

RCIA: SESSION TWELVE

INTRODUCTION TO THE SACRAMENTS

Week: 02/01/23 – 08/01/23

Q 1: What is a sacrament?

A sacrament is “an efficacious sign (capable of producing the desired effect) of grace, instituted by Christ and entrusted to the Church, by which divine life is dispensed to us by the work of the Holy Spirit.”¹

Q 2: What is the difference between a sign and a sacrament?

A sign is something that can point to the presence of something (*Supermarket*); it can be an action or gesture to convey something (*a salute*); a board or poster (*a STOP sign*); something that stands for a word or phrase (*+, -, x, €,)* etc. etc. A sacrament is an efficacious sign i.e. “they reveal and make present the reality they signify.”²

Q 3: How many sacraments are there?

“There are seven sacraments in the Church: Baptism, Confirmation or Chrismation, Eucharist, Penance, Anointing of the Sick, Holy Orders, and Matrimony.”³

Q 4: Who instituted the sacraments?

“Adhering to the teaching of the Holy Scriptures, to the apostolic traditions and to the consensus ... of the Fathers, we profess that the sacraments of the new law were ... all instituted by Jesus Christ our Lord.”⁴

Q 5: Who oversees and celebrates the sacraments?

Jesus entrusted the sacraments to the Church. “Throughout his earthly life, Christ’s words and deeds anticipated the power of his Paschal Mystery. Sacraments confer the grace that comes forth from Jesus Christ and that appears in the life of the Church by the power of the Holy Spirit.”⁵

Q 6: What is the purpose of the sacraments?

Through the sacraments the Holy Spirit draws us closer to Jesus Christ and makes us partakers in the life of the Holy Trinity. “Jesus gave us the

¹ Irish Episcopal Conference, *Irish Catholic Catechism for Adults*, p.566.

² Ibid. p.188.

³ Veritas, *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 1113.

⁴ Ibid. no. 1114.

⁵ Irish Episcopal Conference, *Irish Catholic Catechism for Adults*, p.188.

Sacraments to call us to worship God, to build up the Church, to deepen our faith, to show us how to pray, to connect us with the living Tradition of the Church and to sanctify us.”⁶

Q 7: Are the seven sacraments grouped together in any way?

The seven sacraments are grouped together in the following way:

- Three sacraments of Initiation: Baptism, Confirmation (Chrismation) and Eucharist.
- Two sacraments of Healing: Penance and Anointing of the Sick.
- Two sacraments at the Service of Communion: Holy Orders and Matrimony.

“As we come to understand the Sacraments, it is important to recognise that the Sacraments have a visible and invisible reality, a reality open to all the human senses but grasped in its God-given depths with the eyes of faith.”⁷

⁶ Ibid. p.189.

⁷ Ibid. p.187.

1. Gospel Reflection: Sunday 08/01/23 is the feast of the Baptism of the Lord (Year A) or the First Sunday in Ordinary Time and the Gospel reading is Mt. 3:13-17. The text of the reading is below. The following format will be used for all Gospel reflections:

- Read the text aloud.
- Pause for a minute's silence.
- Read the text aloud again.
- Ask everyone to pick a word or a phrase that struck them. They just say the word or phrase without comment or discussion.
- Read the text again.
- Ask those present to comment on their word or phrase. What struck them about it? Why/how is it speaking to them?
- Continue with the discussion. The following questions may be helpful: What does this mean to me? How does it make me feel? Did I find the text disturbing/hopeful/confusing? What images of God emerge for me? What do I think that God is saying in this text? What impact does this have on my life?

GOSPEL READING

Reader: The Lord be with you.

Response: And with your spirit.

Reader: A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew.

Response: Glory to you, O Lord.

Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptised by John. John tried to dissuade him. *'It is I who need baptism from you'* he said *'and yet you come to me!'* But Jesus replied, *'Leave it like this for the time being; it is fitting that we should, in this way, do all that righteousness demands'*. At this, John gave in to him.

As soon as Jesus was baptised he came up from the water, and suddenly the heavens opened and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming down on him. And a voice spoke from heaven, *'This is my Son, the Beloved; my favour rests on him'*.

The Gospel of the Lord *Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.*