

## 3. The Sacraments of Christian Initiation

The Sacraments of Christian Initiation open the door to the Church. Baptism is the beginning of our new life in Christ. Confirmation strengthens this new life, and the Eucharist nourishes it with the Body and Blood of Christ.

### Baptism

The Rite of Baptism includes immersing the candidate's body in water or pouring water on the head while saying, "I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit."

Baptism brings forgiveness of Original Sin and all personal sins. Through Baptism a believer is born into new life to become an adoptive child of the Father, a member of Christ and his family, the Church, and a temple of the Holy Spirit. Because Baptism imprints the soul with a spiritual sign, the character, the sacrament can be received only once.

Usually a bishop or priest, or, increasingly, a deacon would be the minister of Baptism. But in the case of necessity, anyone with the right intention can baptize using water and the same words the priest or deacon would use: "I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit."

The Church teaches that Baptism is necessary for salvation. That's why the Church urges parents to seek Baptism for a child shortly after he or she is born. But knowing that God wants all to be saved

gives hope that there is a way to salvation for children who die without Baptism.

The Church holds that those who suffer death for their faith without having received Baptism are baptized by their death. This Baptism of blood brings about the benefits of the sacrament without being a sacrament. The same is true for those who sincerely want to be baptized and die before receiving the sacrament. The Baptism of desire brings about the benefits of the sacrament.

### Confirmation

In Confirmation, candidates receive a special outpouring of the Holy Spirit that perfects, or completes, the grace they received in Baptism. The sacrament brings:

- A deeper bond with God, the Father
- A firmer union with Jesus and his Church
- An increase in the Gifts of the Holy Spirit
- The special strength of the Holy Spirit to carry out the mission of the Church

Like Baptism, Confirmation imprints a spiritual mark on the soul. It can be received only once.

The Rite of Confirmation is the anointing of the forehead with Sacred Chrism (perfumed oil consecrated by the bishop), the laying on of the minister's hand, and the words "Be sealed with the Gift of the Holy Spirit." The minister of the sacrament is the bishop or a priest designated by the bishop.

## The Eucharist

The Eucharist (the word means “thanksgiving” in Greek) is the heart and summit of the Church’s life. In the Eucharist, Christ:

- Associates his Church and all her members with his sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving offered once for all on the Cross to his Father
- Pours out the graces of salvation on the members of the Church

The Eucharistic celebration, which is also called the sacrifice of the Mass, is one single act of worship that includes:

- The proclamation of the Word of God
- Thanksgiving to God the Father for all his blessings, above all the gift of the Son
- The Consecration of bread and wine
- Reception of the Lord’s Body and Blood

The Eucharist is the memorial of Christ’s work of salvation accomplished by his life, Death, Resurrection, and Ascension. This work is made present by liturgical action. Only validly ordained priests can consecrate the bread and the wine so that they become the Body and Blood of Christ.

The essential signs of the Eucharist include:

- Wheat bread and grape wine, on which the blessing of the Holy Spirit is invoked
- The words of consecration spoken by Jesus on the night before he died: “For this is my Body which will be given up for you.... For this is the chalice of my Blood...”



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The transubstantiation, a unique kind of change, of bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Jesus is brought about by the words of consecration and the action of the Holy Spirit. Christ himself—his Body and Blood, his soul and divinity—becomes present under the appearance of bread and wine.

The Church offers the Eucharist in reparation for the sins of the living and the dead to obtain spiritual or temporal (worldly) benefits from God. Anyone who wants to receive the Eucharist must be in the state of grace. Those in mortal sin must receive absolution in the Sacrament of Reconciliation or Penance before receiving the Eucharist.