

Sacraments

Living Our Faith

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The Sacraments – Encounters with the Risen Christ

The Sacraments

Every act of worship is an encounter with the risen Lord.

In Catholic tradition we call these encounters *sacraments* – the Greek word is *mysterion* (mystery).

Mystery in the sense that there is more there than meets the eye – we can't understand it all at once.

Not in the sense of an “enigma” something that repels us – that frustrates and discourages us

Obviously, we can encounter the Lord in other ways besides public worship – as in personal prayer
But there is something special in the public act – the presence of others makes the experience stronger
What are some of these ways to encounter the Lord? How many sacraments are there?

Pick a number – one, a gazillion, or seven.

In one sense, there is only one Sacrament – Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

Jesus is God himself – the God who is with us (*emanuel*), the God revealing and revealed.

Jesus is the source of our spiritual life, it is His Spirit in our hearts, His grace that is His life.

It is through Jesus that we are reunited with His Father, made holy and righteous in His sight.

In our Catholic tradition every sacrament starts with Jesus and leads back to Jesus.

In another sense, there are an unlimited number of sacraments (a gazillion?).

We can encounter the risen Lord anywhere in our lives – Jesus is not *limited* to liturgy.

Any time we open our hearts to him we receive the grace of his presence – and we grow spiritually

But in our Catholic understanding, there are seven *special* times in our life when we encounter Jesus:

Baptism – our first encounter, the one that makes all the others possible

Confirmation – our mature reception of the Holy Spirit

Eucharist – the centerpiece of our spiritual life, the hub that all the others revolve around.

Reconciliation – the most personal sacrament, coming to grip with our brokenness.

Anointing of the Sick – physical and spiritual healing in times of illness

Marriage – learning to love another as Jesus loves us.

Holy Orders – joyful service to others in the name of Jesus.

We can see that the sacraments cover all aspects of our life:

Sacraments of Initiation:

Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist

The means by which we become (and stay!) a member of the community Jesus has called to be Church.

Sacraments of Healing:

Anointing of the Sick and Reconciliation

When our lives become disordered by physical or spiritual sickness, we go to Jesus for healing

Sacraments of Vocation

Marriage and Holy Orders

We give our lives a direction, a context, within which we will work to build the Kingdom of God.

As Catholics we are *sacramental people*;

living and dying within the grace of Jesus that we receive through the sacraments

Interestingly enough the church has a special “sacramental” for people who are *not* baptized; catechumens (unbaptized people desiring to enter the church through the RCIA) are blessed with the oil of catechumens – reserved for them alone to strengthen them on their journey. The church's loving care extends even to those who are not yet members

In our Catholic understanding of the Sacraments, the “who,” “how” and “where” is extremely important.

WHO – the “ordinary minister” of the sacrament.

All sacraments have an “ordinary minister” – the person who under normal circumstances performs it.

An “extraordinary” minister is someone who (with proper delegation) can perform the sacrament: in extraordinary circumstances and for a limited time and a specific place

<u>Sacrament</u>	<u>Ordinary minister</u>	<u>Extraordinary minister</u>
Baptism	The deacon, priest or bishop	Anyone (requires no delegation)
Confirmation	The bishop	The priest (with delegation or danger of death) Priests are delegated to confirm at the Easter Vigil
Eucharist	The priest or bishop	None For <i>distribution</i> of the Eucharist (communion) the Deacon or instituted Acolyte is an ordinary minister. Lay people (who are not Acolytes) may be commissioned as extraordinary ministers for a limited time in a specific place.
Marriage	The deacon, priest or bishop	Lay person (with delegation) Technically, the bride and groom are the ministers, the clergyman or delegate are there as witnesses only and accept the consent in the name of the Church.
Holy Orders	The bishop	None
Reconciliation	The priest or bishop	None
Anointing	The priest or bishop	None

HOW – the way the sacrament is given (the key words and elements that make the sacrament “happen”)

All sacraments have a proper “form” and “matter:

The “form “ is the words the minister of the sacrament speaks to bring about the sacrament

The “matter “ is the symbol of the sacrament, something tangible (you can drop it on your foot!)

<u>Sacrament</u>	<u>Form</u>	<u>Matter</u>
Baptism	“I baptize you in the name of the Father And of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”	Water (poured or immersion)
Confirmation	“Be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit”	Laying on of hands (in <i>and</i> Holy Chrism (oil)
Eucharist	“This is my body . . . this is my blood” Eucharistic Prayer	Bread and wine
Marriage	“I do . . . I do” (the consent)	The bride and groom
Holy Orders	“Receive the Holy Spirit . . .” Prayer of consecration	Laying on of hands
Reconciliation	“I absolve you from your sins . . .” Prayer of absolution	The penitent’s confession
Anointing	“Through this holy anointing . . .”	Oil (of the sick)

WHERE – place of celebration of the sacrament

In great need a sacrament can be celebrated anywhere but usually the following apply:

<u>Sacrament</u>	<u>Place</u>
Baptism	The parish church of the parents in front of the community
Confirmation	For children – their parish church within a Eucharistic liturgy For adults baptized as infants – at the cathedral (by the bishop) within a Eucharistic liturgy. If baptized as adults, right after the baptism (by the priest)
Eucharist	A church or approved chapel or oratory
Marriage	For a Catholic couple – The parish church of the bride, or approved chapel or oratory, within a Eucharistic liturgy. For one Catholic and one baptized Christian- A Catholic church or approved chapel or oratory, or another Christian church (with permission from the bishop) For one Catholic and one not baptized - A “dignified place.” Two non-Catholics may not be married in a Catholic church or by Catholic clergy
Holy Orders	The cathedral (on a Sunday) within a Eucharistic liturgy
Reconciliation	Anywhere
Anointing	Anywhere

Word and Symbol

The sacraments not only presume faith but by words and objects they also nourish, strengthen, and express it.

“*lex orandi, lex credendi*” “The law of prayer is the law of faith” the Church believes as she prays.

Belief leads to prayer, prayer strengthens belief

When celebrated in faith, the sacraments *confer* the grace that they *signify*.

The Sacraments are efficacious because in them Christ himself is at work.

A sacrament recalls the action of Jesus by word and symbol

For example, the action of washing with water (the symbol) in Baptism brings about a cleansing from sin

By going down into the water, we are buried with Christ

in coming back up we rise with him from death (this is the reason for full immersion baptism) we are permanently joined to Jesus by sacramentally acting out his death and resurrection

This sacramental “remembering” (or *anamnesis*) takes the past event and brings it forward

For example, the Eucharist recalls the death and resurrection of Jesus

we don't *re-sacrifice* Jesus but we make present *anew* his saving deeds – literally *re-member*, make new; rather like playing a piece of sheet music allows us to re-experience the presence of the composer at once both historical and brand new, like the head of a household who brings from his storeroom both the new and the old (Matthew 13:52)”

The sacraments act “*ex opere operato*” “by the very fact of the action’s being performed”

“the sacrament is not wrought by the righteousness of the celebrant or the recipient but by the power of God.”

For example, two people receive communion. When the minister says, “receive the body of Christ.”

One person says “amen,” receives in faith and gets the grace of the sacrament – the Body of Christ.

The other one thinks “what nonsense!”

and receives only bread because by their lack of faith they block the sacramental grace present.

The effect (or validity) of the sacrament does not depend on the “worthiness” of the minister

For example the priest who says the consecration but does so without faith,

The people, so long as *they* have faith, receive the Body of Christ and the sacramental grace, even though the priest has rejected the grace.

The rule “*ecclesia suplet*” (the church supplies) applies
the church supplies the grace missing in the minister.

The Necessity of the Sacraments

Catholics are sacramental people – each part of our lives is lived around the sacraments

they are the tools we have to live a righteous life and come at the end to the joys of heaven

The Church affirms that for believers, the sacraments are necessary for salvation

because *Christ* is necessary for salvation:

The Church does not know of any means other than Baptism that assures entry into eternal beatitude; this is why she takes care not to neglect the mission she has received from the Lord to see that all who can be baptized are "reborn of water and the Spirit." God has bound salvation to the sacrament of Baptism, but he himself is not bound by his sacraments (CCC 1257)

Notice that the statement “the church does not know” does not imply there are *no* other means of salvation, there may be other paths (see Gaduim et Spes, *the Church in the Modern World*” 22.5) for people of good will. Only God knows for sure!

Sacraments - Focus Questions

- 1) The sacraments encompass our faith life – they are a direct encounter with the risen Lord. Have I ever felt the presence of the Lord at a Liturgy? When and where are some of the other times I have experienced the Lord's presence? How are these experiences the same? Different? Do we really need the liturgy?
- 2) We should feel “energized” by a sacramental liturgy. Which sacrament holds the most meaning for you? The Mass? Baptisms? Reconciliation? Marriage? Which one could you do without? Should we add any new ones?
- 3) In our Catholic understanding sacred place is important to ritual and liturgy. Why do you think this is? Does it make a difference if we are married in a church or on the beach at sunset? Are some places really more holy than others? What makes them that way?
- 4) Grace flows to us through the sacrament regardless of the minister – even a bad priest can celebrate Mass so the grace is there. Does the presider of the sacrament make a difference to you? How about the one receiving the sacrament – do they need to be properly disposed? Can they block the grace available?

Baptism

The basics:

Baptism comes from the Greek *baptizein* meaning “to wash.”

As a sacrament we can find its origin in Scripture:

In the Jewish tradition, there was a ceremonial bath (the *mikvah*) symbolizing the cleansing from sin after penance.

We get an echo of this in the story of Naaman the Syrian leper (leprosy was seen as punishment for sin):

The prophet sent him the message: "Go and wash seven times in the Jordan, and your flesh will heal, and you will be clean." (2 Kings 5:10)

In the New Testament, the figure of John the Baptist is associated with the coming of the Lord and the forgiveness of sins:

And you, child, will be called prophet of the Most High, for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways, to give his people knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins, (Luke 1:76-77)

John's baptism differs from our sacramental baptism in that John's was a baptism of repentance, enabling people to be reconciled to God through the forgiveness of sin.

Our sacramental baptism today is a baptism into the Lord Jesus, into his Paschal Mystery – his dying and rising

We see John carrying out his ministry of Baptism – even to the point of baptizing Jesus:

Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan to be baptized by him. (Matthew 3:13)

John (the) Baptist appeared in the desert proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins (Mark 1:4)

(John) went throughout (the) whole region of the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins (Luke 3:2b-3)

John answered them, "I baptize with water..." (John 1:26)

The practice of baptism was quickly adopted by the early Church:

Peter (said) to them, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the holy Spirit. (Acts 2:38)

Then he ordered the chariot to stop, and Philip and the eunuch both went down into the water, and he baptized him.(Acts 8:38)

Paul's reflections on baptism form the basis for our current understanding of it:

Or are you unaware that we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were indeed buried with him through baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might live in newness of life. For if we have grown into union with him through a death like his, we shall also be united with him in the resurrection.(Rom 6:3-5)

If we share Jesus' dying we will share in his rising and, with him, inherit eternal life.

The history of baptism:

In the early church (pre 325 AD), baptism was usually done on adults, not infants:

Joining the church put you at risk of persecution – a solemn decision only an adult could make for themselves

Although there was a tradition of whole families being baptized at one time
see the story of Peter baptizing the household of Cornelius in Acts 10:44-49

In baptism you joined the Christian community – and they had to make sure you weren't a Roman spy!

It often took years for people to be accepted into the community – it was a matter of safety for the community

As time went on, the understanding of Baptism began to emphasize the removal of sin rather than joining the community.

By now Christianity was the official religion of the Roman Empire
there was no longer a risk of persecution or need for secrecy.

People (like the emperor Constantine) often put off baptism until they were at the point of death;

If I get baptized, I have to lead a holy life – no partying or sinning any more

So, I will join the Christian community but party on until I am old – then get baptized

All my sins will be forgiven (true) and I can still go to heaven after a sinful life (have my cake and eat it too!)

Obviously this turns baptism into some kind of “magic” and the church tried to discourage it.

What is the role of baptism?

It is the First Sacrament

The defining sacrament for a Christian; we are Christians *because* we are baptized.

All other sacraments require baptism for reception.

Why?

With baptism we enter the Christian community; God comes to us in community, our sanctification is through the community; we come to God through other people

But what about sin?

Baptism is linked to sin; to understand this requires another section!

What is sin?

Breaking of a law; doing ‘wrong’; hurting another

This is the ‘legal’ (law-based) approach to sin.

Destroying a relationship; with God / neighbor / self.

This is the ‘relational’ approach to sin

Point: Sin is about both; but we stress the relational approach because it makes more sense:

Sin is an attitude, a stance, that says "no" to God. Our relationship with God is broken

From this sinful attitude / broken relationship comes sinful actions.

From those sinful actions flow the broken relationships with our neighbors and our selves

We don’t just break our relationship with God but we build up a wall between us and Him.

Jesus breaks down this wall of sin.

