

RCIA: SESSION SEVENTEEN

THE SACRAMENTS OF COMMUNION

Week: 13/02/23 - 19/02/23

Introduction

A sacrament is a visible sign of an unseen reality. Holy Orders and Matrimony belong to the Sacraments of Communion. This means they are primarily directed toward the salvation of others and the recipients of these Sacraments grow in holiness through their service to others.

Marriage is the communion of one man and one woman, who become one flesh. The marriage covenant, by which a man and woman form with each other an intimate communion of life and love, has been founded and endowed with its own special laws by the Creator. By its very nature it is ordered to the good of the couple, as well as to the generation and education of children. These purposes are protected and fostered by the permanence of the marriage bond and the mutual fidelity of the spouses.

Holy Orders is the communion of the priest with Jesus, the High Priest, and His people. When a priest is ordained he is anointed with the Spirit which seals the priest with an indelible, spiritual character that configures him to Christ the priest and enables him to act in the name of Christ the Head. The then priest watches over and leads his community.

The Sacrament of Marriage

Catechism References: #1601-1666

Scripture References: Gen. 2:18, 20-24

Mt. 19:4-6

1 Peter 3:7

Heb. 13:4

Is. 62:5

Jn. 13:34-35

Code of Canon Law: 1055-1140

SACRED SCRIPTURE & MARRIAGE

Sacred Scripture begins with the creation and union of man and woman and ends with "the wedding feast of the Lamb" (Rev 19:7, 9). Scripture often refers to marriage, its origin and purpose, the meaning God gave to it, and its renewal in the covenant made by Jesus with his Church. Man and woman were created for each other.

Genesis 1:27 shows us that the human person's complementarity as male and female reflects the image of God. A man "leaves his father and mother and clings to his wife, and the two of them become one flesh" (Gn 2:23). The man joyfully recognizes the woman as "bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh" (Gn 2:23). God blesses the man and woman and commands them to "be fertile and multiply" (Gn 1:28). Jesus echoes these teachings from Genesis when he stated: "...from the beginning the Creator 'made them male and female' and said, '[f]or this reason a man shall leave ... and the two shall become one flesh" (Matt. 19: 4,5).

These Biblical passages help us to understand God's plan for marriage. Man and woman enter a lifelong bond of love and life, giving themselves as equal persons completely to one another. By this self-gift, they cooperate with God in bringing children to life and in caring for them.

WHAT IS MATRIMONY?

Matrimony comes from the Latin word *maritare*, meaning, “to wed, marry, give in marriage.” It refers to the contract made by the couple – a mutual alliance they enter into when they made the vow to support each other and be together for life.

According to the Catechism of the Council of Trent, “marriage is a conjugal union between a man and a woman, both in legal status, in which they establish a perpetual and indissoluble union of lives. There are two goals in this union – procreation and education of the offspring (**procreative**) and the mutual support of the spouses” (**unitive**).

The Sacrament of Marriage is a covenant, which is more than a contract. Covenant always expresses a relationship between persons. The marriage covenant refers to the relationship between the husband and wife, a permanent union of persons capable of knowing and loving each other and God. The celebration of marriage is also a liturgical act, appropriately held in a public liturgy at church. Catholics are urged to celebrate their marriage within the Eucharistic Liturgy.

Marriage as a covenant relationship. The sacrament of marriage is a covenantal relationship and not just a contractual one. In a contractual relationship, one person is free to break the bond if the other person breaks the commitment in some way. In a covenantal relationship, both spouses promise “to love each other in good times and in bad, in sickness and in health, until death do us part.” A covenant relationship mirrors God’s love for us. He keeps loving us even when we stop loving him.

NATURAL AND SACRAMENTAL MARRIAGE

Marriages may be either natural or sacramental. **Natural** marriage is a vowed covenant, a partnership of the whole of life ordered to the good of the spouses and the procreation and education of children. The Church recognizes natural marriage as valid, presuming the spouses marry freely, intend marriage as an exclusive and permanent bond, and do not exclude the possibility of children.

