Overview of the Sacraments

Sacraments:
  • Outward signs of an inward/interior grace instituted by Christ for our sanctification.
  • Visible signs of an invisible grace
  • Both a sign and an instrument of grace.

What is grace?
Grace is the living and loving presence of God in us.
(Father M Roverse)

The purpose of the sacraments is to sanctify men, to build up the Body of Christ and, finally, to give worship to God.

They not only presuppose faith, but also by words and objects they also nourish, strengthen, and express it.
That is why they are called ‘sacraments of faith.’

The whole liturgical life of the Church revolves around the sacraments especially the Eucharistic sacrifice.

As Catholics, we believe that Christ instituted all seven sacraments and each sacrament has a scriptural basis.

Sacraments are actions of the Holy Spirit at work in the Body of Christ, the Church.

Summary
The sacraments are efficacious signs of grace, instituted by Christ and entrusted to the Church, by which divine life is dispensed to us. The visible rites by which the sacraments are celebrated signify and make present the graces proper to each sacrament. They bear fruit in those who receive them with the required dispositions.

The Holy Spirit prepares the faithful for the sacraments by the Word of God and the faith that welcomes that word in well-disposed hearts. Thus the sacraments strengthen faith and express it.
The seven sacraments are categorized into three groups:

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**Sacraments of Christian Initiation**

From the time of the apostles, becoming a Christian has been accomplished by a journey and initiation in several stages.

Christian initiation is accomplished by three sacraments together: Baptism which is the beginning of new life; Confirmation which is its strengthening; and the Eucharist which nourishes the disciple with Christ's Body and Blood for his transformation in Christ.

❖ **Sacrament of Baptism**

Holy Baptism is the basis of the whole Christian life, the gateway to life in the Spirit and the door that gives access to the other sacraments.

Through Baptism we are freed from sin and reborn as children of God; we become members of Christ, are incorporated into the Church and made sharers in her mission.

❖ **Sacrament of Confirmation**

Baptism, the Eucharist, and the sacrament of Confirmation together constitute the "sacraments of Christian initiation," whose unity must be safeguarded.

The reception of the sacrament of Confirmation is necessary for the completion of baptismal grace.

By the sacrament of Confirmation, the baptized are more perfectly bound to the Church and are enriched with a special strength of the Holy Spirit.

❖ **Sacrament of the Eucharist**

The Holy Eucharist completes Christian initiation.
The Eucharist is the heart and the summit of the Church’s life, for in it Christ associates his Church and all her members with his sacrifice offered once for all on the cross to his Father; by this sacrifice he pours out the graces of salvation on his Body which is the Church.

Communion with the Body and Blood of Christ increases the communicant’s union with the Lord, forgives his venial sins, and preserves him from grave sins.

**Sacraments of Healing**

Through the sacraments of Christian initiation, man receives the new life of Christ. This “new life” is subject to suffering, illness, and death. It can be weakened and even lost by sin.

- **Sacrament of Penance**
The forgiveness of sins committed after Baptism is conferred by a particular sacrament called the sacrament of conversion, confession, penance, or reconciliation.

- **Anointing of the Sick**
The sacrament of Anointing of the Sick has as its purpose the conferral of a special grace on the Christian experiencing the difficulties inherent in the condition of illness or old age.

**Sacraments at the Service of Communion**
The sacraments, Holy Orders and Matrimony, are directed towards the salvation of others

- **Sacrament of Holy Orders**
Those who receive the sacrament of Holy Orders are consecrated in Christ’s name "to feed the Church by the word and grace of God."

- **Sacrament of Matrimony**
Those who receive the Sacrament of Matrimony are strengthened and consecrated for the duties and dignity of their state by a special sacrament."