He is the bridge over the canyon of sin that separates us from God. True God and true man, he bridges the gap.

Original Sin is that fundamental alienation from God that we all have at birth

The world is not as God intended; sin and death were never part of God's original plan.

They come about from our basic “disconnectedness” with God – the primal sin of Adam and Eve our first parents

Scripture tells the story of how they disobeyed God and ate the forbidden fruit, the knowledge of good and evil.

In so doing our human nature, our essence, became broken – estranged from God.

Baptism heals our essence that was stained by original sin

Personal sin is our own alienation from God; the wall we build between God and us

Baptism also heals individual (personal) sin. If we fall into sin later, the sacrament of reconciliation heals us.

Baptism, then:

Joins us to Jesus and the Christian community

We become his brothers and sisters, adopted children of God. We will receive all he has received; suffering and death, but also resurrection and glory.

Washes away original and personal sin

Because we are united with Jesus, our original estrangement from God is fixed; the relationship is restored.

The slate is wiped clean. If we sin again, we have recourse to the sacrament of reconciliation.

In summary:

Jesus came to reconcile us with God. In baptism, we are united with Christ; we ‘die’ with him and ‘rise’ with him. Our sins are forgiven; we become a new creation. We join the Church, which is his ‘body.’ United in love with the community, we experience Jesus in the sacraments and each other.

The Symbols of Baptism

Water

What do you do with it?

Drink it, wash with it, swim in it

Water is powerful stuff

Water in the desert. The Israelites lived in a desert region; water was very much on their minds

Dual nature of water:

Source of life – need water to live, example of Sea of Galilee, we are born from the waters of our mother's womb

Source of death – drowning (dark and cold) no air (breath), example of the Dead Sea, storms at sea.

As a people the Israelites were saved from slavery by a journey across the Red Sea; salvation to them, death to the Egyptians.

Water cleanses;

Removes dirt, stains

Removes ritual impurity; the stain of sin

Most rituals start with personal purification; blessing with sign of cross, priest washes before Eucharist.

Beginning of life starts with ritual washing – baptism

Immerse / Pour

Immersion; stresses the dual nature of water;

Die and rise. Sink down into the water (drown); die to our old life. Rise from death to new life.

The Paschal Mystery; Jesus dies and rises. We are joined to it in our dying and rising at baptism; it is what we celebrate at every Eucharist. If we are united to him, all he has will be ours; eternal life in the Kingdom.

We sink down, exhale and give up our breath (spirit); we rise up, gasp for air and breathe in a new spirit.

Pouring; stresses ritual purification

We are washed clean from all stain of sin; original and personal. All Jewish prayer started with a ritual bath.

We will baptize you by full immersion and saying:

"I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit."

Name

Why is a name important?

Names have power; we call upon the name of the Lord in prayer. We become what we are named; we live up to our nicknames – good or bad.

We are each unique; each of us has the dignity of a name.

To name something is to somehow own it; to claim it, to legitimize. We recognize this when we name our children.

Names establish a relationship; you – me, I – Thou

We are called by name

God gives people names when he intervenes in their lives;

Abram is named Abraham, Jacob is called Israel, Simon is named Peter.

You will be baptized by name: *"John Smith, I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit"*

Candle

What do you do with a candle?

Light it, use as a guide in the dark

Light; illuminates

The candle flame drives off darkness; there is a universal fear of the dark, bad things happen in the dark.

Judas betrayed Jesus at night.

Dark is a metaphor for sin so light is a metaphor for goodness. St. Paul says we are children of light.

Jesus is the light of the world; dispelling the darkness of sin and death.

The baptismal candle recalls the Easter candle, lit from the blessed fire at the Easter Vigil.

Fire; complex symbol (a symbol within a symbol)

Associated with the sacred, burnt offerings rise to heaven (where God is)

Fire is intangible; see / feel its effects but not itself. Consumes without being filled; is divided without being dimmed. Can be fragile; holding a promise – a spark. Can be awesome; powerful – like a forest fire.

Faith; is like fire

Tongues of fire rest on the apostles at Pentecost. We are “inflamed” with love of Jesus. Our “hearts were burning inside of us” when he walked with us to Emmaus. Like fire, *faith* needs to be tended or it will go out. We will light a candle from the Easter candle and hand it to the godparents (who hold it for you) saying: *“Receive the light of Christ.”*

Olive Oil

What do you do with oil?

Food, medicine, fuel

Oil; crushed from olives

Crushing extracts the “essence” from the fruit; it concentrates its goodness. Comes only after being crushed; our lives yield their essence only after being “crushed”; *our* suffering unites us with *Jesus’* suffering.

Oil is valuable, always highly prized. It takes a lot of olives to make a little oil.

Why olive oil?

Vegetable oil from a *living* source (not 10-W-30!)

Olive trees live a long time; hundreds of years. They are very slow growing; a person plants an olive tree for their grandchildren. They are a symbol of peace because they take so long to mature (trees are often a casualty of war).

Uses of olive oil;

Staple food of the Middle East; eaten every day.

Fuel; burned in lamps. Illuminate the darkness.

Healing / strengthening properties, used as a medicine; soothing to skin. Wounds were dressed with wine and oil.

Used in anointing; a ritual of designation. The ancient Hebrews anointed priests, prophets and kings

Perfumed oil

One oil (the sacred Chrism) contains perfume, the other (the oil of catechumens) does not.

Perfume acts as a metaphor for the Holy Spirit. You can’t see perfume (you can’t see a smell), but you know it is there. Perfume is rich / costly / luxurious; important people (like kings) use perfume.

The Chrism is *consecrated* for use rather than *blessed* as is the oil of catechumens; the bishop breathes on it, changing its essence. The perfume symbolizes this change.

We will use oil in the baptism ceremony:

After the pouring of water, sacred chrism is used *“that you may remain for ever a member of Christ who is Priest, Prophet, and King.”*

White garment

Why a white garment?

A white garment would have been hard to obtain in ancient times.

Only a newly made garment would be clean and white.

New clothing

We take off the old and put on the new; we are re-created, the slate is wiped clean, we start fresh.

There is no stain of dirt on our clothes or sin on our soul. We have put on Christ like a suit of clothes

In ancient times;

The newly baptized would wear their new garment for a week in the community as a sign of their initiation.

After your baptism, you will dry off and put on a new garment (a tunic): *“you have become a new creation and clothed yourselves in Christ.”*

The Community

Why baptize at the Easter Vigil?

God calls us; to relationship with him, relationship with one another.

The assembled community witnesses the baptism and receives the newly baptized.

God works in groups

In the Old Testament, God rescued the Israelites as a people from slavery in Egypt, brought them safely to the land of Canaan. He gave them the Law on Mt. Sinai, he punished them as a people and then restored them as a people.

In the New Testament, Jesus gathered groups of people around him; the 12, the 72. His miracles were public affairs, he fed thousands at a time. He told his disciples to go into all the world and proclaim the good news (Mt 28:19).

We learn about God from someone else, our faith is "handed on" to us by parents, catechists and others.

Godparents

Represent the community, model a Christian lifestyle for the catechumen as they grow in faith.

The catechumens are asking to be received into the community; the community has the duty of helping the catechumens be formed in faith.

An aside - Why do Catholics baptize babies?

It is our tradition – from the earliest times we baptized babies

In ancient times, babies often died shortly after birth

Parents wanted to be with their children in heaven – felt that if they weren't baptized, they wouldn't be

Our vision today is that children who die before baptism are "in the arms of Jesus"

When parents ask for baptism of their children, they commit to raising the child in the Catholic faith

At confirmation age (the "age of reason") the child will elect on his own what his parents did

They are "confirmed" in their baptism

Infant baptism shows the power of Jesus

That his redemption is so powerful that even those who can't cooperate in it can take advantage of it

It also shows his love

That grace is available to all (even babies) as a free gift – as long as we don't block it

Baptism – Focus Questions:

What does “dying and rising” mean to you? Physical death? Intense personal experience?

If you could have only one thing to help you through life, what would it be? Money? A good job? Faith?

If sin is seen as alienation from God, what does it mean to “fall into sin?” Is sin an attitude or an action? Is it possible to fall into sin without knowing it?

The Church has always distinguished between “mortal” (very serious, 'killing) and “venial” (less serious) sin. Is there a difference between the two? Are some sins worse than others? Can a relationship be “bent” but not “broken?”

Baptism removes both personal and Original sin. What is the difference between the two? How can a newborn baby be in a state of sin? Shouldn't we wait until the person can understand sin before baptizing them?

The Sacrament of Reconciliation – when things go wrong.

Reconciliation is a sacrament of healing.

We need healing when we “get off the track” and are estranged from God.

Since God is the source of life (and health), if the relationship with God is diminished, so is our health

This can be both spiritual and physical health – the soul and body are one: “body-soul”

As the soul is healthy, so is the body.

Sin is the term for this estrangement, the cause of the sickness.

The reality of sin

When we neglect our relationship with God,

When we forget who He is and who we are, and forget how much he loves us
we allow Sin to take root in our hearts.

Sin is the name we give to this state of *alienation* from God

It is something we fall into – like quicksand; it tries to draw us under the mud and suffocate us

It is a result of life choices we have made – choices to turn away from God;

We follow our own selfish desires rather than being open to people around us.

Ultimately sin is *selfishness* – “I want what I want when I want it”

It ignores the other relationships in our lives – relationships with God and other people

In a state of sin, my thinking becomes clouded – I become the measure of all things. I think that:

A person or thing has value only to the extent it benefits me, things without immediate benefit are worthless

If I want something, then it is OK to have it – and how I go about getting it doesn't matter

People who try and frustrate my desires – tell me I can't have what I want – are my enemies

And it is OK to hurt them if they try and prevent me from getting what I want.

As Christians we want to have an enriching, positive relationship with God;

Sin destroys this relationship and a fundamental task of all Christians is to fight sin in their lives.

As Catholics, our primary weapon against sin is the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

Where does sin come from?

God is the creator of the entire universe (us included)

We are created in his *image* and *likeness*,

we share his power of *reason* and his faculty of *free will* (Gen 1)

The world is not as God originally intended it

God *intended* us to live in perfect harmony with him.

Through an act of *disobedience*, humans became separated from God (Gen 3).

We call this separation *Original Sin*. It is part of our human heritage and it affects us all.

Through this initial separation from God, sin came into the world

And the result of sin is death: (Rom 6:23)

both our *physical* death at the end of our lives

and our *spiritual* death through personal sin

In spite of this, God still calls us to himself

God is always reaching out to us saying, “Will you love me?”

There is something within us that replies "Here I am!" when God calls our name (1 Sam 3:10)

To help us return to him, God sent Jesus Christ into the world (John 3:16)

God is present in us and in the world in a new and powerful way through his son, Jesus

This is the *Good News* of the *Kingdom of God*

Through the *obedience* of Jesus, the *disobedience* of our first parents was overridden (Rom 5:19)

Through the Holy Spirit we have the strength to resist sin and live a life of grace.

The Sacrament of Baptism unites us with Jesus; all that he has will become ours (Rom 6:3)
Because of this union, Original Sin (the echo of our first parent's disobedience) is wiped away.
But it is still possible to fall into *Personal Sin*;

God gives us free will – we have the freedom to ignore his call; to turn our backs on him.
When we chose to return to God, the Sacrament of Reconciliation is the means we use.

Unlike Baptism which is a once-in-a-lifetime event; we (should) receive reconciliation frequently
Before significant life events (marriage, ordination, reception into the Church, etc.)
Before significant seasons during the year (Christmas, Easter, etc.)
Whenever we fall into a state of serious sin
And whenever our conscience is bothering us!

How does reconciliation work?

Sin doesn't happen all at once – it is a *process* of removing ourselves from the presence of God
Likewise *healing* from sin (reconciliation) is a process – of returning to the light of God's grace.

First – reconciliation requires an internal conversion. (CCC 1430)

We must undergo conversion; turning away from our selfish habits and returning to God.

We must become aware of the harm our state of sin has caused – to ourselves and to those around us

We must desire to change our lives; to form an intent (with God's help) to avoid sin in the future.

The technical name for this conversion is *contrition*

We foster contrition by an *examination of the conscience*

A mental inventory of relationships in our lives; how they are going and which ones need to be repaired.

Many formulas are available; the Ten Commandments and Sermon on the Mount are two staples

When we turn from Sin motivated solely by the love of God; this is called "*perfect contrition*"

Even serious sins (as well as less serious sins) can be forgiven by this – if we also resolve not to sin again.

When we turn from sin for fear of punishment; this is called "*imperfect contrition*"

Although this will not forgive serious sins, it does provide proper disposition to receive the sacrament

Second – we must begin the journey back to God.

This usually entails a public acknowledgment of our sins;

We need to face our sins;

To confront them honestly and openly; striving to overcome them with God's help.

