

RCIA

Association of Hebrew Catholics

The Sacramental System

Baptism and Confirmation

Reading: CCC 1113-1209, 2558-2760, 1210-1321

CCCC 224-270

Sacraments in General

224. What are the sacraments and which are they?

The sacraments, **instituted by Christ** and **entrusted to the Church**, are **efficacious signs of grace** perceptible to the senses. Through them divine life is bestowed upon us. There are seven sacraments: Baptism, Confirmation, Holy Eucharist, Penance, Anointing of the Sick, Holy Orders, and Matrimony.

This definition of sacrament has 4 elements:

- Sacred signs perceptible to the senses
- Efficacious to accomplish what they signify
- Instituted by Christ
- Entrusted to the Church.

Sacraments in General

225. What is the relationship of the sacraments to Christ?

The mysteries of Christ's life are the foundations of what he would henceforth dispense in the sacraments, through the ministers of his Church.

- The sacraments enable the mysteries of Christ's life—birth, Passion, death, and Resurrection—to touch us today with their power, and to configure us to those mysteries, and insert us into them.
- Romans 6:3-4: “Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.”

Sacraments in General

226. What is the link between the sacraments and the Church?

Christ has entrusted the sacraments to his Church. They are the sacraments “of the Church” in a twofold sense: they are “from her” insofar as they are actions of the Church which is the sacrament of Christ’s action; and they are “for her” in as much as they **build up the Church**.

- Without the sacraments, there would be no Church.

Sacraments in General

- **227. What is the sacramental character?**

It is a spiritual “seal” bestowed by the sacraments of **Baptism, Confirmation, and Holy Orders**. It is a promise and guarantee of divine protection. By virtue of this seal the Christian is **configured to Christ, participates in a variety of ways in his priesthood** and takes his part in the Church according to different states and functions. He is, therefore, set apart for divine worship and the service of the Church. Because this character is indelible the sacraments that impress it on the soul are received only once in life.

- Sacramental character imprints us with Christ’s **identity, mission,** and spiritual **power**.

Sacraments in General

- **228. What is the relationship between the sacraments and faith?**

The sacraments not only presuppose faith but with words and ritual elements they nourish, strengthen, and express it. By celebrating the sacraments, the Church professes the faith that comes from the apostles. This explains the origin of the ancient saying, “lex orandi, lex credendi,” that is, the Church believes as she prays.

Sacraments in General

229. Why are the sacraments efficacious?

The sacraments are efficacious **ex opere operato** ("by the very fact that the sacramental action is performed") because **it is Christ who acts** in the sacraments and communicates the grace they signify. The efficacy of the sacraments does not depend upon the personal holiness of the minister. However, the **fruits** of the sacraments do **depend on the dispositions** of the one who receives them.

Sacraments in General

- **230. For what reason are the sacraments necessary for salvation?**

For believers in Christ the sacraments, even if they are not all given to each of the faithful, are necessary for salvation because they confer sacramental grace, forgiveness of sins, adoption as children of God, conformation to Christ the Lord and membership in the Church. The Holy Spirit heals and transforms those who receive the sacraments.

Sacraments in General

- **231. What is sacramental grace?**

Sacramental grace is the grace of the Holy Spirit which is given by Christ and is proper to each sacrament. This grace helps the faithful in their journey toward holiness and so assists the Church as well to grow in charity and in her witness to the world.

Sacraments in General

- **232. What is the relationship between the sacraments and everlasting life?**

In the sacraments the Church already receives a foretaste of eternal life, while “awaiting in blessed hope, the appearing in glory of our great God and saviour Christ Jesus”
(Titus 2:13).

Liturgy and Sacraments in General

- The **liturgy is the public prayer** of the Church.
- **233. Who acts in the liturgy?**

In the liturgy it is the whole Christ (Christus Totus) who acts, Head and Body. As our High Priest he celebrates with his body, which is the Church in heaven and on earth.

Liturgy and Sacraments in General

- **234. Who celebrates the heavenly liturgy?**

The heavenly liturgy is celebrated by the angels, by the saints of the Old and New Testament, particularly the Mother of God, by the Apostles, by the martyrs, and by the “great multitude which no one could number from every nation, race, people, and tongue.” (Revelation 7:9). When we celebrate the mystery of our salvation in the sacraments we participate in this eternal liturgy.

Liturgy and Sacraments in General

- **235. How does the Church on earth celebrate the liturgy?**

The Church on earth celebrates the liturgy as a priestly people in which each one acts according to his proper function in the unity of the Holy Spirit.

