

The Sacraments

Nature of the Sacraments

1 Q. What is meant by the word sacrament?

A. By the word sacrament is meant a sensible and efficacious sign of grace, instituted by Christ to sanctify our souls.

2 Q. Why do you call the sacraments sensible and efficacious signs of grace?

A. I call the sacraments sensible and efficacious signs of grace because all the sacraments signify by means of sensible things, the divine grace which they produce in our souls.

3 Q. Show by an example how the sacraments are sensible and efficacious signs of grace.

A. In Baptism the pouring of water on the head of the person, and the words: "I baptize thee," that is, I wash thee, "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost," are a sensible sign of that which Baptism accomplishes in the soul; just as water washes the body, so in like manner does the grace given in Baptism cleanse the soul from sin.

4 Q. How many sacraments are there, and what are they called?

A. There are seven sacraments: Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist, Penance, Extreme Unction, Holy Orders and Matrimony.

5 Q. What is necessary to constitute a sacrament?

A. To constitute a sacrament it is necessary to have the matter, the form, and the minister, who must have the intention to do what the Church does.

6 Q. What is the matter of the sacraments?

A. The matter of the sacraments is the sensible thing made use of in effecting the sacrament; such as, for example, natural water in Baptism, oil and balsam in Confirmation.

7 Q. What is the form of the sacraments?

A. The form of the sacraments is the words which are pronounced in order to effect the sacrament.

8 Q. Who is the minister of the sacraments?

A. The minister of the sacraments is the person who administers or confers the sacrament.

9 Q. What is grace?

A. Grace is an inward and supernatural gift given to us without any merit of our own, but through the merits of Jesus Christ in order to gain eternal life.

10 Q. How is grace distinguished?

A. Grace is divided into sanctifying grace, which is also called habitual grace, and actual grace.

11 Q. What is sanctifying grace?

A. Sanctifying grace is a supernatural gift inherent in our soul, and rendering us just, adopted children of God and heirs to Paradise.

12 Q. What is actual grace?

A. Actual grace is a supernatural gift which enlightens the mind, moves and strengthens the will in order to enable us to do good and avoid evil.

13 Q. Can we resist the grace of God?

A. Yes, we can resist the grace of God because it does not destroy our free will.

14 Q. By the aid of our own powers alone can we do anything available to life eternal?

A. Without the help of the grace of God, and by our own powers alone, we cannot do anything helpful to life everlasting.

15 Q. How is grace given us by God?

A. Grace is given us by God chiefly through the sacraments.

16 Q. Do the sacraments confer any other grace besides sanctifying grace?

A. Besides sanctifying grace the sacraments also confer sacramental grace.

17 Q. What is sacramental grace?

A. Sacramental grace consists in the right acquired in the reception of a sacrament, to have at the proper time the actual graces necessary to fulfill the obligations arising from the sacrament received. Thus when we were baptized we received the right to have the grace to live a Christian life.

18 Q. Do the sacraments always confer grace on those who receive them?

A. The sacraments always confer grace provided they are received with the necessary dispositions.

19 Q. Who gave to the sacraments the power of conferring grace?

A. Jesus Christ by His passion and death gave to the sacraments the power of conferring grace.

20 Q. What sacraments confer first sanctifying grace?

A. The sacraments which confer first sanctifying grace, and render us friends of God, are two: Baptism and Penance.

21 Q. How are these two sacraments called on that account?

A. These two sacraments, Baptism and Penance, are on that account called sacraments of the dead, because they are instituted chiefly to restore to the life of grace the soul dead by sin.

22 Q. Which are the sacraments that increase grace in those who already possess it?

A. The sacraments which increase grace in those who already possess it are the other five: Confirmation, Eucharist, Extreme Unction, Holy Orders and Matrimony, all of which confer second grace.

23 Q. On this account how are they called?

A. These five sacraments — Confirmation, Eucharist, Extreme Unction, Holy Orders and Matrimony — are on that account called sacraments of the living, because those who receive them must be free from mortal sin, that is, already alive through sanctifying grace.