We do this by admitting our sins first to *ourselves* and then to *another person*;

Of course, with anything as personal as sin, we need to be careful who we admit them to

Priests are the natural choice;

they not only hear our sins and counsel us, but they alone can give us sacramental absolution

The technical term for this admitting of sin is *confession*

It is the primary *external* thing the penitent does in the sacrament of reconciliation

With the aid of a wise confessor, our confession purges us of the remorse associated with our sin

We are freed from any externally imposed burden of shame; we can wipe our hands clean and start anew.

During the confession, the penitent:

expresses *remorse* (sorrow) for their sins

expresses an *intent* to change their behavior so they will not commit this kind of sin in the future.

Without an expression of sorrow and an intent to change, the priest is unable to give absolution

What would be the point? *God* knows if you aren't sorry or don't intend to sin again

The absolution (because it comes from God) wouldn't work anyway!

Third – once our sins are admitted, we have the desire (and responsibility) to *remedy* the harm we have caused.

It is impossible to sin and not harm someone else; there are no victim-less sins.

We obviously harm others by our sinful actions growing out of our own selfishness

Less obvious (perhaps) is the harm we do to *ourselves* through our sin;

depriving others of the benefits of a relationship with us, with the gifts we might have given them.
society is impoverished when we chose sin and selfishness over the common good.

And we may also have a physiological expression (illness) of the disruption caused by Sin
which calls for the Sacrament of Anointing.

We must try to correct the wrongs we have done; repair the damage done to society and to ourselves

The technical term for trying to fix what we have broken is *satisfaction*;

Simple justice requires that we try to do so, as does our position of conversion and intent to sin no more.

In the Sacrament of Reconciliation, the priest and the penitent agree on a *penance*;
some positive thing we can do to heal the hurt we have done.

The penance will depend on the sins;

we may be asked to return something we have stolen or apologize to someone we have wronged.

However, there may be times when this is neither *possible* nor *advisable*,

so another penance may be devised; prayer, works of charity, and so forth.

Finally – once we have decided to attempt to mend the harm we have caused, we experience forgiveness by:

1) Confronting and admitting our sins, 2) making a determination to heal their harm and 3) trying to sin no more

Once done, we can experience the forgiveness of our sin
and the reconciliation with God, neighbor and self

At the end of the sacrament, the priest speaks the words of absolution:

“God, the Father of mercies,

through the death and the 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.”

Important notes:

Only God forgives sin;

“God, the Father of mercies ... has reconciled the world to himself”

God is the one doing the forgiving – not the priest.

As soon as we repent our sins and make a firm intent to sin no longer, we are forgiven.

If we are killed by a truck on the way to confession, the sins we *would have* confessed are forgiven!

Sin has a social dimension

“through the ministry of the Church”

Sin *always* hurts our relationship with others so reconciliation has to involve those we have hurt.

The priest in the sacrament is a representative of the community (the church)

he speaks for the community when he receives the sinner back into the community.

Jesus is at the heart for reconciliation

The priest (as visible figure of Christ’s presence) speaks the words of absolution in Christ’s name

Christ intended to give this ability to the church:

“I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be

bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. (Matthew 16:19)”

“Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained. (John 20:23)”

Through the apostolic delegation of Peter and his successors, (the bishops of Rome – Popes)

priests are able to absolve sins in the name of the Church.

This comes about by the power of the Holy Spirit – not the worthiness of the priest. He is merely an instrument that God uses to assure the penitent they are truly forgiven.

Liturgical Celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation

There are three “rites” or forms of celebration:

Rite 1:

This is the traditional one-on-one meeting between penitent and confessor, and is the norm for the sacrament:

It is the most personal of all sacraments so it is probably the most flexible. It usually consists of:

The penitent goes to the priest who welcomes them and invites them to sit down.

It may take place face-to-face or with the penitent behind a screen, hidden from the priest.

The Priest (or the penitent) may open with a brief prayer.

If the penitent is not known to the priest, the penitent usually gives information about their situation.

The priest and penitent usually share a scripture reading.

Often the penitent selects a passage that is meaningful to them, relating to their particular sins.

The penitent explains (confesses) their sins, under the guidance of the priest, and expresses sorrow for them.

Often the priest will counsel the penitent, advising helpful courses of action.

The priest and penitent agree on a penance, something the penitent can do to make amends for their sins.

This is highly personal and usually involves some kind of change in behavior on the part of the penitent

Usually the penitent makes an “**Act of Contrition**”. The traditional form is:

“O my God, I am heartily sorry for having offended you, and I detest all my sins, because of Your just punishments, but most of all because they offend You, my God, who are all-good and deserving of all my love. I firmly resolve, with the help of Your grace, to sin no more and to avoid the near occasion of sin.”

The priest prays the words of absolution over the penitent

The priest and penitent exchange a sign of peace

The penitent leaves and performs their penance as soon as is practical.

Rite 2:

This is the communal rite with communal confession but with individual absolution.

The community gathers as a group in the church.

A Liturgy of the Word is celebrated.

As a group, the assembly prays a general prayer of confession

This can take many forms and usually sins are “generic” rather than specific.

Each person then goes to the priest (or priests) to receive the words of absolution

The service often ends with a sign of peace.

This is not the “normal” way people are to celebrate the sacrament – Rite 1 is.

There is an obligation on the part of the penitent to go to individual reconciliation in the case of serious sin.

Rite 3:

This is the communal rite with communal confession and communal absolution.

The celebration is the same as Rite 2 but the priest speaks the words of absolution over all, not one-by-one.

This rite is reserved for an emergency (like a sinking boat) where there is no time for the individual rite.

This rite is not used in the Archdiocese of Detroit

A note on indulgences

Yes, we still have them. No, they don't work the way you think they do.

An *indulgence* cancels out the temporal punishment for sin that the penitent has:

Confessed but not yet done their *penance* for

Did *not* confess but *would have* had they been able to (or understand the gravity of the situation).

It does *not* apply to:

People who are not sorry for their sins

People who intend to sin, but want a “get out of hell free card” before they do;

to be excused for a sin they intend to commit before they commit it (can't fool God, remember?)

The good things that Jesus and the Saints did while alive (the “treasury of merit”)

can be applied (only by the church!) to correctly disposed people in remission of *punishment* of sin

Working out of the penance for our sins is a form of spiritual purification.

Indulgences speed this process along through the prayers of the church through the Communion of Saints.

In past times, indulgences were abused (sold)

they are one of the things Martin Luther protested against

A note on Purgatory.

Spiritual purification should start right now on earth while we are alive

Acts of purification include prayer, fasting and alms-giving – all designed to ready us for the Kingdom of God

Ideally, this purification is completed before our deaths and we are ready to enter the Kingdom of heaven.

If (for whatever reason) this purification is not completed before death;

We are *unready* for heaven but *undeserving* of hell

Purgatory is the state in which this purification will take place.

We remain in this state of purification, helped by the prayers of the church, until we are ready for heaven

Catholic tradition teaches that the prayers of the living can help the dead (and the dead can pray for the living).

again, this is possible because of the Communion of Saints

The link we all have with one another because of our link with Jesus.

Sin and Law

We often think of sin as breaking a law – either God's law or society's law.

Law is the wall we build around something we value; laws define and protect social norms.

They are useful for social stability and help us to focus our behavior

However, an *overemphasis* on law can lead to an attitude of *minimalism* – what is the least I have to do?

This attitude should have no place in a relationship of love!

Imagine saying to your spouse, “Honey, what is the *least* I have to do for you to love me.?”

Jesus calls us to “love one another as I have loved you (Jn 13:34)” deeply, completely and radically

There is no room for minimalism – rather there is a joyful sharing of love between the parties.

An Examination of Conscience

Lord, Jesus, enlighten my heart, that I may see myself as you see me, a child of the God, noble in dignity yet burdened by sin. Help me to know my sins and to lay them at the foot of your cross, so that by your holy blood you may wash me clean. Amen.

- Do I love God with my whole heart? Or am I more concerned about the things of this world? Do I allow my faith in Christ to be the center of my life?
- Do I show reverence for God's name?
- Do I participate in Church Services? Is my participation attentive and prayerful?
- Do I prayerfully prepare to receive the sacrament of Eucharist? Do I receive communion as a means of grace-filled union with Christ, or only out of habit or convention?
- Are there false gods in my life which I worship by giving them greater attention and deeper trust than I give to God, e.g. money, power, pleasure, peer approval, superstition? Are decisions in my life prompted by greed?
- Do I have a genuine love of people, or do I use them simply as a means to an end? Do I show my love by respectful interaction and thoughtful courtesy?
- Do I fulfill my duties to parents and family? Do I show my love and respect for members of my family? Do I appreciate them sufficiently?
- Have I been respectful, obedient and cooperative to those who have legitimate authority over me or some part of my life?
- Have I been truthful and honest? Have I been deceptive or unnecessarily secretive? Have I broken a trust? Have I spoken honestly and respectfully of others?
- Have I respected all human life? Have I allowed anger, hatred or bitterness to interfere in my relationships? Have I abused alcohol or any other substance? Have I driven recklessly, or endangered my life or others' lives in any way?
- Do I take proper care of my body, and give due attention to my physical health?
- Do I defend the dignity of all human life, or do I minimize the value of some people?
- Have I stolen property of others? Have I practiced the self-discipline appropriate to my state in life? Have I avoided lust by practicing sexual modesty and chastity in my choice of TV, movies, internet, clothing, dance, etc.? Have I refrained from sexual activity outside of marriage?
- Do I avoid the persons, places or situations which are "near occasions of sin?"
- Do I willingly accept the sufferings which come my way as a means of sharing in the Cross of Christ? Or do I grumble and resent any inconvenience?
- Do I compromise my faith in Jesus by going along with the sinful ways of the world?
- Do I strive to give good example to others? Do I encourage them to make right choices?
- Do I remain humble, even when I have done something well? Am I arrogant?
- Do I admit mistakes when I make them, and seek forgiveness promptly? Am I quick to forgive those who have offended me or do I hold grudges?
- Have I been grateful to God and others for their kindness and generosity to me?
- Is my concern for the poor and less fortunate only superficial, or do I actually take time and find ways to assist them?
- Do I focus too much time/ energy/ attention on my personal concerns, and not enough on the concerns of others? Am I envious or resentful of the good fortune of others?
- Do I really strive to grow closer to Christ? To follow him more faithfully? To surrender my life to him?

- Do I pray daily? Do I give prayer the priority that it deserves? Is part of my daily prayer an examination of conscience? Do I pray for the needs of others, or remain enclosed in my own personal concerns?

How to go to Confession

- 1 EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE; how have you—in your thoughts, words, and actions—neglected to live Christ’s commands to “love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind,” and to “love your neighbor as yourself.” Done BEFORE you go to confession.
- 2 GREETING: The priest will welcome you; he may say a short blessing or read a Scripture passage.
- 3 THE SIGN OF THE CROSS: Together, you and the priest will make the Sign of the Cross. You may then begin your confession with these or similar words:
“Bless me, Father, for I have sinned. It has been [give days, months, or years] since my last confession.”
- 4 CONFESSION: Confess all your sins to the priest. If you are unsure what to say, ask the priest for help. When you are finished, conclude with these or similar words:
“I am sorry for these and all my sins.”
- 5 PENANCE: The priest will propose an act of penance. The penance might be prayer, a work of mercy, or an act of charity. He might also counsel you on how to better live a Christian life.
- 6 ACT OF CONTRITION: After the priest has conferred your penance, pray an Act of Contrition, expressing sorrow for your sins and resolving to sin no more.
“My God, I am sorry for my sins with all my heart. In choosing to do wrong and failing to do good, I have sinned against you whom I should love above all things. I firmly intend, with your help, to do penance, to sin no more, and to avoid whatever leads me to sin. Our Savior Jesus Christ suffered and died for us. In his name, my God, have mercy. (Rite of Penance, no. 45)
- 7 ABSOLUTION: The priest will extend his hands over your head and pronounce the words of absolution. You respond, “Amen.”
- 8 PRAISE: The priest will usually praise the mercy of God and will invite you to do the same. For example, the priest may say, “Give thanks to the Lord for he is good.” And your response would be, “His mercy endures for ever” (Rite of Penance, no. 47).
- 9 DISMISSAL: The priest will conclude the sacrament, often saying, “Go in peace.”

Don't forget to do your penance!

Reconciliation – Focus Questions:

Think of someone who has hurt you. Would you accept their apology? Would you have Preconditions for forgiveness? What happens when you refuse to forgive?

Think of someone you have hurt. How would you ask forgiveness? What would you do if they didn't forgive you?

“But I say to you, everyone who looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart. Mt 5:28)” Do you agree with this? Why would thoughts be sinful? Is a sin only something you do?

Can something be legal and still sinful? Can you think of an example? Are we required to obey unjust laws?

Marriage – The Two Shall Become One

Marriage in Scripture

Begins with the creation of man and woman in the image and likeness of God

“Then God said: “Let us make men and women in our image, after our likeness (Gn 1:26)”

Concludes with a vision of “the wedding-feast of the Lamb.”

