

The Sacraments

The Sacraments of the Church incorporate many symbols, like light in the darkness. They also symbolize the life and work of Jesus Christ. But they do more than just point to something else; they make the thing they symbolize real and present for those who are participating in the sacrament. They are wonderful gifts from God. In a sacrament, Jesus himself acts in and through the ritual, offering new life (Baptism), forgiving sins (Reconciliation), giving His own body and blood (Eucharist), healing (Anointing the sick), uniting (Marriage), consecrating (Holy Orders, Confirmation). Through the work of the Holy Spirit, the transforming grace of Christ's actions is poured into the hearts of those who are participating. The sacraments effect change in us and in the world because of God's power, not our own. You must be prepared for and actively participate in the sacraments if the grace given by God in them is to have an effect in your life. (Taken from the "Catholic Faith Handbook for Youth", Brian Singer-Towns, Saint Mary's Press)

The Church Celebrates Seven Sacraments

1. **Baptism:** Baptism is the foundation of Christian life. Jesus sent his apostles out to all nations to baptize believers. He wanted everyone to know him and to share his life and love.
2. **Reconciliation:** The sacrament of Reconciliation strengthens or restores our relationship with God and others, and our sins are forgiven.
3. **Eucharist:** The Mass is another name for the celebration of the Eucharist. We receive the body and blood of Jesus Christ in Holy Communion.
4. **Confirmation:** In the sacrament of Confirmation we receive the Gift of the Holy Spirit in a special way. We become more like Christ and are strengthened to be his witnesses.
5. **Matrimony:** A promise of faithfulness and love. Marriage was a part of God's plan from the very beginning as a sign of Jesus' love and presence.

6. **Holy Orders:** A promise of service for the People of God. Jesus sent his apostles out to all parts of the world to lead his community and to bring people to share in his kingdom.
7. **Anointing of the Sick:** We believe that when we are suffering, Jesus is with us sharing in our pain. Christ comforts those who are sick and he suffers with them.