

Defending the Faith II: The Seven Sacraments of the Church in Sacred Scripture

Before reading this treatise, consider reading “Defending the Faith I” from our website (www.grandcatholic.com; see “Spiritual Resources.”) The beauty of the Catholic Church is that it has the seven sacraments instituted by Christ. Many other Christian faiths have two or three. A sacrament is a sacred sign, instituted by Christ and entrusted to the Church, to dispense divine life (grace) into us. Whenever we receive a sacrament, we have direct contact with the Trinity and can receive God’s invisible power to accomplish His mission. Whenever we read the Bible, we have immediate contact with God. All the sacraments begin with God’s word. In the Mass, we begin with scriptural readings and then we get to receive Jesus in the Eucharist. With all these gifts from God in our Church, we have a magnanimous opportunity to develop a deep friendship with God.

This summary names the seven sacraments, simply describes their effects, describes their signs, gives their sacramental formulas (words) if they are brief, gives some of their scriptural references, and occasionally cites comments from the Fathers of the Church. Within the scriptural references, you will see how the sacrament was pre-figured or foreshadowed in the Old Testament (Old Covenant). New Testament scripture passages have a “+” in front of them. To get even more scripture references, visit www.scripturecatholic.com.

The Sacred Scriptures referenced below are paraphrased or summarized unless they are in quotations.

1. Baptism [Effect: We are freed from our sins, become children of God, and receive the gifts of the Holy Spirit.]
Sign: Pouring of holy water over the head of the recipient (or immersion).
Formula: “[Name], I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.”
Old Covenant: See Col 2:11-12: Baptism has replaced circumcision. 2 Kings 5:14: The leper Naaman dipped himself seven times in the Jordan, and his flesh was restored like that of a child, foreshadowing the regenerative function of Baptism.
+ Jn 3:5; Mk 16:16: Baptism is required for entering heaven.
+ Mt 28:18-20: “Then Jesus approached and said to them, ‘All power in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age.’”

+ Acts 16:15, Acts 16:33, 1 Cor 1:16: Whole households were baptized. (We believe in infant Baptism.)
- St. Hippolytus of Rome (about 215 A.D.): “Baptize first the children; and if they can speak for themselves, let them do so. Otherwise let their parents or other relatives speak for them” (*The Apostolic Tradition* 21).
- God wants everyone to become Catholic Christians and to give us incredible gifts; why would we delay God’s gift of Baptism?

2. Confirmation [We receive the fullness of the Holy Spirit; we are now God’s warriors who have courage to “preach” and lay down our lives for the Lord.]

Sign: Laying on of hands; anointing with blessed oil.

Formula: “[Name], be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

Old Covenant: 1 Sam 16:13; Ex 40:12-15: Kings and priests were anointed to receive God’s strength and wisdom.

+ Acts 8:14-17: “Now when the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent them Peter and John, who went down and prayed for them, that they might receive the holy Spirit, for it had not yet fallen upon any of them; they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they laid hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit.”

+ Acts 19:5-6: “When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul laid (his) hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them....”

3. Eucharist [This is the Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity of Jesus Christ; received at Mass and by the sick.]

Sign: Bread and wine.

Formula: The Eucharistic Prayer within the liturgy, with its institution narrative: “This is my Body... This is my Blood....”

Old Covenant: Ex 12:1-28: Roots in Jewish Passover. Gen 14:18: Melchizedek’s offering of bread and wine.

+ Jn 6:35-71: Jesus promises that the Eucharist is coming. In verses 53-56, Jesus talks about His flesh and blood four times. If He were speaking symbolically, He would have told them so. Jesus said at the Last Supper, “This is my Body.” He did not say, “This is a symbol of my Body.” The Jews knew He was speaking literally; that is why they walked away, as we see in Jn 6:66. They did not believe Him.

+ Mt 26:19-29, Mk 14:16-26, Lk 22:14-20: Jesus institutes the Eucharist at the Last Supper (the first Mass).

+ 1 Cor 11:23-29: We should not receive the Eucharist—the Body and Blood of Christ—if we are aware of grave sin.

- St. Ignatius of Antioch (110 A.D.): “[heretics] abstain from Eucharist and from prayer, because they do not confess that the Eucharist is the Flesh of our Savior Jesus Christ....” *Letter to the Smyrnaeans* 6,2.

- St Justin Martyr (150 A.D.): "...not as common bread nor common drink do we receive these; but...as we have been taught, the food which has been made into the Eucharist by the Eucharistic prayer set down by him, and by the change of which our blood and flesh is nourished, is both the Flesh and Blood of that incarnated Jesus" *First Apology* 66,20.