“the wedding day of the Lamb has come, his bride has made herself ready (Rev 19:7)”

Marriage is not a purely human institution; God himself is the author of marriage

God who created human beings out of love also calls them to love,

and love is the “fundamental calling” of every person

Human beings are created in the image and likeness of God who is himself love

their mutual love becomes an image of the absolute and unfailing love with which God loves us

God sees this love and blesses it – it is “very, very good.”

Men and woman were created for one another

“It is not good that the man should be alone. (Gn 2:18)”

The Woman, “flesh of his flesh,” is his equal, his nearest in all things

God gives them to each other that the *“two will become one flesh. (Gn 2:24)”*

Jesus himself teaches that this is an unbreakable union of two lives,

What God has joined together must not be torn apart (Mk 10:9)

Unfortunately the reality of Sin that tears us apart from God also tears us apart from one another:

As soon as he had eaten the fruit, Adam blamed his disobedience on his wife, Eve. (Gn 3:12)

We see the discord caused by Sin spreading until God regretted his creation (Noah and the flood).

Note that this discord / broken relationship is the result of Sin and is *not* in the nature of men and women.

Marriage in Law

In the Jewish Law, the rights of married couples is spelled out – including the right to divorce

The Law of Moses aims at protecting a wife from arbitrary domination by her husband.

In later Jewish thought marriage is seen as an image of the covenant God made with His people;.

”You will be my people and I will be your God. (Lev 26:12)”

A covenant is an unconditional, permanent relationship between two parties.

It takes the form of a sacred oath, sealed often with sacrifice (like Abraham’s sacrifice in Gn 15:18)

Since God is party to the covenant, it is permanent and cannot be dissolved (it lasts as long as God – forever)

Even if *we* are unfaithful to the covenant, *God* will remain faithful – because faithfulness is God’s nature.

Jesus confirmed the dignity of marriage by choosing the wedding at Cana for his first public miracle (Jn 2:1-11)

From this point on, it is clear that marriage is a good and desirable state of life;

It is blessed by God and a sign (a sacramental sign!) of God’s presence.

It is also clear that the presence of Jesus in a marriage transforms those who enter into the marriage.

just as the water was transformed into wine at the wedding feast at Cana,

the man and woman in marriage are transformed into something new and very special

In his teaching, Jesus returns to the original understanding of marriage (before the Law of Moses)

that marriage is a permanent and indissoluble bond between those who are his disciples.

This original state of marriage was disturbed by Sin,

but Jesus has come to set things right; he himself will provide the grace / strength to live it out.

Since Jesus establishes the *new* law in his Body and Blood, (Lk 22:20),

Christian marriage becomes a sign of the *new covenant* God has established with human beings

Men and women are to love one another as Christ loves the Church

“Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ loved the church and handed himself over for her (Eph 5:25)”

“It is by following Christ, renouncing themselves, and taking up their crosses

that spouses will be able to "receive" the original meaning of marriage

and live it with the help of Christ. (CCC - Catechism of the Catholic Church 1615)”

Marriage as a Sacrament

It is clear from Scripture that Christ intended to establish marriage as a special opportunity of grace.

In our Catholic tradition, we have always regarded marriage as a sacrament (as has the Orthodox Church)

Many of the Protestant churches have dropped marriage as a sacrament because:

a) Jesus does not *explicitly* command his disciples to observe it (as he did Baptism and Eucharist.)

b) At the time of the Reformation there were abuses surrounding the administration of the sacrament.

Because of this, in Protestant churches marriage became a secular institution rather than a religious one.

Because the sacramental / religious aspect was lost, the permanent / indissoluble aspect was also lost.

Divorce became an available course of action to resolve marital disputes.

Our Catholic understanding of marriage holds that:

1. Marriage is a *covenant*.

Modeled on God’s covenant with Israel and Jesus’ relationship with the Church.

It requires and supports an unconditional, unrestricted love between the man and woman

In marriage we are to ‘love one another as Christ loves the Church.’

And this love is so great that God was even willing to die for his people.

2. Established between a woman and a man *by themselves*.

Consent makes the marriage – two people are married because they freely *choose* to be married

The Church’s minister merely witnesses the marriage and gives the Church’s blessing;

it is the couple who *do* the marriage

Without consent, there is no marriage;

the nature of a covenant requires that the relationship be freely entered into.

3. It is a partnership of the *whole of life*.

This is because marriage is a covenant entered into prayerfully with free consent of both parties;

Marriage requires (and supports) a total commitment of the partners, a total fidelity of body and mind.

The two become one flesh – nothing is held back, no part of life is excluded

Because of the unity of the man and women,

sacramental marriage is a permanent bond that cannot be dissolved.

if there is a defect in the consent, a lack of discretion or other impediment,

the marriage (although still civilly valid) may not be sacramental.

4. It has twin goals; the *good of the spouses*, and the *creation and education of children*.

The good of the spouses (each other)

The couple’s love for one another, flowing from the divine love, it should nourish them

It is in fulfilling the needs of the other that our needs are met;

It is in the fullness of our giving that we receive the fullness of love ourselves

Marriage is about the *other* – changing your life focus from self-love to love of the other.

You do not lose your identity with in the marriage;
rather, you can grow into the person God wants you to be *within* the context of the relationship.

The good of children

Love within marriage is a *fruitful* love – children are the fruit of the relationship
a visible sign of God’s grace and the love of the spouses.

Through children, we share in God’s work of creation; we become co-creators with him.

Since the family is the context that the children are nurtured in;

married couples have the responsibility to:

a) provide a stable, supportive, loving family environment for their children

b) provide for their welfare, education (secular and spiritual) and upbringing as best they can

5. And these goals are part of the *nature* of marriage.

As we saw above, marriage is a divine institution; it was established by God for our benefit.

We need a companion for our life’s journey; someone we can share all things with.

We need intimacy,

to express love and be loved in turn, to affirm and be affirmed at all levels;

emotional, physical and spiritual

6. Between the baptized, marriage is a *sacrament*.

Marriage not only *requires* commitment but *supports* it.

A man and woman, freely giving one another their consent to live in a sacramental union,

truly become one flesh – just as the bread and wine become the body and blood of Jesus

As baptized people, we are already united with Christ; we share in his life, and his Spirit dwells
within us.

When we are married, this becomes a source of grace for us; the grace that is the very life of God.

It is the grace of God – received through the sacrament – that makes marriage possible.

Sacred Sexuality

The Church is very careful when it speaks of marriage – it is at once deeply personal and highly public.

It is both the foundation of our society and the means of ensuring future generations.

The *essence* of married life is the joining of man and woman as one – this finds physical expression in
the marital act itself

Catholics define a Sacrament as the *exterior* sign of an *internal* disposition – instituted by Christ and a
source of grace.

It is the act of intercourse that is the principal sign of the sacrament of marriage – and within marriage
it is a holy and beautiful thing.

Anything that diminishes the *act* diminishes the *sacrament*.

It also follows that the marital act should be reserved for marriage because it requires a sacramental
commitment on the part of the couple.

Reflecting on the sacred nature of the couple's intimate life, and the church 's concern for the partners
and their children, it holds that:

Since we are made in the image and likeness of God, the human person is *holy*, has an innate *worth*
and *dignity* that must be upheld

As a couple, your intimate life must recognize this – degrading or dehumanizing acts ignore your
human dignity.

Human nature includes *free will*, you are free to act or abstain from action.

Intimate acts must be freely entered in to by you *both* – coercion or force in intimate acts violates
your freedom as individuals.

As the marriage is built on mutual trust, *honesty* must be an integral part of the marriage act.

Honesty has two requirements:

The first requirement is to *fidelity*, the marital relationship is mutually exclusive – it has the welfare of the other as its sole concern.

Each partner gives themselves completely to the other – nothing is left out or left over.

Infidelity comes from a failure to share completely

The second requirement is to *openness*, a willingness to receive the gifts, to share the adventure, that marriage brings.

It is here that the church reminds you that children are part of that adventure;
you should be open to having children.

Ultimately love governs your life together – the same *kind* of love that Jesus' for us, a love that cares more for the *other* than the *self*.

There will be times when you will abstain from (or participate in) relations, as a free loving gift to the other.

The celebration of the sacrament

The norm for marriage is:

a Catholic man marries a Catholic woman in a Catholic church by Catholic clergy (deacon or priest)
Anything else requires permission (dispensation) by the local bishop.

With permission of the bishop, a Catholic can marry a protestant at a protestant church

A Catholic may marry a non-Christian in a “suitable and dignified” place

Usually you *cannot* get married on the beach at sunset, at the reception hall or your back yard

You can marry almost any day of the year except Good Friday and Holy Saturday (no sacraments allowed)

The requirements for a mass are a little more stringent. Yes you can marry during Lent.

Caveat: each diocese sets its own rules, these are the ones for Detroit

The **Rite of Marriage** can be done either within the Mass (if both parties are Catholic) or at a Liturgy of the Word (scripture service). In either case, the ritual of marriage is the same:

The couple are greeted by the presider

Their intent to marry and understanding of the sacrament are declared:

Have you come here freely and without reservation to give yourselves to each other in marriage?

Will you love and honor each other as husband and wife for the rest of your lives?

Will you accept children lovingly from God and bring them up according to the law of Christ and the church

The couple exchange consent:

I take you to be my wife (husband)

I promise to be true to you in good times and bad, in sickness and in health

I will love you and honor you all the days of my life.

The presider accepts their consent in the name of the church

Rings are blessed and exchanged.

There is a final nuptial blessing for the couple.

What about birth control?

In the Church's eyes, it is not only important *what* you do, but *how* you do it. The Church insists on two things:

First of all, that the *nature* of marriage requires you to be open to the *possibility* of having children.

It is through the union of man and woman that new people come into the world – this is God's intent.

The honesty of your relationship, and your fidelity to God's design for humanity, precludes any *artificial* means in preventing pregnancy.

Secondly, human dignity requires that all children to a marriage be loved and cherished.

They are to be given the physical necessities they require, nurtured in a healthy and supportive environment, and educated both in secular and spiritual knowledge - to do otherwise would be irresponsible

It is allowable (and even desirable) to plan the birth of your children for a time that the above objectives can be met.

To accomplish this, without violating the honesty of your marriage, requires a means of planning birth based on natural fertility rhythms and mutually agreed upon abstinence.

The Church's recommendation is to use Natural Family Planning – it is safe, easy, inexpensive and reliable.

Conclusion

The church values marriage highly – it is ordained by God and has the dignity of a sacrament

In the church's view, marriage (rightly!) includes a religious aspect

For Christians, Jesus is present in all aspects of their life

It makes sense that Jesus is also (or should be) at the core of a marriage

With all the pressures on the family from our modern world,

It seems clear that we need to re-connect with the religious aspect of marriage and family life

Only with the grace of God can we expect to handle the challenges life throws at us.

Marriage – Focus Questions:

What does commitment mean to you? How do you stay faithful to a promise? How can faith help commitment?

What does it mean to completely share your life with another? Can't I have my stuff and they have theirs? Do I have to tell my spouse everything?

What do children bring to a marriage? Why would you want to have children? Why would you not want them?

As Catholics we understand marriage to be permanent and indissoluble, divorce is not an option. What about bad marriages, marriages that are abusive or toxic? Should divorce be allowed in those circumstances?

Anointing of the Sick – Healing in Body and Spirit

Biblical Foundations

Old Testament

Disease was usually seen as the result of sin,

“(Azariah the priest) opposed King Uzziah, saying to him: “It is not for you, Uzziah, to burn incense to the LORD, but for the priests, the sons of Aaron, . . . Uzziah . . . became angry, but at the moment he showed his anger to the priests, . . . leprosy broke out on his forehead. (2 Chronicles 26:18-19)”

Healing happened when the one afflicted person reconciled with the Lord:

Example: Naaman the Syrian is healed of leprosy when he acknowledges the God of the Israelites

“(Elijah) sent him the message: “Go and wash seven times in the Jordan, and your flesh will heal, and you will be clean. (2 Kings 5:10)”

The New Testament continues the idea of a holy man curing the ill in the healing ministry of Christ:

“As (Jesus) was entering a village, ten lepers met (him). They stood at a distance from him and raised their voice, saying, “Jesus, Master! Have pity on us!” And when he saw them, he said, “Go show yourselves to the priests.” As they were going they were cleansed. (Luke 17:12-14)”

In the Gospels, Christ’s great compassion toward the sick is expressed in the miraculous healings he performs, which heal the entire person, both body and soul.

“But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins”—he then said to the paralytic, “Rise, pick up your stretcher, and go home. (Mt 9:6)”

The Letter of James is the scriptural source for the Sacrament of the Sick.

The emphasis is both on healing of the body and of the spirit (forgiveness of sin)

“Is anyone among you sick? He should summon the presbyters 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. (James 5:14-15)”

In our Catholic understanding, healing always includes reconciliation

The sacrament itself

Given to those who are seriously ill (i.e. requiring a visit to the hospital)

Most properly given at the *onset* of an illness (while there is hope of recovery).

can be given to the aged, even if there is no particular illness

Can be given multiple times to the same individual

Given by a priest because the one who is ill is encouraged also to celebrate reconciliation.