A **sacramental** marriage, however, is more than a natural bond. When marriage occurs between two baptized persons, it is sacramental. As a sacrament, marriage is “intended to perfect the couple’s love and to strengthen their indissoluble unity” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1641). Christ dwells with the couple and assists them in living out their vocations. When Christians marry, they receive the grace to help one another attain holiness and are strengthened to love one another with a supernatural love.

Since baptism is the gateway to the other sacraments, it is impossible to enter into a sacramental union without baptism. If one spouse has received baptism but not the other, it is not a sacramental marriage.

What is a Sacrament?

Sacraments were instituted by Jesus to give grace to humanity. The term “sacrament” is best defined as “an outward sign instituted by Christ to give grace”. It has three parts:

An outward sign: Because we are humans, the Lord uses material symbols that we humans can understand and/or perceive. These are the “things” we use (water and oil, words, and gestures) to confer a sacrament.

Instituted by Christ: Jesus ‘created’ the seven sacraments by His actions during His life. After he died on the cross and ascended into heaven, that was the end to the creating of sacraments.

To give grace: the essential purpose of every sacrament is to give grace.

SYMBOLS OF MARRIAGE



The Wedding Rings

The wedding rings symbolises the unity, completeness and eternal love for one another. The physical meaning is that it is a spoken reminder of faithful commitment to the marriage.

MARRIAGE CEREMONY

Marriage is different to most of the Sacraments which are conferred by a priest, or bishop. The man and woman confer the Sacrament of Marriage upon each other when they express their consent to marry before God and the Church.

As a Sacrament Marriage is part of the Church's liturgy. Jesus taught that marriage is indissoluble: "Therefore, what God has joined together, no human being must separate" (Matthew 19:6). Through the sacrament of Matrimony, the Church teaches that Jesus gives the strength and grace to live the real meaning of marriage. In the writings of St Paul: "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ loved the church and handed himself over for her to sanctify her" (Ephesians 5:25–26).

The **exchange of consent** between a man and a woman is an essential part of the marriage ceremony. Catholic wedding vows are generally preceded by three questions from the priest:

- "Have you come here freely and without reservation to give yourselves to each other in marriage?"
- "Will you honour each other as man 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 his Church?"

The presence of the priest and of other witnesses testifies to the fact that marriage is part of the Church which recognises the lifelong and exclusive commitment of the bride and groom to each other. Catholic marriage is a vocation and it requires the married couple to accept certain obligations toward each other, the children, and the community.

The exchange of rings, are an ancient symbol of the couple's commitment to one another and their desire to enter into the covenant relationship of marriage. In the Scriptures, rings were given as signs of commitment. After being blessed by the priest the rings are exchanged between bride and groom. This exchange signifies that in married life the weaknesses of one partner will be compensated for by the strengths of the other.

What is the Sacrament of Holy Orders?

Catechism References: #1536-1600

Code of Canon Law: #1008-1054

Scripture References: Mk. 3:13-19

Acts 6:6

Mt. 18:18

Lk. 22:19

Jn. 20:21-23

Heb. 7:15-17 – Jesus, the High Priest

OVERVIEW

Jesus chose twelve apostles. One of them, Judas, betrayed Jesus. After Jesus' ascension, the apostles had the important mission of spreading the news about Jesus, but they were lacking one member. At a gathering of Jesus' disciples, Peter told the group that a replacement for Judas was needed. The man to be chosen needed to have been a witness to Jesus' life, death, resurrection, and ascension. Two men were proposed, Justus and Matthias. Peter and the apostles prayed for the Lord to show them whom to choose. Matthias was chosen and became the new apostle (Acts 1:15-26).

The apostles chose a new Church leader to be a witness to Jesus Christ and continue his work. Today the pope and bishops have been called and chosen to continue Jesus' work; they are successors to the apostles.

All members of the Church participate in the **common priesthood** of all believers through Baptism. However, some men are called to serve Jesus and the Church today through the celebration of the Sacrament of Holy Orders, the **ministerial priesthood**. Through their leadership in the Church, they help continue Jesus' presence on earth in the tradition of the apostles.