The **baptized offer themselves in a spiritual sacrifice**; the ordained ministers celebrate according to the Order they received for the service of all the members of the Church; the bishops and priests act in the Person of Christ the Head.

Liturgy and Sacraments in General

- **236. How is the liturgy celebrated?**

The celebration of the liturgy is interwoven with signs and symbols whose meaning is rooted in creation and in human culture. It is determined by the events of the Old Testament and is fully revealed in the Person and work of Christ.

Liturgy and Sacraments in General

- **237. From where do the sacramental signs come?**

Some come from created things (light, water, fire, bread, wine, oil); others come from social life (washing, anointing, breaking of bread). Still others come from the history of salvation in the Old Covenant (the Passover rites, the sacrifices, the laying on of hands, the consecrations). These signs, some of which are normative and unchangeable, were taken up by Christ and are made the bearers of his saving and sanctifying action.

Liturgy and Sacraments in General

- **238. What is the link between the actions and the words in the celebration of the sacraments?**

Actions and words are very closely linked in the celebration of the sacraments. Indeed, even if the symbolic actions are already in themselves a language, it is necessary that the words of the rite accompany and give life to these actions. The liturgical words and actions are inseparable both insofar as they are meaningful signs and insofar as they bring about what they signify.

Liturgy and Sacraments in General

- **239. What are the criteria for the proper use of singing and music in liturgical celebrations?**

Since song and music are closely connected with liturgical action they must respect the following criteria. They should conform to Catholic doctrine in their texts, drawn preferably from Sacred Scripture and liturgical sources. They should be a beautiful expression of prayer. The music should be of a high quality. Song and music should encourage the participation of the liturgical assembly. They should express the cultural richness of the People of God and the sacred and solemn character of the celebration. “He who sings, prays twice” (Saint Augustine).

Liturgy and Sacraments in General

- **240. What is the purpose of holy images?**

The image of Christ is the liturgical icon par excellence. Other images, representations of Our Lady and of the Saints, signify Christ who is glorified in them. They proclaim the same Gospel message that Sacred Scripture communicates by the word and they help to awaken and nourish the faith of believers.

Liturgy and Sacraments in General

- **241. What is the center of the liturgical season?**

The center of the liturgical season is Sunday which is the foundation and kernel of the entire liturgical year and has its culmination in the annual celebration of Easter, the feast of feasts.

Liturgy and Sacraments in General

- **242. What is the function of the liturgical year?**

In the liturgical year the Church celebrates the whole mystery of Christ from his Incarnation to his return in glory. On set days the Church venerates with special love the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Mother of God. The Church also keeps the memorials of saints who lived for Christ, who suffered with him, and who live with him in glory.

Liturgy and Sacraments in General

- **243. What is the Liturgy of the Hours?**

The Liturgy of the Hours, which is the public and common prayer of the Church, is the prayer of Christ with his body, the Church. Through the Liturgy of the Hours the mystery of Christ, which we celebrate in the Eucharist, sanctifies and transforms the whole of each day. It is composed mainly of psalms, other biblical texts, and readings from the Fathers and spiritual masters.

Liturgy and Sacraments in General

- **244. Does the Church need places in order to celebrate the liturgy?**

The worship “in spirit and truth” (John 4:24) of the New Covenant is not tied exclusively to any place because Christ is the true temple of God. Through him Christians and the whole Church become temples of the living God by the action of the Holy Spirit. Nonetheless, the people of God in their earthly condition need places in which the community can gather to celebrate the

Liturgy and Sacraments in General

- **245. What are sacred buildings?**

They are the houses of God, a symbol of the Church that lives in that place as well as of the heavenly Jerusalem. Above all they are places of prayer in which the Church celebrates the Eucharist and worships Christ who is truly present in the tabernacle.

Liturgy and Sacraments in General

- **246. What are the privileged places inside sacred buildings?**

They are: the altar, the tabernacle, the place where the sacred Chrism and other holy oils are kept, the chair of the bishop (cathedra) or the chair of the priest, the ambo, the baptismal font, and the confessional.

Liturgy and Sacraments in General

- **247. Why is the one Mystery of Christ celebrated by the Church according to various liturgical traditions?**

The answer is that the unfathomable richness of the mystery of Christ cannot be exhausted by any single liturgical tradition. From the very beginning, therefore, this richness found expression among various peoples and cultures in ways that are characterized by a wonderful diversity and complementarity.