Sickness and sin are theologically joined, anointing can resolve illness and reconcile sin.

Laying on of hands

The priest imposes hands on the person who is sick in silence

This like an “*epiclesis*” or calling down the Holy Spirit upon the person who is ill.

The Oil of the Sick is the “matter” of the sacrament

Anointing the forehead and hands (or the effected areas) of the person who is ill:

Best done if the sick person is awake and able to participate

May be done on an unconscious person but not someone who has already died.

The words of the priest spoken while anointing is the “form”

“Through this holy anointing may the Lord in his love and mercy help you with the Grace of the Holy Spirit.”

(the forehead is anointed)

“May the Lord who frees you from sin save you and rise you up.”

(the Hands are anointed)

Anointing is also done in a communal setting – within the Mass with the community present

Shows the solidarity of the community with the people who are sick

The gift of the sacrament

Remember that we are people made up of both *body* and *spirit*;

The spirit can have a powerful influence on the state of the body

Anointing will *always* bring spiritual healing – if the person receiving it has the proper disposition

It may *also* include physical healing, if this is God's will

Our sufferings *unite* us with the sufferings of Jesus

and take on *meaning* when joined to those of Christ

the whole Church commends those who are sick to Christ

by our compassion, we remind those who are sick that the Church shares their suffering.

When one part of the Body of Christ suffers, we all suffer

“If [one] part suffers, all the parts suffer with it; (1 Cor 12:26).

each person, made in the image of God, has dignity that remains unchanged, whatever the body suffers.

Christ *sanctifies* our suffering and makes it a source of grace for us.

Those who are sick can be signs of faith and witnesses of Christ's Resurrection to the entire community

Their suffering is united with the suffering of Christ for the building up of the Church

The sick person receives in return the Holy Spirit's gifts of strength, faith, peace, and courage

Holy Viaticum (“Passing Over”)

The Eucharist itself is the last sacrament, not anointing.

Communion is our food for the journey, our final journey back home to God.

Anointing is given at the onset of illness, not at the very end.

In the “old days” there was the practice of “extreme unction” (the “last rites”)

People waited until death to call a priest (often he got there too late).

Sometimes the shock of seeing a priest made the sick person give up hope (I'm done for!)

The moral: Don't wait! If you get seriously sick, go see your priest!

Anointing of the Sick – Focus Questions:

How do resentment and anger influence our health? How about fear of death? How do you resolve these issues?

What does “dying and rising” mean to you? Physical death? Intense personal experience? Starting over again?

How does my suffering help me get closer to Christ? How do I find meaning in suffering? Can suffering ever be a positive experience?

Why does God allow suffering? Does he permit it or cause it? Where does my free will enter in? Does God send suffering as a test or punishment?

Holy Orders – Called to Serve

The sacrament itself

Holy Orders is the sacrament of *Apostolic* ministry – the ministry of continuing Christ’s mission in the world.

All Christians are called to minister to one another in the name of Jesus:

“I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me. (Mt 25:35-36)”

This is the “Priesthood of the Faithful” which we *all* receive by virtue of our baptism.

Some Christians are called to a particular kind and degree of ministry – called to be clergy.

They are set aside (consecrated) for service to God’s people as a particular sign of Christ’s presence.

The *community* discerns their vocation and sends them forth for formation (education)

The *bishop* ordains them by prayer and laying on of hands – returning them to the community to serve.

All who receive Holy Orders are called to serve God’s people by:

Teaching – proclaiming the Scriptures, instructing and exhorting the people

Which is done through teaching (catechism) and preaching the Homily

Leading prayer – presiding at liturgy and administering the sacraments.

Which includes all the liturgy of the church – weekend Mass, weddings, funerals, baptisms and so on.

Governing – directing communities or sectors of church life (dioceses, parishes, institutions, etc.)

Which includes administering parishes (or a diocese!), organizing outreach programs, and so on.

Scriptural foundation

Old Testament

The origins of the priest and deacon are found in the Old Testament

Priests:

Abraham built altars and made sacrifices to his God – in this he acted as a priest

God made a covenant with him that was sealed in animal sacrifice.

“It was on that occasion that the LORD made a covenant with Abram (Gn 15:18)”

Other peoples had their own priests:

“Melchizedek, king of Salem, brought out bread and wine, and being a priest of God Most High, he blessed Abram (Gn 14:18)” has always been seen as a figure of Christ (as High Priest)

Aaron (brother of Moses) was the first Jewish priest consecrated to the worship of Yahweh:

“(Moses) also poured some of the anointing oil on Aaron’s head, thus consecrating him. (Lv 8:12)”

Deacons:

Moses selected the tribe of Levi to help the tribe of Aaron in their role as priests

“(Moses said) it is I who have taken your kinsmen, the Levites, from the body of the Israelites; they are a gift to you, dedicated to the LORD for the service of the meeting tent. (Lv 18:6)”

The Levites (who deacons see as their ancestors) were responsible for the sanctuary and the belongings.

They carried the Ark of the covenant and later served in the Temple

They were distinct from the priests and their ministry was one of support

New Testament

Bishops:

Jesus selected 12 people (the Apostles) for a special mission in the church

Catholics see the bishops as the successors of the Apostles

“I say to you, you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church (Mt 16:18)”

Paul gives a list of desirable qualities for a bishop:

“(a) bishop must be irreproachable, married only once, temperate, self-controlled, decent, hospitable, able to teach, not a drunkard, not aggressive, but gentle, not contentious, not a lover of money (1 Tim 3:3)”

Priests:

The role of the priest is not really mentioned in the New Testament as such

Because of the sacrifice of Jesus, Priests in the Old Testament sense were no longer required:

“we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God (Heb 4:14)”

Deacons:

Peter instituted the order of Deacons as servants of the poor and outcast:

“It is not right for us to neglect the word of God to serve at table. Brothers, select from among you seven reputable men, filled with the Spirit and wisdom, whom we shall appoint to this task, (Acts 6:3)”

Paul gives their qualifications:

“Similarly, deacons must be dignified, not deceitful, not addicted to drink, not greedy for sordid gain, holding fast to the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience (1 Tim 3:9)”

Basics of the sacrament:

There are three degrees of holy orders:

The **Episcopate** (bishops) – in the image of *Christ the Good Shepherd*

In Catholic teaching, the bishops are the successors of the 12 Apostles

They are the leaders of the church in a particular geographic area (diocese)

Only bishops have the power to ordain and all clergy swear an oath of obedience to them.

The **Presbyterate** (priests) – in the image of *Christ the High Priest*

Priests are ordained to assist the bishop in performing the sacraments

Some priests (in our diocese almost all) are parish pastors

They care for God's people in a specific parish (by administration of the sacraments)

The **Diaconate** (deacons) – in the image of *Christ the Servant*

Deacons are ordained to assist the bishop in serving "the rest" of the people in the diocese

Deacons are chaplains in hospital, prisons, shelters; caring for the poor and marginalized

They usually are married and have full-time jobs in addition to their ministry.

Transitional Deacons – are men in the seminary preparing for the priesthood

They are ordained to the diaconate for a year before their ordination as priests

They differ from *Permanent Deacons* who remain deacons the rest of their lives

Note: Popes, Cardinals and Monsignors are not a division of clergy!

These are merely honorary titles (and duties) given to them.

The *Pope* is a bishop who is made the bishop of Rome – first among equals.

His special job is to symbolize (and bring about) the unity of all Catholics

Cardinals are bishops whose additional job is to elect the Pope and act as his advisers.

Monsignors are priests who have done some special job for the church and receive the title as thanks.

In Catholic tradition, only men are ordained.

The ordained minister receives his grace to be a minister from Christ himself,

As such, he is a figure of Christ – standing in his place in the community, ministering as Christ himself.

In our Latin Rite Catholic tradition, our priesthood is celibate (they are not married).

Deacons are allowed to be married at the time of ordination

although they may not marry again after – as in the death of their wife.

Unmarried deacons take the vow of celibacy at their ordination.

Priests take the vow of celibacy at ordination (if they have not taken it before).

In the Eastern churches (both uniate, in communion with Rome, and orthodox, not in communion with Rome) priests have always been – and still are – married.

Bishops in the Eastern Churches have traditionally been celibate (and are usually monks)

In North America, uniate Eastern rite priests are usually celibate out of respect for the Latin priests.

In the Latin Rite Catholic tradition, priests were commonly married up to the middle ages

don't forget St. Peter (our first Pope!) was married – he had a mother-in-law.

A note on church organization:

The Universal Catholic Church is divided into several (about 10) "Ritual" churches

Each with their own liturgical tradition, clergy, canon law and dioceses (eparchies)

For instance the Melkite, Chaldean, Ukrainian, Maronite churches.

All are in communion with Rome (uniata – united with the Pope)

The Latin Rite (Roman Catholic) is the largest church (about 80 % of all Catholics in the world are Latin Rite)

Within the Latin Rite:

The world is divided up into **dioceses** – geographical territories – for ease of administration.

They can be of any size – China is one diocese, The United States has dozens.

Each diocese is headed up by a **bishop** – the Diocesan Bishop (or Local Ordinary who may not be a bishop).

He is appointed by the Pope and answers directly to the Pope

Within his diocese, he is the absolute leader.

He sets the Liturgical policy, administers Canon Law, ordains priests and deacons

Within each diocese is the **cathedral** – the "home church" of the diocese

This is where the bishop has his throne (*cathedra*) and celebrates the liturgy.

The cathedral may also be a parish church – it then has a pastor (called the rector)

He may have additional bishops (auxiliary bishops) to help him (we have five in our diocese)

These auxiliary bishops have no authority on their own, only what the diocesan bishop delegates to them

The diocesan bishop has people to help him in administering the diocese

There is a council of the priests (Presbyterial Council) in the diocese that advise him

There is a whole bureaucracy (the Curia) to run the day-to-day affairs of the diocese.

He is also a member of the national bishop's committee for his country

In the United States this is the NCCB (National Conference of Catholic Bishops)

They help in policy decisions, giving uniformity of Church policy in a given region

Sometimes several dioceses may be grouped together into a province (as in Michigan)

One diocese (usually the largest) is chosen to be the **arch-diocese** and the bishop is the **arch-bishop**

The dioceses of Saginaw, Gaylord, Lansing and Grand Rapids and the Arch-Diocese of Detroit form the Ecclesiastical Province of Michigan

The dioceses share resources (like the Seminary for training priests)

and look to the arch-bishop for general leadership.

Within the diocese there are **parishes** – an area having a central church and a pastor appointed by the bishop

Each pastor has responsibility for the spiritual health of his people (as the bishop does for the diocese)

Within his parish, the pastor is the absolute leader – responsible only to the bishop.

The pastor will have people to help him run the parish:

Associate pastors are priests appointed to the parish to help the pastor – they are responsible to him.

A deacon may be assigned to a parish full or part time to help the pastor.

The Parish Council represents the people of the parish and helps the pastor make (spending) decisions

Pastoral associates are trained lay-people who help in specific areas:

The Director of Religious Education (DRE) runs the education programs

Music and liturgical ministers plan worship services, sacristans care for church belongings

Parish secretaries are responsible for record keeping

Counselors talk to people, help them with problems.

Some parishes are “clustered”

Several small parishes that are close together will often share a priest

Some parishes have Parish Administrators rather than pastors

These are not the ideal situation but a way of coping with a shortage of priests.

Also within the diocese are various **institutions** (hospitals, prisons) whose needs the bishop also must tend

Deacons are usually the ones who minister in these situations

They are appointed by the bishop and are responsible to:

Primarily the bishop – or the diocesan office that has charge of their institution

Secondarily the head of the institution – especially if it is a secular (not a church) institution

The bishop may also appoint priests (this was the case in the past) but is not usual now

Certain religious groups (monks and nuns) may have special ministries within a diocese

The Sisters of Mercy run Mercy High School and the St. Joseph / Mercy health care system.

Religious Communities / Monastic Orders

These are the orders of monks and nuns (properly called religious communities)

For example Franciscans, Dominicans, Jesuits and so on.

They have a structure separate from the diocesan structure.

There is much diversity in how they are organized but there are a few common traits:

They are all under the direction of Rome (through a special department)

The communities are all lay people – they do not receive the sacrament of Holy Orders

(*except* for those members – men only – who become priests)

They do take various vows – usually celibacy, obedience, poverty (or simplicity of life) and stability of place (no traveling)

The vows are recognized by the church as solemn and permanent.

Each community has a head (usually elected by the members of the community)

The communities are usually organized into provinces in the various countries they are in

For instance, most Michigan Franciscans are in the St. John the Baptist province headquartered in Cincinnati.

The communities may own a monastery where community members live

or they may live at a local parish (with permission of the pastor) or in houses or apartments.