Those who are called to be priests are ordained through the Rite of Ordination. In celebrating this Rite, men receive a permanent spiritual mark, called a character, signifying that they represent Jesus' presence in the Church. They act *in persona Christi*.

There are three levels of participation in the Sacrament of Holy Orders: as bishop, as priest (from presbyter, which is Greek for “elder”), and as deacon.

A **bishop** receives the fullness of the Sacrament of Holy Orders. He is the head or Ordinary of the local church. The local area entrusted to him is called a diocese.

Priests serve the community in various ways. They may be called to serve in their dioceses or as religious order priests, carrying out the mission of a particular religious community. They preside at liturgies, preach, administer the sacraments, counsel people, serve as pastors, and teach.

Deacons help and serve bishops by serving the needs of the Church, proclaiming the gospel, teaching and preaching, baptizing, witnessing marriages, and assisting the priest celebrant at liturgies.

Deacons are ordained for **service** in the Church. There are deacons who are studying to become priests. There are deacons that include married men who are called to remain deacons for life and to serve the Church in this capacity.

JESUS AND MELCHIZEDEK

If there's one place in the New Testament that most powerfully emphasizes Jesus' priesthood, it's no doubt the Letter to the Hebrews, especially chapter seven. Jesus is our high priest of the heavenly Temple, offering a heavenly sacrifice and bringing about a heavenly liturgy.

Jesus, as Hebrews explains, is a priest not according to the order of Levi, but the order of “Melchizedek.” Melchizedek is the very first person in the Bible explicitly referred to as a “priest” (Genesis 14:18). Hebrews' reference to Melchizedek in Hebrews 7 points back to a more ancient priesthood, before the rise of the Levites who offered sacrifice to God.

Explanation of the Rite of Ordination

The Liturgy begins with a **Procession**. What is important to note is the order of the procession. All liturgical processions are organized according to the "order" of the ministers. Minor ministers process first, the Deacons present

for the celebration, the Deacon carrying the Book of the Gospels, the Ordination Candidate, the concelebrating Priests and finally the bishop.

The readings for the **Liturgy of the Word** are taken from the special Lectionary Readings for Holy Orders. All of the readings speak of God's election of us as a chosen people and the importance of the ministry to carry on the work of Jesus within the Church, caring for the needs of all.

Immediately following the gospel, the rite of Ordination begins. There is first the Calling of the Candidate. A priest calls the Deacon by name from among the people, he responds "Present" and then stands before the Bishop. The Church firmly believes that those who are called to ministry answer a call from the Lord and are called from the midst of the community of the faithful. That is the reason why the ordinand sits with his family in the midst of the congregation. (Hebrews 5:1-6)

The ordination continues with the **Presentation of the Candidate**. The Bishop inquires of those charged with the formation of priesthood candidates, if the ordinand has taken all the preparatory steps and has been found worthy and competent to fulfil the office of priest. The Bishop then ELECTS the individual to be ordained. Bishop will then proceed with a homily which includes instruction to the ordinand in what the Church will expect of him in accepting the call to Priesthood.



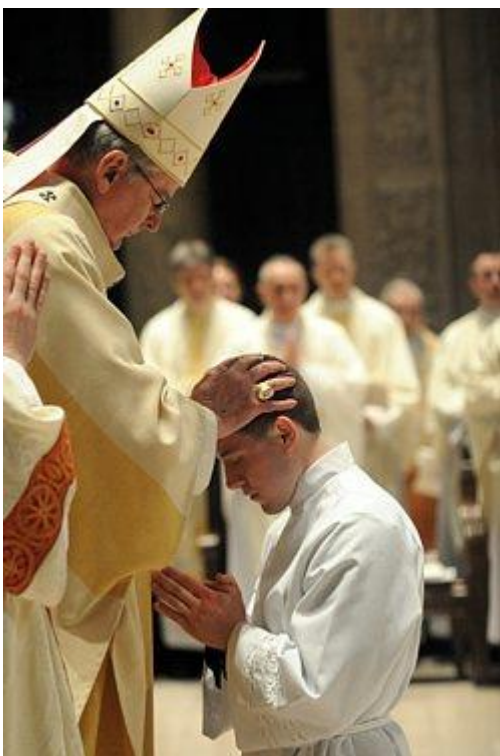
The ordained placing his hands in the bishop's promises obedience to the Bishop and his successors. As a presbyter (priest) he will be under the care, guidance and direction of the Diocesan Bishop. This **promise of obedience** assures that both priest and

bishop will work hand in hand to build the kingdom of God.

