

## The Sacraments

### Session 1: The Sacraments of the Church

What is a Sacrament?

“Sacraments are efficacious signs of grace, instituted by Christ and entrusted to the Church, by which divine life is dispensed to us” (CCC 1131). The visible rites by which the sacraments are celebrated signify and make present the graces proper to each sacrament. They bear fruit in those who receive them with the required dispositions.

#### The Seven Sacraments

The Catholic Church recognizes seven sacraments established by Christ (CCC 1210–1211). These are organized into three specific groups:

##### 1. The Sacraments of Initiation

Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist lay the foundations of the Christian life (CCC 1212).

##### 2. The Sacraments of Healing

Reconciliation (or Penance) and Anointing of the Sick heal and strengthen the soul weakened by illness and sin (CCC 1420–1421).

##### 3. The Sacraments of Service

Matrimony and Holy Orders are directed toward the salvation of others and the building up of the Church (CCC 1534).

---

#### Baptism: The Gateway of Life

Baptism is the gateway of the Christian life. Through this sacrament, the soul passes through Christ’s Passion, Death, and Resurrection and experiences death of the old self and rebirth as a child of God (CCC 1213). Baptism gives us new birth into the life of Christ; therefore, it is necessary for salvation (CCC 1277).

#### The Effects of Baptism:

1. **Forgiveness of sins:** Includes Original Sin as well as all mortal and venial sins committed (CCC 1262).
2. **A New Creature:** Being filled with Christ’s Spirit (CCC 1265).

3. **Incorporation into the Church:** Becoming part of the Mystical Body of Christ (CCC 1267).
4. **Indelible Mark:** Sealed with a spiritual character of belonging to Christ, which consecrates the person for Christian worship (CCC 1272, 1280).
5. **Heirs of Heaven:** Made citizens and heirs of the Kingdom (CCC 1272–1274).
6. **Redemption:** Participation in the Passion, Death, and Resurrection of Jesus (CCC 1214).
7. **Sanctifying Grace:** The conferring of God's divine life (CCC 1266).

### **Signs and Symbols of Baptism:**

1. **Water:** Symbolizes spiritual cleansing, but even more, it represents dying to our old sinful self and rising as new creations in Christ.
2. **White Garments:** Symbolic of the soul, now cleansed from sin.
3. **Candle:** Represents the light of Christ in the world and His presence in the life of the newly baptized.
4. **Oil of Salvation:** This anointing before Baptism is a sign of strength to resist evil and preparation for new life.
5. **Sacred Chrism:** This anointing after Baptism permanently conforms our soul to Christ and makes us sharers in His mission as Priest, Prophet, and King.

---

### Confirmation: Strengthening the Spirit

Confirmation perfects the grace of Baptism and gives the Holy Spirit to root us more deeply in Christ and His Church's mission. It imprints an indelible spiritual mark on the soul, unites us more firmly with Christ, increases the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and gives us the strength to defend the Faith and spread the Gospel (CCC 1285, 1303, 1316-1317).

### The Significance of Sacred Chrism in Confirmation:

Anointing with oil played an important role in the Old Testament for creating prophets, priests, and kings. "Christ" comes from the Greek word *Christos*, meaning "anointed one." Jesus says in Luke 4:18: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor."<sup>12</sup>

Jesus is “the Christ” because He is the Anointed One <sup>3</sup>from God. We are called “Christians” because we are “anointed ones” in Jesus Christ. We were first anointed with Sacred Chrism at <sup>4</sup>our Baptism and then again in our Confirmation.

Sacred Chrism is a mixture of olive oil and balsam fragrance. The fragrance reminds us that we are sanctified and called to be the “aroma of Christ” in the world (2 Corinthians 2:15). The oil reminds us that we are strengthened in the Holy Spirit to spread and defend the Catholic Faith.

### **Discussion & Reflection: Signs, Symbols, and Anointing**

**Question: What are some of the outward signs and symbols used in Baptism, and what do they represent?**

- **Water:** Plunging into water symbolizes spiritual cleansing, but even more, it represents dying to our old sinful self and rising as new creations in Christ as we pass through the Death and Resurrection of Jesus through Baptism.
- **White Garments:** White garments are symbolic of the soul, now cleansed from sin and clothed in Christ.
- **Candle:** The candle represents the light of Christ in the world and the living presence of Christ in the life of the newly baptized.
- **Oil of Salvation:** This anointing with oil *before* Baptism is a sign of strength to resist evil and preparation for new life in Christ.
- **Sacred Chrism:** This anointing *after* Baptism permanently conforms our soul to Christ and makes us sharers in His mission as Priest, Prophet, and King.

---

**DISCUSSION QUESTION : Why is it significant that in Confirmation we are anointed with Sacred Chrism?**

Anointing with oil played an important role in Old Testament times for the consecration of prophets, priests, and kings. Understanding the "Anointing" helps us understand our identity in Christ:

- **The Meaning of "Christ":** The title "Christ" comes from the Greek word *Christos*, meaning “Anointed One.” \* **Jesus as the Anointed:** Jesus confirms this in Luke 4:18: “*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor.*” Jesus is “the Christ” because He is the Anointed One from God.

- **Our Identity as Christians:** We are called “Christians” because we are “anointed ones” in Jesus Christ. We were first anointed with Sacred Chrism at our Baptism and then again in our Confirmation.
- **The Composition of Chrism:** Sacred Chrism is a mixture of olive oil and balsam fragrance.
  - **The Fragrance:** This reminds us that we are sanctified and called to be what St. Paul calls the “**aroma of Christ**” in the world (2 Corinthians 2:15).
  - **The Oil:** This reminds us that we are strengthened in the Holy Spirit to spread and defend the Catholic Faith.