Each community within a diocese must have the permission of the bishop to set up a presence.

In their internal operations they are completely separate from the diocese

and not responsible to the bishop – only to the superiors of their own order

In their external operations they must follow the rules of the dioceses

If they run a parish, they must follow the diocesan rules for parishes.

If they run a school, they have to teach what the diocese curriculum contains

If they run a hospital, they must follow diocesan guidelines for hospitals

Each community has its own special spiritual work to do.

Some communities are *cloistered* – members live within a monastery and spend their day in prayer
Some are *secular* – out in the world; they run the hospitals, shelters, etc.

Liturgical roles of clergy

Each member of the clergy has his particular role in the liturgy.

Bishops

Have particular responsibility for liturgies that effect the whole diocese. They will:

Preside at ordinations, church consecrations.

Confirmation is reserved to them (although they may delegate it)

In the liturgy they wear the pointed hat (miter) and *pallium* (like a scarf) and carry a staff (crosier)

Priests

Have particular responsibility for sacramental liturgies in their parishes

They do the daily mass (weekends too!), funerals, weddings, baptisms, confession and anointing

In the liturgy they wear the normal vestments – chasuble and stole.

Both priests and bishops wear black clothing with the Roman collar

A member of a religious community will wear the habit of that community

Deacons

Have their own place in the liturgy – they are the “host” of the liturgy, telling people what / when to do.

At the Mass:

In the Liturgy of the Word, the deacon will always read the Gospel (he may also preach)

He (is supposed to) read the Universal Prayers (prayers of the faithful)

The deacon receives the gifts of bread and wine at mass and sets the altar.

He is the minister of the cup – mixing water with the wine and elevating the cup at the great amen.

He dismisses the people when the mass is complete

Deacons also do baptisms and marriages (usually without the Eucharist)

In the liturgy they wear the dalmatic and stole, in general they do not wear the Roman collar.

Holy Orders - Focus questions:

We all share in the priesthood of the faithful. How do you exercise it? Shouldn't ministry be left to the professionals (priests and deacons)? Why should I get involved?

Religious women (sisters) were often teachers in past years. What is your impression of them? What is it based on; movies and hearsay or personal experience?

How have clergy helped you grow in faith? Have any prevented your growth?

Catholic priests do not marry. Should they be able to? How would the priesthood change if they were married? Would this be a good or bad thing?

Should women be allowed to become clergy? What are the arguments for and against. As a man, how would you feel confessing to a female priest? As a woman confessing to a female priest?

Confirmation - Sealed with the Spirit.

The scriptural background

The scriptural basis for Confirmation as a sacrament is probably the weakest of all seven
In the Old Testament, the Spirit (or glory) of God (the *shekinah*) would rest upon the messiah.

Mary conceived Jesus through the power of the Holy Spirit.

The Spirit descended (like a dove) upon Jesus when John baptized him.

In the New Testament the story of Pentecost is used as the basis for Confirmation:

"When the time for Pentecost was fulfilled, they were all in one place together. And suddenly there came from the sky a noise like a strong driving wind, and it filled the entire house in which they were. Then there appeared to them tongues as of fire, which parted and came to rest on each one of them. And they were all filled with the holy Spirit and began to speak in different tongues, as the Spirit enabled them to proclaim. (Acts 2:1-5)"

This outpouring of the Spirit on the Apostles has often been seen as the Gift(s) of the Spirit given to the Church

In our Catholic Tradition we see the bishops as successors of the Apostles;

Handing on the teaching of the church and ensuring its accuracy

Teaching, preaching and baptizing as Jesus instructed them to (Matthew 26).

The sacrament itself

Is intimately linked to baptism;

In baptism we receive the Holy Spirit for the *first* time,

In confirmation we are *sealed* with the Spirit (symbolizing a completeness of reception – the *fullness* of the Spirit)

We are more perfectly bound to the *Spirit* and to the *Church* (which is where the Spirit resides)

We also are empowered to do the work of the Church – witnessing to Christ in the world.

Our church (the Western or Latin church) separates the sacraments of baptism and confirmation

Since infant baptism is common, confirmation is received when the child is at the "age of reason"

This varies around the world, in Detroit it is currently eighth grade

Parents and godparents spoke for them as a child, they now have the chance to speak for themselves;

To be "confirmed" in their baptismal vows"

In the Eastern Churches (Byzantine, Melkite, etc.) confirmation *always* follows baptism, even for babies.

Confirmation consists of two actions:

The laying on of hands by the Bishop (usually over all to be confirmed)

This signifies the outpouring of the Spirit and the prayer refers to the seven gifts of the Spirit

An anointing with Holy Chrism and the Words "*Be sealed with the Holy Spirit.*"

The one being confirmed is anointed on the forehead while the words are spoken.

The oil here is used to "seal" the spirit poured out in the laying on of hands

The ordinary minister of confirmation is the bishop,

A priest can be delegated to confirm, deacons never do confirmation (although we aid the bishop at the service).

The most common time a priest confirms is on Holy Saturday during the Easter Vigil.

The role of the Holy Spirit

"No one can say 'Jesus is Lord' except by the Holy Spirit. (1 Cor 12:3)"

Knowledge of faith is possible only in the Holy Spirit, to know Christ, we first must be touched by the Spirit.

This is why baptism is the first of all sacraments – it communicates the Spirit for the first time:

The Spirit leads to the Son, the Son is the way to the Father

The knowledge of the Father is the Son, knowledge of God's Son is given through the Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is at work with the Father and the Son from the beginning

In these "end times," ushered in by the Son's redeeming Incarnation, the Spirit is revealed and given;

We live in the age of the Spirit; poured out over the Church at Pentecost and received anew in the Sacraments.

The Spirit does not speak for itself but rather is known by its movements – opening the Word of God to us.

We see the Spirit in:

Scripture, inspired by the Holy Spirit

Tradition (capital "T"), what has been believed by "all, everywhere, always"

The Church's **Magisterium**, the teaching authority of the Church which the Spirit assists and guards from error.

The **Sacraments**, through its words and symbols, in which the Holy Spirit puts us into Communion with Christ

Prayer, wherein the Spirit intercedes for us;

The **charisms** and **ministries** by which the Church is built up

The **signs** of apostolic and missionary life

The **witness** of saints through whom the Spirit manifests its holiness and continues the work of salvation.

Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit

"Give them the spirit of

[1] wisdom and

[2] understanding,

the spirit of [3] right judgment and

[4] courage,

the spirit of [5] knowledge and

[6] reverence.

Fill them with the spirit of [7] wonder and awe in your presence."

(From the Rite of Confirmation)

The biblical origin of these seven gifts is found in Isaiah (11:1-3) where he is foretelling the qualities of the Messiah:

*"But a shoot shall sprout from the stump of Jesse,
and from his roots a bud shall blossom.*

*The spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him:
a spirit of wisdom and of understanding,
a spirit of counsel and of strength,
a spirit of knowledge and of fear of the Lord,
and his delight shall be the fear of the Lord.'*

The ancient Greek and Latin translations of this passage read "piety" for "fear of the Lord" in line six; this gives us our traditional seven gifts.

Four New Testament passages showing specific gifts that God's Spirit gives to his people:

Romans 12:3-8

For as in one body we have many parts, and all the parts do not have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ and individually parts of one another. Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us exercise them:

if prophecy, in proportion to the faith;

if ministry, in ministering;

if one is a teacher, in teaching;

if one exhorts, in exhortation;

if one contributes, in generosity;

if one is over others, with diligence;

if one does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.

1 Corinthians 12:4-11

There are different kinds of spiritual gifts but the same Spirit; there are different forms of service but the same Lord; there are different workings but the same God who produces all of them in everyone. To each individual the manifestation of the Spirit is given for some benefit.

To one is given through the Spirit the expression of wisdom;

to another the expression of knowledge according to the same Spirit;

to another faith by the same Spirit;

to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit;

to another mighty deeds;
to another prophecy;
to another discernment of spirits;
to another varieties of tongues;
to another interpretation of tongues.

But one and the same Spirit produces all of these, distributing them individually to each person as he wishes.

Ephesians 4:7-13:

But grace was given to each of us according to the measure of Christ's gift. . .

And he gave some as apostles,
others as prophets,
others as evangelists,
others as pastors and teachers,

to equip the holy ones for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of faith and knowledge of the Son of God . . .

1 Peter 4:10-11

As each one has received a gift, use it to serve one another as good stewards of God's varied grace.

Whoever preaches, let it be with the words of God;
whoever serves, let it be with the strength that God supplies,

so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong glory and dominion forever and ever.

Note that although the *specific* gifts may vary, everybody has a *some* gift (maybe several) and is given that gift to benefit the community

Gifts that call attention to the one who has them (like the gift of tongues) are not as precious as gifts that give blessing to others (like the gift of love).

It is the work of the Holy Spirit to ultimately fulfill the high priestly prayer of Jesus:

"I pray...that they may all be one, as you, Father, are in me and I in you, that they also may be in us, that the world may believe that you sent me. And I have given them the glory you gave me, so that they may be one, as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may be brought to perfection as one" (John 17:20-23).

Unity is the greatest sign of the Holy Spirit – "we are one in the Spirit, we are one in the Lord."

Effects of the gifts of the Spirit

Wisdom

Helps us to see an important viewpoint of the world – God's!

Through it, we desire to make God's viewpoint our own.

God's Love and his presence can be seen in every person, place and situation.

Understanding

Helps us gain a deeper insight into what we believe through faith.

We gain deeper spiritual insight to God's Word when we see it active and in our lives.

Right Judgment

We all have to make difficult decisions, but we don't have to make them by ourselves.

We are never alone; the Spirit, which is always with us, helps us make the tough calls.

We might meet the Spirit in the sacrament of reconciliation or through other Christians who are ready to listen and help us work through our decisions.

Courage

Allows us to live firmly by faith rather than by fear; do the right thing in spite of difficulties.

Helps us trust God's love and presence in our lives in the face of disappointments and troubles.

Helps us to stick to things, not give up when the going gets tough.

Knowledge

Broadens our hearts and minds to learn from, and share with, others.

Helps us know ourselves and the world around us

Know where our faith leads, what church is all about.

Reverence

Allows us to praise God in worship and prayer, both individually and publicly.

Enables us to love and cherish the things of God; to see God in the things around us.

To treat the fragile world and the things in it gently.

Wonder and Awe

Allows us to see the power and beauty of God in our lives.

Helps us see ourselves as united with God and our brothers and sister Christians.

It is a child-like vision; to see the world fresh each day.

In Conclusion

The Spirit is out there; when you reflect you will see some in your own lives. On his return to heaven Jesus said “I will not leave you alone.” The Spirit is his presence in us and around us; teaching, helping, empowering us, and ultimately leading us back to him.

Confirmation - Reflection questions

We all have gifts from God. What are some of yours? Are they gifts or skills? Did you have to practice them or not? What are some gifts you wish you had? How could you go about getting them?

Some of the Spirit's gifts are quite practical, for instance Courage and Wisdom. Some are a little more distant. What does the gift of reverence mean to you? Can you see it being useful in your daily life? How about Wonder and Awe? Does this differ from reverence?

Has God ever helped you make a decision? In what way? Did you pray before making it? How about after? What difference did it (or would it have) make?

What is the difference between understanding and knowledge? Can they be used independently? How would right judgment fit in? Do we always use understanding before we judge?

The Church is the moderator of the gifts of the Spirit. Are the gifts given to all or just those in charge? Can you think of times the Church failed to use them?

Eucharist (part 1) – Do This in Memory of Me

Definitions

The Eucharist is part of the *Mass* (the “standard” Sunday Liturgy of the Catholic Church)

The *Mass* consists of

Introductory Rites – Penitential rite

Liturgy of the Word – Scripture readings, homily, intercessions

Liturgy of the Eucharist – Eucharistic prayer, communion

Concluding Rites – Blessing, Dismissal

Background

Eucharist = Greek for ‘to give thanks’

Chosen by the early Church to translate the Hebrew ‘berakah’ = ‘blessing’

For Jews, the blessing is the basic form of prayer

For the Jews, the main occasion of blessing was the family meal

The weekly Sabbath meal, the annual Passover meal, both central to Jewish worship

The blessing of the bread at the start of the meal

The blessing of the cup of wine at the end

The prayers were always led by the head of the family, with the other members responding

Point: Jesus would have been very familiar with these meal rituals

Note that when Jesus instituted a form of worship for his community, he used the model of a family meal – NOT the pomp of the Temple worship.

Primary thing to remember about the Eucharist is that first and foremost it is a memorial meal.

A prayer of celebration, of praise and thanksgiving, modeled on a family meal.

Scripture

The Jewish Passover

Exodus 12 – Traditional institution of the Passover:

The blood of a spotless lamb is smeared on the doorpost of the house;

It prevents the angel of the Lord from killing the first-born inside.