The **Litany of the Saints** are then invoked to intercede on the behalf of the candidate as he approaches the sacrament of Holy Orders. The Litany of the Saints reminds us of the universal call to holiness and especially the call to holiness that marks the life of a priest. The ordinand will prostrate himself while the assembly kneels to pray. The gesture of **prostration** is a symbol of his submission to the will of God. This is a very powerful moment as this man hands his life over to God in total abandonment. The Bishop concludes the Litany with a prayer.



The actual rite of Ordination takes place in the two parts that follow. First is



the ancient symbol of the **Laying on of Hands**. The ordinand will go before the Bishop and the Bishop prays in silence as he places his hands on the head of the candidate. This gesture was first used by the apostles in the election of the first deacons for service in the Church (Acts 6:6). Using this same gesture the priests now come forward to impose hands. This is a sign that they, too, share the same gift of ordination through the gift of the Holy Spirit. When the priests have finished, they will raise their hand (as at the consecration of the Mass) in blessing as the Bishop prays the Prayer of Consecration. This prayer is the second part of the actual Ordination. The assembly responds "Amen" to

the Bishop's prayer as a sign of our assent, too, of the sacred action that has taken place.



The newly ordained priest then removes his deacon's stole and is **vested** with the priest's stole (a sign of his office of the priesthood) and the chasuble (the vestment worn for the celebration of the Mass). The stole symbolizes the authority and responsibility to serve in imitation of Christ. It reflects the line from Scripture: "For my yoke is easy and my burden light." (Matthew 11:30)

He then goes before the Bishop where the palms of his hands are **anointed** with the Sacred Chrism. The Bishop prays, "The Father anointed our Lord Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit. May Jesus preserve you to sanctify the Christian people and to offer sacrifice to God." His hands are anointed so that, like Jesus, he may be a servant to the people of God leading them to the love of the Father through his celebration of the sacraments and his example.



The **Presentation of the Gifts** take place. Representatives of the church bring the gifts of bread and wine forward to the Bishop who then presents them to the new priest. He says, "Accept from the holy people of God the gifts to be offered to him. Know what you are doing, imitate the mystery you celebrate,

model your life on the mystery of the Lord's cross." In this presentation the Bishop exhorts the new priest to live the mystery of the Eucharist in his own life, giving his life as Jesus did for the eternal life of the



faithful. The Rite of Ordination concludes with the **Sign of Peace**. Having been given the gifts to exercise his office, the new priest is welcomed into the Order of Priest, first by the Bishop and then his brother priests.

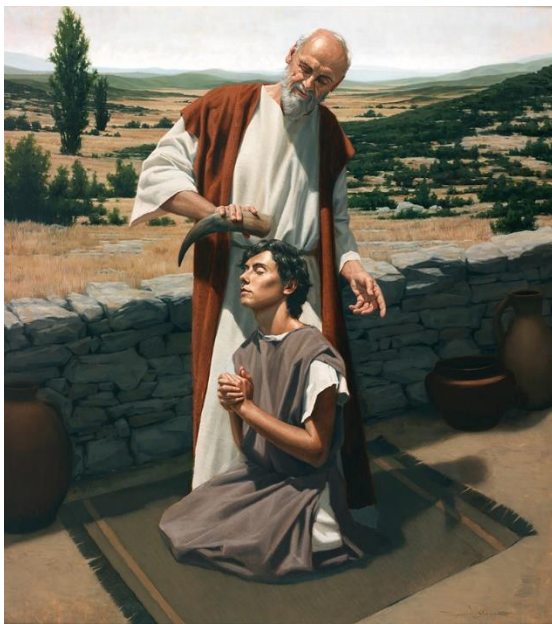
The **Liturgy of the Eucharist** is then celebrated by the Bishop with the newly ordained taking a prominent role in this, his first celebration of the Eucharist as a priest.