248. The Church is Catholic and therefore can integrate into her unity all the authentic riches of cultures.

Liturgy and Sacraments in General

- **249. Is everything immutable in the liturgy?**

In the liturgy, particularly in that of the sacraments, there are unchangeable elements because they are of divine institution. The Church is the faithful guardian of them. There are also, however, elements subject to change which the Church has the power and on occasion also the duty to adapt to the cultures of diverse peoples.

Sacraments in General

- **The seven sacraments are:**
- Baptism
- Confirmation
- Holy Eucharist
- Penance
- Anointing of the Sick
- Holy Orders
- Matrimony

Why These Seven Sacraments?

- St. Thomas gives a classic answer to why there are these seven sacraments by creating an analogy between natural life and supernatural life. As certain elements are necessary for man's natural life, so analogous elements are necessary for man's supernatural life.

St. Thomas's Analogy: Individual Needs

- What is necessary for each individual is **birth, growth to maturity, nourishment, healing** in times of illness, and **preparation for death**. So likewise in the supernatural life it is necessary to have spiritual rebirth through **Baptism**, growth to spiritual maturity through **Confirmation**, spiritual nourishment in the **Eucharist**, spiritual healing through **Penance**, and spiritual preparation for death through the sacrament of **Anointing of the Sick**.

St. Thomas's Analogy: 2 Social Needs, Matrimony and Holy Orders

- With regard to man's social nature, two kinds of society are necessary: the family and civil society; the former is based on marriage, and the latter requires some headship to keep it unified.
- Thus we have the elevation of marriage to a sacrament, and likewise governance of ecclesial society is elevated to the supernatural order through the sacrament of Holy Orders.

Catechism of the Catholic Church, §1210

“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. There is thus a certain resemblance between the stages of natural life and the stages of the spiritual life.”

Sacraments in General

- **250. How are the sacraments of the Church divided?**

The sacraments are divided into: the sacraments of **Christian initiation** (Baptism, Confirmation, and Holy Eucharist); the sacraments of **healing** (Penance and Anointing of the Sick); and the sacraments at the service of communion and mission (**Holy Orders and Matrimony**). The sacraments touch all the important moments of Christian life. **All of the sacraments are ordered to the Holy Eucharist** “as to their end” (Saint Thomas Aquinas).

Baptism

- **251. How is Christian initiation brought about?**

Christian initiation is accomplished by means of the sacraments which establish the foundations of Christian life. The faithful born anew by Baptism are strengthened by Confirmation and are then nourished by the Eucharist.

Baptism

- **252. What names are given to the first sacrament of initiation?**

This sacrament is primarily called Baptism because of the central rite with which it is celebrated. To baptize means to “immerse” in water. The one who is baptized is immersed into the death of Christ and rises with him as a “new creature” (2 Corinthians 5:17). This sacrament is also called the “bath of regeneration and renewal in the Holy Spirit” (Titus 3:5); and it is called “enlightenment” because the baptized becomes “a son of light” (Ephesians 5:8).

Baptism

- **253. How is Baptism prefigured in the Old Covenant?**

In the Old Covenant Baptism was pre-figured in various ways: water, seen as source of life and of death; in the Ark of Noah, which saved by means of water; in the passing through the Red Sea, which liberated Israel from Egyptian slavery; in the crossing of the Jordan River, that brought Israel into the promised land which is the image of eternal life.

Baptism

- **254. Who brought to fulfillment those prefigurations?**

All the Old Covenant prefigurations find their fulfillment in Jesus Christ. At the beginning of his public life Jesus had himself baptized by John the Baptist in the Jordan. On the cross, blood and water, signs of Baptism and the Eucharist, flowed from his pierced side. After his Resurrection he gave to his apostles this mission: "Go forth and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19).

Baptism

- **255. Starting when and to whom has the Church administered Baptism?**
- From the day of Pentecost, the Church has administered Baptism to anyone who believes in Jesus Christ.

Baptism

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256. In what does the essential rite of Baptism consist?

The essential rite of this sacrament consists in immersing the candidate in water or pouring water over his or her head while invoking the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

257. Who can receive Baptism?

Every person not yet baptized is able to receive Baptism.

Baptism

- **258. Why does the Church baptize infants?**

The Church baptizes infants because they are born with original sin. They need to be freed from the power of the Evil One and brought into that realm of freedom which belongs to the children of God.

- Infants are baptized also to become members of the family of God, the Church, be configured to Christ by baptismal character, and receive sanctifying grace.

Baptism

- **259. What is required of one who is to be baptized?**

Everyone who is to be baptized is required to make a profession of faith. This is done personally in the case of an adult or by the parents and by the Church in the case of infants. Also the godfather or the godmother and the whole ecclesial community share the responsibility for baptismal preparation (catechumenate) as well as for the development and safeguarding of the faith and grace given at baptism.