Initiates the Exodus, the journey of the Jewish people from slavery to freedom, their adoption by God as his own special people, the covenant of the Law given on Sinai

Celebrated as a “perpetual institution”, a memorial meal, a recitation of the events of the Exodus

Central to Jewish worship and spirituality; recalls the goodness of the Lord, God’s favor to Israel

Christian theologians have always seen the Eucharist as rooted in the Passover meal

Accounts of the institution of the Eucharist (the Last Supper / Lord’s Supper)

Paul – 1 Corinthians 11:23-25 (oldest account)

‘Jesus blessed the bread, broke it and said “This is my body which is for you.

Do this in remembrance of me.”’

“this cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this...in remembrance of me”

Mark 14:22-24

‘Jesus took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them...’ “This is my body”’

‘He took a cup, gave thanks, gave it to them...’ “This is my blood of the covenant...”

Luke 22:19-20

‘Jesus took a cup, gave thanks...’ “Take this and share it among your selves”

‘He took the bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them...’ “This is my body...”

Matthew 26:26-28

‘Jesus took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and giving it to them...’ “...this is my body”’

'He took a cup, gave thanks, gave it to them...' 'This is my blood of the covenant'

Points to notice

The accounts all differ slightly, probably because:

They came from the local liturgy of the gospel writers; what their communities were already doing

Each writer had their own audience, theological stance

These are theological, not historical accounts

They all agree on the main points;

Jesus took bread and wine from the meal, said the blessing over them, identified himself with the bread and wine, and gave it to the disciples.

An aside:

John's gospel does not have an institution narrative at the last supper

Rather, he has the foot washing; the 'Bread of Life' discourse (John 6:22 ff) takes its place.

"Jesus said to them, "Amen, amen, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you do not have life within you. (John 6:53)"

Development of the Church's understanding of the Eucharist

"Do this in memory of me" Meal and Sacrifice

"Memory / memorial" had a special meaning to the Jewish people:

The grace and blessings of past events becomes an actuality for those who recall them today

The events are re-membered, made whole, made present again;

In prayer we re-enter into the events each time we participate in the ritual.

Greatest example is the Passover meal that Jews still celebrate to this day.

The Letter to the Hebrews – another, later, perspective

The sacrificial nature of the Eucharist – unique because Jesus was unique

Resonated with the Passover meal;

The spotless victim sacrificed for the good of the people.

Jesus has already sacrificed himself (as both priest and victim), we can't re-sacrifice him.

But because Jesus is God, his sacrifice has an eternal, outside of time, component;

His sacrifice is, in some way, still going on –

the Eucharist recalls this sacrifice and allows us to participate in it within time.

This is the Paschal (Easter) Mystery, that "Dying you destroyed our death, rising you restored our life"

We participate in Jesus' dying and rising sacramentally through the liturgy (primarily the

Eucharist) and live it out in our lives – every time we choose Good and reject Evil, we die to the old and rise to the new.

"This is my body" – how is Jesus present in the Eucharist?

Jesus told us *that* the bread and wine (the elements) are his body and blood,

but he didn't say *how* they get that way.

The Church rejects ideas like:

Symbolism – that the elements just "remind" us of Jesus or just "symbolize" him.

There is no real communion, only a memorial

This is the position coming from the Calvinist / Knox tradition (e.g. Presbyterian) traditions

Also the Baptist / Holiness (e.g. Pentecostal) traditions

Kind-of change – the elements become "like" Jesus (but in what way?)

This is like those ideas of the Incarnation that say Jesus only "seemed" to be a man.

Non-permanent change – the elements do really become Jesus *but*,

They don't *remain* Jesus when the congregation goes home (they go back to being bread and wine)

They change, but it is not a *substantial* change (transubstantiation does not occur)

This is the position of the Lutheran churches and those traditions influenced by them.

The Catholic church insists that:

There is a real, permanent change in the elements from bread and wine to the body and blood of Jesus

All of Jesus is present – body and blood, soul and divinity

and since Jesus is present, the rest of the Trinity is also – the fullness of God is present

Each particle of bread and wine contains all of Jesus

and remains so as long as it is identifiable as bread and wine

With our senses we perceive bread and wine (look / taste / smell bread and wine)

but we receive the body and blood of the Lord.

Church of the Gospel Writers (AD 40 – mid 100's)

In Jewish thought, you enter into a sacrifice by consuming the victim

In the memorial (the re-remembering) of Jesus' death and resurrection,

the bread and wine in some mysterious (Greek, *mysterion* = Latin, *sacramentum* / *sacramental*) fashion

become the body and blood of Jesus.

2,000 years later we are still trying to understand this!

Church of the Apostolic Fathers (mid 100's to 500's)

The idea of Eucharist as memorial meal character is gradually replaced by Eucharist as liturgy / ritual.

Creation of the Mass in its early form;

Liturgy of the Word – from the Jewish synagogue service

Liturgy of the Eucharist – the 'breaking of the bread'

The Mass becomes public worship (after AD 325 – the legalization of Christianity)

The celebration moves out of 'home churches' to public churches

We get priests, altars and hierarchy,

Bread and wine *become* the body and blood of Jesus

Philosophical subtleties: signs not only signify what they symbolize but participate in its reality.

Priests (only!) do this through calling down the power of the Holy Spirit (*epiclesis*)

Church of the Middle Ages (600's to late 1300's)

Passing away of the ancient world, categories of speaking are changed

There is a loss of the sense of symbol as used by the Apostolic Fathers

Exaggerated realism, Jesus is present in the Eucharist in a crude, physical way (bleeding host)

There is a focus on the Jesus on earth rather than Jesus glorified in heaven

The mass becomes an allegory of Jesus' passion and death

Development of the cult of the Eucharist

Reservation, adoration, procession, benediction

Comes from a decline in participation in the liturgy; use of Latin, role of the priest

All this distances the eucharist from the people – becomes something to watch rather than participate in.

St. Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274)

Defines how Jesus can be present in the bread and wine

Not as a material body is present in material reality, but present as the soul is present in the body.

Still the basic teaching of the Church on the Eucharist.

A note on transubstantiation:

According to this notion, all material things are made up of *substance* and *accidents*.
The substance is what the thing truly is; the accidents are things like color, weight, texture, etc.

Consider a chair:

There are many chairs in the world, but only one “concept” (idea) of a chair (“chairness”)

Any one specific chair (the one you are sitting on) is a chair because it has “chairness.”

It has the essence of a chair (the *substance* of chair).

Its size, shape, color, etc. are all *accidental* to this chair – it is a green metal chair, but still a chair.

Accidents can change – I can paint the chair and it is still a chair

Substance cannot change – if I cut the chair up into little pieces it is no longer a chair
(firewood?)

although the *accidents* (color, texture etc.) may still be the same!

The two (substance and accident) are independent of one another.

The *Accidents* of something are proper to our physical reality – governed by the laws of Science

The *Substance* of something exists *apart* from our world of physical reality (in the Mind of God?)

This particular chair (its *accidents*) points to the greater reality of Chairs (the *substance*)

the *Idea* of a chair is expressed in this particular green chair I am sitting in.

So then, it might be possible to change the *substance* of something but not the *accidents*

And this is exactly what happens in the Eucharist;

By the power of the Holy Spirit and the intervention of the priest,

The *substance* of bread and wine is changed into the substance of Jesus (his body and blood)

The *accidents* of bread and wine remain.

Since a thing *is* what its substance is, the bread and wine are now truly Jesus’ body and blood.

Permanently, truly and completely Jesus Christ, so we can really eat his body and drink his blood

Church of the Counter Reformation (1400’s to 1963)

The Reformers (Protestants):

The Mass is the worst example of “faith through works”

It is exactly what they wish to get rid of in the notion of “faith alone”

Martin Luther – kept the real presence but refused to explain how it worked (he rejects transubstantiation)

Calvin / Zwingli / Knox - The Eucharist is *only* a meal, a nostalgic calling to mind of events long ago

The Counter Reformers / Council of Trent:

Adopted language of Aquinas, affirm the change of bread and wine into Christ’s body
(transubstantiation)

Against the Reformers, adopted the notion of Eucharist as sacrifice.

Modern Understanding

So what is the Eucharist?

Sacrament of unity

Sacraments bring about what they symbolize

Unity / community (Greek = *koinonia*)

“One body, one bread, one cup of blessing which we *share*” – the symbols

Eucharist strengthens and deepens the bonds of unity within the community
Sharing / dividing the bread and cup implies sacrifice, dying to self, which creates community.
We offer ourselves on the altar, we are like the simple bread and wine offered;
Through the mystery of the Eucharist, all that is offered, bread, wine, and ourselves will be made holy by the power of the Holy Spirit and transformed into the body of Jesus.

Community / communion in love

Giving and receiving love, love of neighbor, love of God

The source of love is the love of Father and Son within the life of the Trinity

God shares this divine life with us through the Eucharist

By sharing his love with others, by our self-giving to others, we become Eucharist ourselves

The Eucharist makes the Church / the Church makes the Eucharist

The community built up is the Church,

without the Eucharist, there would be no community, no Church

Without the Church, there would be no Eucharist;

it belongs to the public prayer of the Church, the people worshipping together, priest and congregation.

We do not come to God on our own, only in a community, with other people.

A Source of Reconciliation, Healing and Growth

The Eucharist promotes unity so it facilitates reconciliation.

Union with Christ reunites us to those we are separated from

When relationships are restored, health (physical and spiritual) follows

It is our bread for the journey – our journey of growth in love of God and neighbor

The presence of Christ

Christ is present in the Eucharist in many ways – among them:

In the consecrated bread and wine

In the proclaimed Word

In the person of the priest

In the assembled people

All of the ways are integrated into an organic whole;

no one way is more important than another,

no one way can be removed without harming the whole.

Eucharist (part 1) – Focus Questions:

The Eucharist can be seen as a family thanksgiving. How does your family celebrate and give thanks? Is there anything you do that is unique to your family? What is symbolic in your gatherings? Objects? People? Jokes?

The Mass is the primary experience of church most Catholics have. What has been your experience of going to Mass? What are the best and worse Masses you have ever attended? What happened to make them that way?

Think of a Mass you have attended recently. What spoke to you most deeply? What annoyed you? What would you do to make the experience better?

Our Catholic theology tells us that Jesus is really present in the consecrated bread and wine. What does this mean to you? How would you explain this to a child? A non-Catholic? Does it really matter?

Eucharist (part 2) – Outline of the Mass and Notes

Introductory thoughts

The Liturgy

Liturgy is what the church “does”; it comes from the Greek meaning “a work of the people”

So, if the church is the people of God, then liturgy is what the people do; it requires our full, active and conscious participation.

It is not a spectator sport!

It is the public prayer of the church; as opposed to private or small-group prayer.

Each person present has a unique part, proper to them. It is their right and duty to participate according to their vocation.

It creates and expresses community.

It is the source and summit of the Christian life.

At its heart is the *Paschal Mystery* of Jesus, the mystery of his death and resurrection; the celebration of our entrance into that mystery by our baptism, our dying and rising with Christ.

The purpose of liturgy

Is to sanctify us via the grace of the liturgy. In so doing, the body of Christ (the church) is built up and worship is given to God. The unity of the worshippers, both with God and one another, should be the result of any liturgy.

Kinds of liturgy

The Mass

Consists of the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist; two liturgies forming one act of worship. Has the dignity of a sacrament; Jesus is present in a unique way. It is the sacrament of unity; we are one in Christ when we share the one bread and cup.

Liturgy of the Hours

Morning / Evening prayer; recitation of Psalms, the daily prayer of the Church.

Para-liturgies

Everything else; scripture services, stations of the cross, benediction, etc.

Sacraments (Baptism, confirmation, etc.) - are always celebrated within a Liturgy of the Word. The liturgy of the Mass often follows.

Origins and History

Jewish roots; the synagogue service. Scripture readings, homily, intercessions and blessing.

Early church ; “the breaking of the bread.” A memorial meal, prayers by the leader of the assembly.

Middle ages; scholastic philosophy defines how the Mass “works” (we still use their terms today).

Council of Trent (c. 1550); Reaction to the Reformation, defines the Tridentine (or Latin) Mass in great detail.

Vatican Council II; an “updating.” General reform of the liturgy, return to original focus of the Mass.

Summary

For almost 2,000 years the Eucharistic liturgy has been the heart of who the church is and what it does. It is nothing less than the promise of Jesus; to be present in the church until the end of time.

Introductory Rites

Their purpose is to prepare us to celebrate the mass

Entrance

The entry procession, introductory chant or song – the *introit* (entrance antiphons)

The role of song

Five song format (entrance, psalm, offertory, communion, recessional); song “adds joy to prayer”, the mass is a celebration. The cross always leads the way, the most important people are last (the last will be first).

We are the *celebrants*, the priest is the *presider*.

Veneration of the Altar -

The ministers bow to the altar and then venerate it with a kiss

Sacred objects

Altars are consecrated; anointed with chrism and dedicated for the liturgy. Many times the altar has a relic in it (bones of a Saint). Jesus will be made present on the altar, so we show it reverence by bowing to it and kissing it.