24 Q. What sin does he commit who, conscious that he is not in a state of grace, receives one of the sacraments of the living?

A. He who conscious that he is not in a state of grace, receives one of the sacraments of the living, commits a serious sacrilege.

25 Q. What sacraments are most necessary for salvation?

A. The sacraments most necessary to salvation are two: Baptism and Penance. Baptism is necessary to all, and Penance is necessary to all who have sinned mortally after Baptism.

26 Q. What is the greatest of all the sacraments?

A. The greatest of all the sacraments is the Eucharist, because it contains not only grace, but also Jesus Christ the Author of Grace and of the sacraments.

The Blessed Eucharist

The Nature of This Sacrament — The Real Presence

1 Q. What is the sacrament of the Eucharist?

A. The Eucharist is a sacrament in which, by the marvellous conversion of the whole substance of bread into the Body of Jesus Christ, and that of wine into His precious Blood, is contained truly, really, and substantially, the Body, the Blood, the Soul and Divinity of the same Lord Jesus Christ, under the appearance of bread and wine as our spiritual food.

2 Q. In the Eucharist is there the same Jesus Christ who is in heaven, and who was born on earth of the Blessed Virgin?

A. Yes, in the Eucharist there is truly the same Jesus Christ who is in heaven, and who was born on earth of the Blessed Virgin.

3 Q. Why do you believe that in the Eucharist Jesus Christ is really present?

A. I believe that in the Eucharist Jesus Christ is truly present, because He Himself has said it, and holy Church teaches it.

4 Q. What is the matter of the sacrament of the Eucharist?

A. The matter of the sacrament of the Eucharist is that which was used by Jesus Christ Himself, that is, wheaten bread and wine of the vine.

5 Q. What is the form of the sacrament of the Eucharist?

A. The form of the sacrament of the Eucharist consists of the words used by Jesus Christ Himself: "This is My Body: This is My Blood."

6 Q. What is the host before consecration?

A. The host before consecration is bread.

7 Q. After consecration what is the host?

A. After consecration the host is the true Body of our Lord Jesus Christ under the species of bread

8 Q. What is in the chalice before consecration?

A. In the chalice before consecration there is wine with a few drops of water.

9 Q. After consecration what is in the chalice?

A. After consecration there is in the chalice the true Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, under the species of wine.

10 Q. When does the change of the bread into the Body and of the wine into the Blood of Jesus Christ take place?

A. The change of the bread into the Body and of the wine into the Blood of Jesus Christ is made in the very moment in which the priest pronounces the words of consecration during holy Mass.

11 Q. What is the consecration?

A. The consecration is the renewal, by means of the priest, of the miracle wrought by Jesus Christ at the Last Supper, of changing bread and wine into His adorable Body and Blood by saying: "This is My Body: This is My Blood."

12 Q. What does the Church call the miraculous change of bread and of wine into the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ?

A. The Church calls the miraculous change which is daily wrought upon our altars transubstantiation.

13 Q. Who gave this great power to the words of consecration?

A. Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, who is Almighty God, gave this great power to the words of consecration.

14 Q. Is there nothing left of the bread and of the wine after consecration?

A. After consecration the species of the bread and of the wine alone are left.

15 Q. What are the species of the bread and of the wine?

A. The species of the bread and of the wine are the quantity and sensible qualities of the bread and of the wine, such as the form, the colour, and the taste.

16 Q. How can the species of the bread and of the wine remain without their substance?

A. The species of the bread and of the wine remain without their substance in a wonderful way by the power of God Almighty.

17 Q. Under the species of the bread is there only the Body of Jesus Christ and under the species of the wine only His Blood?

A. Both under the species of the bread and under the species of the wine the living Jesus Christ is all present, with His Body, His Blood, His Soul and His Divinity.

18 Q. Can you tell me why Jesus Christ is whole and entire both in the host and in the chalice?

A. Both in the host and in the chalice Jesus Christ is whole and entire, because He is living and immortal in the Eucharist as He is in heaven; hence where His Body is, there also are His Blood, His Soul, and His Divinity; and where His Blood is, there also are His Body, His Soul and His Divinity, all these being inseparable in Jesus Christ.

