

Parent Partnership Handbook

A Guide to Catholic Parenting

Catholic Parents Celebrate Sacraments

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Catholics are one in faith (the Apostles' Creed), word (Sacred Scripture), and Sacrament (sign and instrument of God's grace). Catholic parenting initiates children into this life of faith, and the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* provides formative support. This newsletter summarizes a sacramental view of life.

Christ acts in each of the seven Sacraments to communicate his presence, love, and divine life to help us in our journey toward holiness. Through words and ritual elements, each Sacrament is an expression of faith that instructs, nourishes, and strengthens us at marker-moments in our lives. Because Christ is the actor in each Sacrament, its effectiveness does not depend on the holiness of the minister (*ex opera operato*). The readiness and disposition of the recipient, however, does affect how fruitful the Sacrament will be (*ex opera operantis*).

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* explains that "the seven sacraments touch all the stages and all the important moments of Christian life: they give birth and increase healing and mission to the Christian's life of faith" (CCC #1210).

Sacraments of Christian Initiation

"Christian initiation is accomplished by means of the sacraments which establish the *foundations* of Christian life" (*Compendium Catechism of the Catholic Church*, #251).

Baptism removes sin; gives a share in Christ's role of priest, prophet, and king; establishes membership in the Christian community; infuses the theological virtues and gifts of the Holy Spirit, and bestows an indelible seal that marks the person as forever belonging to Christ.

Confirmation builds on the grace of Baptism by stirring up the gifts of the Holy Spirit, binding the soul more firmly to Christ and the Church, and giving strength to witness to Christian faith.

Holy Eucharist feeds and nourishes us with the very body and blood of Jesus. When Eucharist is given at the time of death, it is called Viaticum—"with you on the way."

Sacraments of Healing

"Christ, the physician of our soul and body, instituted these sacraments because the new life that he gives us in the sacraments of Christian

initiation can be weakened and even lost because of sin" (CCCC, #295).

Penance (Sacrament of Reconciliation, Forgiveness, Confession, or Conversion) reconciles us with God and the Church; eliminates eternal punishment due to sin; increases spiritual strength; restores peace, balance, and serenity of conscience; and gives spiritual consolation.

Anointing of the Sick strengthens the sick person by uniting him or her to the Passion of Christ. It gives comfort, peace, courage, and even the forgiveness of sins if the person is unable to make a confession.

Sacraments of Mission/Service

"Two sacraments, Holy Orders and Matrimony, confer a special grace for a particular mission in the Church to serve and build up the People of God" (CCCC, #321).

Holy Orders consecrates/ordains a man to serve the spiritual needs of the people of God as deacon, priest, or bishop.

Matrimony seals a lifelong, exclusive bond between the spouses. It gives the graces necessary to become holy through the marriage relationship and to accept responsibly the gift of Christian parenting.

Sacrament of Sacraments

The Eucharist is central to the seven Sacraments. All other Sacraments lead to Eucharist and flow from Eucharist. Eucharist is a *memorial* that makes present and actual the same sacrifice of the cross, where Jesus is both the priest and victim who offers himself to the Father for the sake of all humankind. The sacred host contains the body, blood, soul, and divinity of Jesus. So special is this Sacrament that it has many names, the most common being: "the Eucharist, Holy Mass, the Lord's Supper, the Breaking of the Bread, the Eucharistic Celebration, the Memorial of the Passion, death, and Resurrection of the Lord, the Holy Sacrifice, the Holy and Divine Liturgy, the Sacred Mysteries, the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar, and Holy Communion" (CCCC, #275). ▲



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