Greeting of the Congregation

The presider makes the sign of the cross and greets the congregation

Liturgical gesture

The sign of the cross; all prayer starts and ends with God, we invoke the Trinity. The cross is signed throughout the liturgy; over holy water, incense, the gospels, the bread and wine. Gesture calls attention to important things; genuflection before the Host, processions, raising objects show us that something special is happening.

Penitential Act

The priest introduces the act, which is led by the deacon – it may be sung or said. The priest says the words of absolution.

Forms and options

The presider chooses the options appropriate for the congregation / celebration. There are enough options that you will never hear the same mass twice. For example, the Penitential Rite has 3 options; Rite of sprinkling, the *confetior* (I confess to almighty God and to you my brothers and sisters...), and *kyrie* (Lord have mercy, Christ have mercy, Lord have mercy)

Theology

We start prayer by asking forgiveness for our sins which distance us from God; We are sorry for sin (contrition), we confess our sins to ‘God and our brothers and sisters’, ask for intercession (I ask blessed Mary...and you my brothers and sisters to pray for me), receive absolution from the priest (“May almighty God have mercy on us ...”)

Kyrie Eleison

Greek for ‘Lord have mercy’ Led by the deacon

Gloria in Excelsis

A hymn of praise, written by an angel. If used, it is always sung.

The Liturgical year

The mass has ‘*ordinary*’ (unchanging) and ‘*proper*’ (changing with the seasons; Advent, Christmas, Lent, Easter, Ordinary time) parts. The Gloria is omitted in Advent and Lent. Saints are remembered through the year with special prayers.

Collect for the Day (Opening Prayer)

The presider says (or sings) the collect for the day

Role of silence

“Let us pray...(silent pause)” The *collect* collects the prayers of the people and offers them to God. The mass is public prayer, not private devotion, but it does have times for personal silent prayer. This is one of them.

Liturgy of the Word

Two Altars (altar of the *Word*, Altar of the *Body and Blood*) / two Liturgies (Word and Eucharist) / one act of worship (the Mass)

The Lectionary

Contains the prescribed readings for this liturgy. A, B, C Sunday cycle, separate daily cycle. Much of the Old Testament, almost all of the New are read over three years; ‘opens the treasury of Scripture to the faithful.’ Tough on preachers!

Scripture Readings

Proclaimed from the *Ambo* (pulpit); the table of the Word – usually by a lay person.

Worship environment

The altar should be the focal point of the church; the ambo is designed to match the altar, showing continuity between Word and Eucharist. The sanctuary is set off from the congregation (usually by steps); it is a holy place. Flowers are often placed by the ambo and altar – nothing is placed on the altar except the Book of the Gospels.

First Reading

Old Testament outside Easter, from the Book of Acts during the Easter season; the Old Testament tells the origins of our faith, The Book of Acts tells the birth of the church. First reading (usually!) harmonizes in theme with the Gospel.

Psalm

Usually sung by a cantor, usually from the ambo

Song as prayer

“Those who sing well pray twice.” The psalms have always been sung in liturgy; that is their original purpose. The cantor is the person who proclaims them in song. May be sung many ways; most common is *antiphonally* – verse by the cantor and response by the assembly.

Second Reading

New Testament; the Letters of Paul, John, Peter and James. Organization is ‘*Lectio continuo*’ – a ‘straight through’ reading of the letters. Usually only Sunday mass and feast days have two readings.

Alleluia

Alleluia is Hebrew for “praise the Lord;” there are no alleluias during Lent, so it becomes an “acclamation” (“Glory and praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ”).’ A verse proper to the day is sung (the “*versicle*”) with the alleluia.

Dignity of the gospels

The reading of the gospel is reserved for ordained ministers (the deacon if he is there, the priest if not); it may be from a separate book of the gospels (carried in by the deacon). It may be processed and incensed; all to underscore its importance.

Gospel reading

The deacon asks the priest for a blessing (“*May the Lord be on your lips and in your heart . . .*”) and then processes the Book of the Gospels to the ambo.

The Gospels are the story of Jesus; they have a special dignity. Each cycle focuses on a gospel; cycle A is Matthew, B is Mark, C is Luke. John is heard throughout.

Homily

The priest or deacon delivers the homily, usually from the ambo.

A homily is not a sermon; it is a breaking open the Word, not a moral exhortation. Usually focuses on the Gospel, but the second reading provides an alternate text. Preachers must have “faculties” to preach, granted by the bishop – not all clergy have them. Blessed Solanus Casey did not have preaching faculties – and he is a saint!

The Creed (Profession of Faith)

The priest leads the recitation of the creed.

The rule of faith, “what has always been believed, by all people, everywhere.” First person - “I believe..”

Theology

Trinitarian in formula; expresses what we believe about Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Universal Prayers (General Intercessions)

Read by the deacon, may be read by a lay person.

Prayers for our needs

Asking God’s help in prayer has always been part of liturgy; ‘where two or more are gathered, I am there.’ From general to specific, summed up by the priest. Modeled on the Universal Prayers for Good Friday, usually includes the mass intentions for the day.

Dismissal of the catechumens

This is an ancient tradition; they are dismissed before the mysteries of the Eucharist begin.

Liturgy of the Eucharist

Preparation for the Eucharist

Presentation of the Gifts – often called (incorrectly) the offeratory

The bread and wine are brought forward while the offertory chant is sung. The priest and deacon receive them.

Offering back to God the good things he has given us.

The elements

Bread and wine are presented. Bread must be pure, unleavened wheat, the wine must be pure, fermented grape wine. Represents the common food of the people in Jesus’ time. The bread may be low gluten (there is no gluten free host). Instead of wine, pure grape “mustum” (non-alcoholic juice) may be used with the bishop’s permission.

Preparation of the Gifts

The altar is prepared with the book (Missal) and vessels (chalice and patten). The deacon pours the wine into the chalice and adds a little water; waiters did this in Jesus’ time. Deacons are basically waiters; (read Acts 6:1-6).

Incense may be used – for the gifts, the ministers and the congregation.

Theology

Christ shares in our humanity so that we can share in his divinity. This is how we were redeemed; see Philippians 2:6-11.

The priest washes his hands in preparation for the Eucharist – both symbolic and practical

Prayer over the gifts

The assembly stands for the prayer (if not already standing from the incensing).

Ministries

Everybody has a part in the mass, but different parts. There is the priesthood of the faithful as well as the ministerial priesthood. When the priest asks the people to pray over the gifts, this is their right by virtue of their baptism.

Priest: “*Pray, brothers and sisters, that my sacrifice and yours may be acceptable to God . . .*”

People: “*May the Lord accept this sacrifice at your hands . . .*”

Introductory dialog

The priest invites the congregation to join him in prayer. *“The Lord be with you . . .”*

Preface

The priest reads the preface *“It is truly right and just, our duty and our salvation . . .”*

The Preface, or introduction, is proper to the liturgical season or celebration. In ordinary time, we celebrate the glory of God as shown in his creation. Other seasons have their own character.

Sanctus

“Holy, holy, holy;” sung by the angels in Isaiah 6:1-8. God is the source of holiness, sent to us by “the one who is to come;” that is Jesus.

Eucharistic Prayer

Eucharist

Greek for “give thanks;” which is what the mass is all about. Thanking God for the gift of his Son.

Epiclesis

Epiclesis

“Calling the Holy Spirit to come upon;” it is by the power of the Spirit, acting through the priest, that the bread and wine become the body and blood of Jesus. It is “overshadowed” by the power of the Spirit, as was Mary at Jesus’ conception. There is also an Epiclesis at baptism and confirmation, the Spirit is invoked upon the person; changing them, configuring them to Christ.

The priest: *“. . . accept and bless these gifts . . . that they may become for us the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ”*

Institution Narrative and Consecration

Words from Jesus himself; *“this is my body...this is my blood.”* Jesus is truly present here, under the appearance of bread and wine. *“This is a hard saying;”* John’s gospel records people’s difficulties with this; it is still a challenge to us today.

Transubstantiation

Is the term, coined by St. Thomas Aquinas, the church uses to explain how this happens. Ultimately, it is a mystery. My suggestion is “taste and see the goodness of the Lord.” You will understand it when you experience it.

The priest: *“On the night before he was betrayed . . . This is my Body . . . This is my Blood . . . Do this in memory of me. . .”*

The Mystery of Faith (Anamnesis)

The paschal mystery

This is the mystery of our faith; Jesus is our Passover, the lamb sacrificed for us. See Exodus 12:1-28. He has died, risen and will come again; we too must die with him in order to rise with him

The priest: *“The mystery of faith “* People: *When we eat this bread and drink this cup . . .”*

Offering

Sacrifice

The mass is a re-remembering of Jesus’ sacrifice. As priest and victim, he offered himself once for all; the mass makes this sacrifice present again, for us here and now. We offer ourselves to the Father along with him.

The priest: *“. . . we offer you, Lord, the Bread of life and the Chalice of salvation . . .”* see Hebrews 4:14

Intercessions

The priest: *“Remember, Lord, your Church . . .”*

Intercessory prayer

Tradition has always affirmed the value of praying for one another, for the living as well as the dead. With Jesus present, we ask for his prayers as well as the prayers of all who have gone before us, united with us in the Communion of Saints, for those we mention. These are the intercessions of the mass (not the general intercessions that came at the liturgy of the Word).

Final Doxology

The priest, elevating the bread (while the deacon elevates the chalice): *“Through him, and with him, and in him. . .”*

Doxology

The final praise of God: through Jesus to the Father in the power of the Holy Spirit; one Holy and Blessed Trinity, forever and ever, amen! This is the Great Amen – joyously acclaimed in song.

It concludes with the Great Amen – the conclusion of the Eucharistic prayer; almost always sung by all.

Communion Rite

Lord’s Prayer

“Master, teach us to pray” this is the prayer Jesus taught: *“Our Father, who art in heaven . . .”*

Theology

We pray for the coming of the Kingdom; the fullness of God's presence in our hearts and lives. We ask that our will be made one with God's will. The priest's part asks for mercy and peace. Joining hands symbolizes the unity of the kingdom.

The priest adds the "embolism" before the doxology: *"Deliver us Lord from every evil..."*

Rite of Peace

"The peace of the Lord that passes all understanding;" in Hebrew Shalom. Not just peace, but the fullness of God's blessings; may God give you all good things.

The priest: *"The peace of the Lord be with you always"* People: *"And with your spirit."*

The deacon: *"Let us offer each other the sign of peace"*

Briefly exchange a sign of Christ's peace (usually a handshake) with those around you.

Breaking of the Bread

Host

Before consecration, it is bread, after consecration it is Host (*Hostis* is Latin for victim) *"Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world;"* the bread is broken; as Christ was broken.

Communing

A small piece of Host is placed in the chalice; the body reuniting with the blood as a reminder of the resurrection.

Angus Dei

Theology

Old Testament priests offered lambs as sacrifice for the people. Jesus is our sacrificial lamb – offered for many to redeem them from their sin.

All: *"Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world, have mercy on us."* Repeated three times

Priest (elevating the chalice and broken bread): *"Behold the lamb of God . . ."*

People: *"Lord I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof . . ."* words spoken by the Centurion, see Luke 7:7

Personal Preparation by the Priest

Priest (quietly) *"May the receiving of your Body and Blood . . . be for me protection in mind and body . . ."*

Reception of Communion

How to receive

We may receive under one or both species; only bread or both bread and wine. Either is a full and complete reception. The bread is usually received in the hand, some prefer to receive it directly on the tongue. You should not receive by intinction (dipping the bread into the wine). If you chose not to receive the cup that is fine – you may want to reverence it as you pass by, or reverently hold it in your hands and then pass it back.

Gluten Free Host

Since the host must be bread, there really is no "gluten free" host, just "gluten reduced". We have it available, just ask the sacristan before mass. You could also just receive the cup – it is still the complete presence of Jesus.

The important thing is this is your moment with Jesus; don't rush it! Enter into the mystery, savor it and meditate on it. When you receive the host, consume it immediately – don't wait to get back to your seat. If it is dropped, pick it up and either eat it or give it to a Eucharistic minister.

Concluding prayer

Meditation

This is the time for devout personal prayer; either silently or in a song. Try to sit and relax; be conscious that you have just received the risen Lord. What do you want to say to him?

The priest reads the closing prayer of the mass.

Concluding Rite

Any announcements concerning the congregation may be made.

Greeting and blessing

Blessings

There are several forms; the short form is used most often. The long (solemn) form is a three fold blessing, used most often at Christmas and Easter. There is another special form for bishops to use.

The priest blesses the assembly and makes the sign of the cross over them.

The deacon dismisses the assembly.

Just as we are called to worship together, so we are sent out to live what we have just done. The name "mass" comes from the Latin "missa;" which means "you are sent." (The deacon has the last word!)

Final Song

Sung as the procession leaves the church. Stick around – you probably can't get out of the parking lot anyway!