Baptism

- **260. Who can baptize?**

The ordinary ministers of Baptism are the bishop and the priest. In the Latin Church the deacon also can baptize. In case of necessity any person can baptize provided he has the intention of doing what the Church does. This is done by pouring water on the head of the candidate while saying the Trinitarian formula for Baptism: "I baptize you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit".

Baptism

261. Is Baptism necessary for salvation?

Baptism is necessary for salvation for all those to whom the Gospel has been proclaimed and who have had the possibility of asking for this sacrament.

262. Is it possible to be saved without Baptism?

Since Christ died for the salvation of all, those can be saved without Baptism who die for the faith (Baptism of blood). Catechumens and all those who, even without knowing Christ and the Church, still (under the impulse of grace) sincerely seek God and strive to do his will can also be saved without Baptism (Baptism of desire). The Church in her liturgy entrusts children who die without Baptism to the mercy of God.

Baptism

- **263. What are the effects of Baptism?**

Baptism takes away original sin, all personal sins and all punishment due to sin. It makes the baptized person a participant in the divine life of the Trinity through sanctifying grace, the grace of justification which incorporates one into Christ and into his Church. It gives one a share in the priesthood of Christ and provides the basis for communion with all Christians. It bestows the theological virtues and the gifts of the Holy Spirit. A baptized person belongs forever to Christ. He is marked with the indelible seal of Christ (character).

Baptism

- **264. What is the meaning of the Christian name received at Baptism?**

The name is important because God knows each of us by name, that is, in our uniqueness as persons. In Baptism a Christian receives his or her own name in the Church. It should preferably be the name of a saint who might offer the baptized a model of sanctity and an assurance of his or her intercession before God.

Confirmation

- **265. What place does Confirmation have in the divine plan of salvation?**

In the Old Testament the prophets announced that the Spirit of the Lord would rest on the awaited Messiah and on the entire messianic people. The whole life and mission of Jesus were carried out in total communion with the Holy Spirit. The apostles received the Holy Spirit at **Pentecost** and proclaimed “the great works of God” (Acts 2:11). They gave the gift of the same Spirit to the newly baptized by the laying on of hands. Down through the centuries, the Church has continued to live by the Spirit and to impart him to her children.

Confirmation

- **266. Why is this sacrament called Chrismation or Confirmation?**

It is called Chrismation (in the Eastern Churches: Anointing with holy myron or chrism) because the essential rite of the sacrament is anointing with chrism. It is called Confirmation because it confirms and strengthens baptismal grace.

Confirmation

- **267. What is the essential rite of Confirmation?**

The essential rite of Confirmation is the anointing with Sacred Chrism (oil mixed with balsam and consecrated by the bishop), which is done by the laying on of the hand of the minister who pronounces the sacramental words proper to the rite. In the West this anointing is done on the forehead of the baptized with the words, "Be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit". In the Eastern Churches of the Byzantine rite this anointing is also done on other parts of the body with the words, "The seal of the gift of the Holy Spirit".

Confirmation

- **268. What is the effect of Confirmation?**

The effect of Confirmation is a **special outpouring of the Holy Spirit** like that of Pentecost. This outpouring impresses on the soul an **indelible character** and produces a **growth in the grace of Baptism**. It roots the recipient **more deeply in divine sonship, binds him more firmly to Christ and to the Church and reinvigorates the gifts of the Holy Spirit** in his soul. It gives a **special strength to witness** to the Christian faith.

Confirmation

- **269. Who can receive this sacrament?**

Only those already baptized can and should receive this sacrament which can be received only once. To receive Confirmation efficaciously the candidate must be in the state of grace.

- **270. Who is the minister of Confirmation?**

The original minister of Confirmation is the bishop. In this way the link between the confirmed and the Church in her apostolic dimension is made manifest. When a priest confers this sacrament, as ordinarily happens in the East and in special cases in the West, the link with the bishop and with the Church is expressed by the priest who is the collaborator of the bishop and by the Sacred Chrism, consecrated by the bishop himself.

Confirmation

- The character of Confirmation gives a new **identification with Christ** as a mature member of His Body, who is given to share in Christ's **mission**, which is prophet, priest, and king.
- The **prophetic** mission is to give witness to Christ and the Church, and Christ's moral teaching.
- The **kingly** mission is to order creation and social relations in accordance with God's plan, to order oneself in self-mastery, and to serve others in charity.
- The **priestly** mission is to offer one's life and work in union with Christ in the holy Mass, and to intercede for all.