19 Q. When Jesus Christ is in the host does He cease to be in heaven?

A. When Jesus Christ is in the host He does not cease to be in heaven, but is at one and the same time in heaven and in the Blessed Sacrament.

20 Q. Is Jesus Christ present in all the consecrated hosts in the world?

A. Yes, Jesus Christ is present in all consecrated hosts in the world.

21 Q. How can Jesus Christ be present in all the consecrated hosts in the world?

A. Jesus Christ is present in all the consecrated hosts in the world by the Omnipotence of God, to whom nothing is impossible.

22 Q. When the host is broken is the Body of Jesus Christ broken also?

A. When the host is broken, the Body of Jesus Christ is not broken, but only the species of the bread are broken.

23 Q. In which part of the host is the Body of Jesus Christ?

A. The Body of Jesus Christ is entire in all the parts into which the host is broken.

24 Q. Is Jesus Christ just as much in a particle of a host as in a whole host?

A. Yes, the same Jesus Christ is just as much in a particle of a host as in a whole host.

25 Q. Why is the Most Blessed Eucharist preserved in our churches?

A. The Most Blessed Eucharist is preserved in our churches that It may be adored by the faithful, and brought to the sick when necessary.

26 Q. Ought the Eucharist to be adored?

A. The Eucharist ought to be adored by all, because it contains really, truly, and substantially, our Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

The Institution and Effects of the Sacrament of the Eucharist

27 Q. When did Jesus Christ institute the sacrament of the Eucharist?

A. Jesus Christ instituted the sacrament of the Eucharist at the last supper, which He took with His disciples, the evening before His passion.

28 Q. Why did Jesus Christ institute the Most Holy Eucharist?

A. Jesus Christ instituted the Most Holy Eucharist for three principal reasons: (1) To be the Sacrifice of the New Law; (2) To be the food of our souls; (3) To be a perpetual memorial of His passion and death and a precious pledge both of His love for us and of eternal life.

29 Q. Why did Jesus Christ institute this sacrament under the appearances of bread and wine?

A. Jesus Christ instituted this sacrament under the appearances of bread and wine, because, the Eucharist being intended to be our spiritual nourishment, it was therefore fitting that it should be given to us under the form of food and drink.

30 Q. What are the effects which the Most Holy Eucharist produces in us?

A. The principal effects which the Most Holy Eucharist produces in those who worthily receive it are these: (1) It preserves and increases the life of the soul, which is grace, just as natural food sustains and increases the life of the body; (2) It remits venial sins and preserves us from mortal sin; (3) It produces spiritual consolation.

31 Q. Does not the Most Holy Eucharist produce other effects in us?

A. Yes; the Most Holy Eucharist produces three other effects in us: (1) It weakens our passions, and in particular it allays in us the fires of concupiscence; (2) It increases in us the fervour of charity towards God and our neighbour, and aids us to act in conformity with the will of Jesus Christ; (3) It gives us a pledge of future glory and of the resurrection of our body.

The Dispositions necessary to Receive Holy Communion worthily

32 Q. Does the sacrament of the Eucharist always produce its marvellous effects in us?

A. The sacrament of the Eucharist produces its marvellous effects in us when it is received with the requisite dispositions

33 Q. What conditions are necessary to make a good Communion?

A. To make a good communion three conditions are necessary: (1) To be in the grace of God (2) To be fasting from midnight until the moment of Holy Communion; (3) To know what we are about to receive, and to approach Holy Communion devoutly.

[The fast from midnight was the old Eucharistic discipline. In view of evening Masses which became more frequent at his time, Pope Pius XII gave permission to reduce the fast to three hours for solid food and alcoholic drink, and to one hour for non-alcoholic drink (Christus Dominus, 6 Jan. 1953). Later, Pope Paul VI reduced the fast to one hour for everything (see 1983 Code #919). Plain water does not break the fast at any time.]