4. Penance/Confession/Reconciliation [Sins are forgiven by God through the priest; we are reconciled with God and the Church.]

Sign: Contrition (sorrow for sins), confession of sins, and satisfaction (completion of the penance the priest gives)

Formula: "God the Father of mercies, through the death and resurrection of His Son, has reconciled the world to Himself and sent the Holy Spirit among us for the forgiveness of sins; through the ministry of the Church, may God give you pardon and peace; and I absolve you from your sins in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit."

Old Covenant: Lev 5:4-6, Lev 19:21-22: God used priests to forgive and atone for the sins of others.

+ Jn 20:21: Before He grants them the authority to forgive sins, Jesus says to the apostles, "As the Father has sent me, so I send you." [Just as the Father sent Jesus to forgive sins, so Jesus sends the apostles and their successors forgive sins. Jesus gives them His authority to forgive sins. Jesus does the forgiving; the apostles have the authority to minister.]

+ Jn 20:22: The Lord "breathes" on the apostles, and then gives them the power to forgive and retain sins. The only other moment in Scripture where God breathes on man is in Gen 2:7, when the Lord "breathes" divine life into man. When this happens, a significant transformation takes place. In Confession, a significant transformation takes place—new life.

+ Jn 20:23: Jesus says to the Twelve, "Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained." [The penitents must orally confess their sins to the apostles because they are not mind readers.]

+ Mt 18:18: The apostles are given authority to bind and loose. The authority to bind and loose includes administering and removing the temporal penalties due to sin. The Jews understood this since the birth of the Church.

5. Anointing of the Sick [Heals spiritually and sometimes physically; gives strength to be united to Christ.]

Sign: Laying on of hands; anointing with blessed oil.

Formula: "Through this holy anointing, may the Lord in His love and mercy help you with the grace of the Holy Spirit." "Amen." "May the Lord who frees you from sin save you and raise you up." "Amen."

Old Covenant: 2 Kgs 5:14. Healing from God often came by the hand of the prophets.

+ Jas 5:14-15: "Is anyone among you sick? He should summon the presbyters [priests] of the church, and they

should pray over him and anoint [him] with oil in the name of the Lord, and the prayer of faith will save the sick person, and the Lord will raise him up. If he has committed any sins, he will be forgiven."

+ Mk 6:12-13: "So they [the Twelve] went off and preached repentance. They drove out many demons, and they anointed with oil many who were sick and cured them."

6. Marriage [Permanent holy union of one man and one woman before God to help each other get to heaven and bring children into the Kingdom.]

Sign: Mutual consent to live together as husband and wife. (In the Eastern Rites, the priest is the minister.)

Formula: In the Western Rite, the external expression of this is through the interchange of the couple with the Church witness (priest, deacon), as he elicits their intention (questions preceding the vows) and their consent (wedding vows).

Old Covenant: Gen 2:20-24: We see that, from the beginning, husband and wife are joined together by God and become one body. A body cannot be dismembered and still live.

+ Mt 19:3-8. "Some Pharisees approached him, and tested him [Jesus], saying, 'Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any cause whatever?' He said in reply, 'Have you not read that from the beginning the Creator *made them male and female* and said, *For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh?* So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore, what God has joined together, no human being must separate.' They said to him, 'Then why did Moses command that the man give the woman a bill of divorce and dismiss (her)?' He said to them, 'Because of the hardness of your hearts Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so.'"

7. Holy Orders [Permanent life of service to the people of God for their salvation; prays and provides sacraments.]

Sign: Laying on of hands by a validly ordained bishop.

Formula: The Prayer of Consecration that follows the laying on of hands.

Old Covenant: Ex 40:12-16: God commands Moses to ordain Aaron and his sons as priests.

+ Lk 22:19: Jesus commands at the Last Supper, "Do this in memory of me." He makes the Apostles priests.
+ 1 Tim 3:1-13, Tit 1:7, 1 Tim 4:14, Acts 6:1-6: The early Church already has a structure of bishops, priests, and deacons.

+ Acts 14:22-23: "They [Paul and Barnabas] strengthened the spirits of the disciples and exhorted them to persevere in the faith, saying, 'It is necessary for us to undergo many hardships to enter the kingdom of God.' They appointed presbyters [priests] for them in each church and, with prayer and fasting, commended them to the Lord in whom they had put their faith."