Healing

In this sacrament, the baptized confess sins committed after Baptism, express contrition, receive absolution from the priest and are reconciled with God and the Church.

The sacrament calls us not only to be sorry, but to turn again toward a life of grace.

Anointing of the Sick | Strength in Illness

The Anointing of the Sick is for Catholics who are seriously ill, weakened by advanced age, or facing a serious worsening of illness. It is not only for the final moments of life.

Through prayer and anointing by a priest, the Church asks Christ for strength, peace, courage, and healing according to God's will.

Holy Orders | Ordained Service

Through Holy Orders, bishops, priests and deacons are ordained for service in the Church according to their order.

The sacrament configures ordained ministers for distinct forms of teaching, sanctifying, and pastoral service to the People of God.

Matrimony | Covenant & Mission

In the sacrament of Matrimony, a baptized man and baptized woman freely give themselves to one another in a lifelong covenant ordered to the good of the spouses and the generation and education of children.

Their married love becomes a visible sign of Christ's faithful love for the Church.

The Three Groups

INITIATION

Baptism, Eucharist, Confirmation.

HEALING

Penance/Reconciliation, Anointing of the Sick.

SERVICE OF COMMUNION & MISSION

Holy Orders, Matrimony.

KEEP GOING DEEPER

A summary can orient you, but every sacrament carries more depth than a quick guide can hold.

Use the Catechism and your parish formation resources to keep learning.