34 Q. What is meant by being in the grace of God?

A. To be in the grace of God means to have a pure conscience And to be free from every mortal sin.

35 Q. What should one who knows that he is in mortal sin do before receiving Communion?

A. One who knows that he is in mortal sin must make a good confession before going to Holy Communion, for even an act of perfect contrition is not enough without confession to enable one who is in mortal sin to receive Holy Communion properly.

36 Q. Why does not even an act of perfect contrition suffice to enable one who knows he is in mortal sin to go to Communion?

A. Because the Church, out of respect for this sacrament, has ordained that no one in mortal sin should dare to go to Communion without first going to confession.

37 Q. Does he who goes to Communion in mortal sin receive Jesus Christ?

A. He who goes to Communion in mortal sin receives Jesus Christ but not His grace; moreover, he commits a sacrilege and renders himself deserving of sentence of damnation.

38 Q. What sort of fast is required before Communion?

A. Before communion there is required a natural fast which is broken by taking the least thing by way of food or drink.

39 Q. If one were to swallow a particle that had remained between the teeth, or a drop of water while washing, might he still go to Communion?

A. If one were to swallow a particle that had remained between the teeth, or a drop of water while washing, he might still go to Communion, because in both cases these things would either not be taken as food or drink, or they would have already lost the nature of either. (Water no longer breaks the fast.)

40 Q. Is it ever allowed to go to Communion after having broken the fast?

A. To go to Communion after having broken the fast is permitted to the sick, who are in danger of death, and to those who on account of prolonged illness have received a special dispensation from the Pope. Communion given to the sick in danger of death is called *viaticum*, because it supports them on their way from this life to eternity.

41 Q. What is meant by the words: To know what we are about to receive?

A. To know what we are about to receive means to know and firmly believe what is taught in Christian doctrine concerning this sacrament.

42 Q. What do the words: To receive Holy Communion with devotion mean?

A. To receive Holy Communion with devotion means to approach Holy Communion with humility and modesty in person and dress; and to make a preparation before, and an act of thanksgiving after, Holy Communion.

43 Q. In what does the preparation before Communion consist?

A. Preparation before Communion consists in meditating for some time on Whom we are about to receive, and on who we are; and in making acts of faith, hope, charity, contrition, adoration, humility, and desire to receive Jesus Christ.

44 Q. In what does the thanksgiving after Communion consist?

A. Thanksgiving after Communion consists in keeping ourselves recollected in order to honour the Lord who is within us; renewing our acts of faith, of hope, of charity, of adoration, of thanksgiving, of offerings, and of requests, especially for those graces which are most necessary for ourselves and for those for whom we are bound to pray.

45 Q. What should we do during the day on which we have received Communion?

A. During the day on which we have received Communion we should remain as recollected as possible, occupy ourselves in works of piety, and discharge the duties of our state with greater diligence.

46 Q. How long does Jesus Christ abide within us after Holy Communion?

A. After Holy Communion Jesus Christ abides within us by His grace as long as we commit no mortal sin; and He abides within us by His Real Presence until the sacramental species are consumed.

The Way to Go to Communion

47 Q. When should the sacred Host be swallowed?

A. We should try to swallow the sacred Host as soon as possible, and we should avoid spitting for some time.

48 Q. If the sacred Host should cling to the palate what should be done?

A. If the sacred Host should cling to the palate it should be removed with the tongue, but never with the finger.

The Precept of Holy Communion

49 Q. When are we bound to receive Communion?

A. We are bound to go to Communion once a year, at Easter, each one in his own parish; and also when in danger of death.

50 Q. At what age does the precept of paschal Communion begin to bind?

A. The precept of paschal Communion begins to bind as soon as a child is capable of receiving with the requisite dispositions.

51 Q. Do they sin who are old enough to receive Communion and do not?

A. They who are old enough to receive Communion and do not either because they are unwilling, or because, through their own fault, they are not instructed, undoubtedly sin. Their parents or guardians also sin if the delay of Communion is owing to their fault, and they shall have to render a strict account to God for it.

52 Q. Is it a good and useful thing to go often to Communion?

A. It is an excellent thing to go to Communion often, and even daily in accordance with the desire of the Church, provided we do so with the requisite dispositions.