The newly ordained lives out the words of the scriptures, You are a priest forever, according to the order of Melchizedek. Through this rite, the priesthood begun in Christ continues for the life of the Church.

Appendix 1

One of the most quoted chapters of Scripture, Psalm 23, includes the phrase, “You anointed my head with oil.”

From the Old Testament, we understand that olive oil (or anointing oil) had predominantly a religious purpose. Not only would you pour oil on the head of a high priest, but also this “holy” oil would sprinkle on furnishings in the Tabernacle (Exodus 25:6), a transportable temple for God’s people, until they created a permanent place of worship during the time of Solomon.



Israel commonly practiced anointing the heads of kings. That is why when Samuel chooses to anoint the lowliest of Jesse’s sons, young David (1 Samuel 16).

The practice of anointing with oil transfers over to the New Testament. Jesus encourages his followers to anoint themselves with oil whenever they take up the practice of fasting (Matthew 6:17), and to pour oil on the sick for healing (Mark 6:13).

The symbolism associated with oil was linked to the Holy Spirit’s presence. When a person is anointed in the Bible, the Holy Spirit descends upon them (1 Sam. 16). In essence, when someone consecrates and sanctifies something with oil, they set it apart for God’s use. Therefore, when Jesus is called “anointed” the Bible means by the Holy Spirit. Anointing in the Old Testament

Anointing with oil stems from the Old Testament and indicates that someone or something is being set apart for a sacred task or duty (Ref. Anointing of King David).

Summary

God used the practice of anointing in Israel to foreshadow God's work through his Son and the Holy Spirit. In the same way, priests and kings were anointed, Jesus is our High Priest and our King.

Although the Israelites consecrated priests and holy objects, setting them apart for God's work, the Holy Spirit consecrates and anoints us, setting us apart to do the work of God.

Gospel Reflection: Sunday 12/02/23 is the Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time and the Gospel reading is Mt 5:13-16. 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 said to his disciples: 'Do not imagine that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets. I have come not to abolish but to complete them. I tell you solemnly, till heaven and earth disappear, not one dot, not one little stroke, shall disappear from the Law until its purpose is achieved. Therefore, the man who infringes even one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be considered the least in the kingdom of heaven; but the man who keeps them and teaches them will be considered great in the kingdom of heaven.

'For I tell you, if your virtue goes no deeper than that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never get into the kingdom of heaven.

'You have learnt how it was said to our ancestors: You must not kill; and if anyone does kill he must answer for it before the court. But I say this to you: anyone who is angry with his brother will answer for it before the court; if a man calls his brother "Fool" he will answer for it before the Sanhedrin; and if a man calls him "Renegade" he will answer for it in hell fire. So then, if you are bringing your offering to the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your offering there before the altar, go and be reconciled with your brother first, and then come back and present your offering. Come to terms with your opponent in good time while you are still on the way to the court with him, or he may hand you over to the judge and the judge to the officer, and you will be thrown into prison. I tell you solemnly, you will not get out till you have paid the last penny.

'You have learnt how it was said: You must not commit adultery. But I say this to you: if a man looks at a woman lustfully, he has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye should cause you to sin, tear it out and throw it away; for it will do you less harm to lose one part of you than to have your whole body thrown into hell. And if your right hand should cause you to sin, cut it off and throw it away; for it will do you less harm to lose one part of you than to have your whole body go to hell.

'It has also been said: Anyone who divorces his wife must give her a writ of dismissal. But I say this to you: everyone who divorces his wife, except for the case of fornication, makes her an adulteress; and anyone who marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

'Again, you have learnt how it was said to our ancestors: You must not break your oath, but must fulfil your oaths to the Lord. But I say this to you: do not swear at all, either by heaven, since that is God's throne; or by the earth, since that is his footstool; or by Jerusalem, since that is the city of the great king. Do not swear by your own head either, since you cannot turn a single hair white or black. All you need say is "Yes" if you mean yes, "No" if you mean no; anything more than this comes from the evil one.'