

Lord, Give Me Eternal Life

Eighth Grade Student Textbook

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Updated Second Edition

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UNIT 1: THE SACRAMENTS—PERSONAL MEETINGS WITH JESUS

Vocabulary

grace: the gift of God’s life that he shares with persons

the Church: the Church is “the assembly of those whom God’s Word ‘convokes,’ i.e., gathers together to form the People of God, and who themselves, nourished with the Body of Christ, become the Body of Christ” (CCC 777); the Mystical Body of Christ; “Christ and his Church thus together make up the ‘whole Christ’ (*Christus totus*). . . . ‘Head [Jesus] and members form as it were one and the same mystical person’” (CCC 795).

sacrament: (1) a physical sign, (2) given to us by Jesus, (3) through which Jesus meets us, and (4) gives us grace

LESSON 1: MEETING JESUS

One day, a rich young man ran up to meet Jesus. The young man had probably heard about Jesus from his parents or friends. He must have known that Jesus was a very special person who had great powers and who could do wonderful things for people. Obviously, he was excited to meet Jesus, because he ran up to Jesus.

The first thing that the young man did was to ask Jesus a question: “Teacher, what good deed must I do, to have eternal life?” (Matthew 19:16; cf. Mark 10:17; Luke 18:18). By eternal life, the young man meant life with God in heaven. But eternal life also means sharing God’s life here on earth. We call God’s life in us grace.

So, in asking Jesus for eternal life, the young man had great expectations of Jesus. Eternal life isn’t something that people can go and buy in a store. Nor is eternal life something that people can make. Rather, eternal life is life with God, and only God can give eternal life. The rich young man was expecting much from Jesus. But he was probably expecting much because of the wonderful things he had heard about Jesus. (See Matthew 19:16–30; Mark 10:17–31; and Luke 18:18–30.)

It must have been impressive for the young man in the Gospel to meet Jesus personally. Jesus was so powerful, yet so gentle and kind. He was God himself, who became man without ceasing to be God. We know that there is no one more powerful than God. Nor is there anyone more gentle and kind than God. Meeting Jesus might be compared to meeting a very holy person, like the pope, or a great saint, like Saint Francis of Assisi, or someone you know who is close to God and who is very impressive to meet.



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Meeting a holy person is a great privilege, but it still isn't the same as meeting Jesus. Isn't there some way that we can meet Jesus today? Like the young man, we too really want to meet Jesus. Since Jesus is God, can't he find some way to come to us, so that we can meet him?

There is a way that we can meet Jesus, although not the same way as the rich young man met Jesus two thousand years ago. The way we meet Jesus today is in and through the Church. We can meet Jesus through the Church because Jesus and the Church form the Mystical Body of Christ. "The word 'Church' means 'convocation.' It designates the assembly of those whom God's Word 'convokes,' i.e., gathers together to form the People of God, and who themselves, nourished with the Body of Christ, become the Body of Christ" (CCC 777).

Quoting Saint Augustine, Saint John Paul II wrote, "Christ and the Church are one single mystical person."¹ Being an active and faithful member of the Church means meeting Christ. "The one mediator, Christ, established and ever sustains here on earth his holy Church, the community of faith, hope, and charity, as a visible organization through which he communicates truth and grace to all men" (CCC 771).²

For example, when the pope speaks on matters of faith and morality, it is truly Jesus working through him by the power of the Holy Spirit. When a baptized Christian does a kind deed for us, it is truly Jesus who is there helping us. When a priest celebrates Mass, it is truly Jesus who is celebrating the Mass. "It is Christ himself, the eternal high priest of the New Covenant who, acting through the ministry of the priests, offers the Eucharistic sacrifice. And it is the same Christ, really present under the species of bread and wine, who is the offering of the Eucharistic sacrifice" (CCC 1410).

Jesus, then, is present to us in and through the Church. If we really want to meet Jesus, it is in the Church that we will find him. As Pope Francis said, "It is not possible to find Jesus [outside the Church]. The great [Saint] Paul VI said: it is an absurd dichotomy to wish to live with Jesus but without the Church, to follow Jesus but without the Church, to love Jesus but without the Church".³

The Church celebrates the sacraments. The Seven Sacraments of the Church are "places" where we meet Jesus. Like the rich young man in the Gospel, we can meet Christ, and we can ask him for eternal life. This personal meeting with Jesus happens in the sacraments.



Learn more about the mystery of the Church by reading YOUCAT 124.

UNIT 1: THE SACRAMENTS—PERSONAL MEETINGS WITH JESUS

LESSON 2: WHAT IS A SACRAMENT?

By now, the names of the sacraments should be familiar. There are Seven Sacraments in the Church. They are Baptism, Confirmation, Holy Eucharist, Reconciliation, Anointing of the Sick, Holy Orders, and Matrimony. You have been present at the celebration of most of the sacraments.

What exactly is a sacrament? The definition of a sacrament includes four parts. A sacrament is (1) a physical sign, (2) given to us by Jesus, (3) through which Jesus meets us, and (4) gives us grace. This is a simple and compact definition. Let's expand a little on the definition.

A sacrament is a physical, tangible sign. A sacrament is perceivable to our senses. In other words, a sacrament touches our bodies. The sacraments involve certain material elements (water, oil, bread, wine), as well as words that are spoken by the minister of the sacrament. The material elements and the words spoken touch the person receiving the sacrament. This sacramental touch is no ordinary touch. Rather, it is the touch of Jesus himself!

Through the touch of the sacraments, we meet Jesus in a physical, tangible way. Jesus is truly present in the sacrament in a way perceivable to our senses. The Second Vatican Council (1962–1965) reminds us of Jesus' presence in the sacraments when it says: "By [Jesus'] power He is present in the sacraments, so that when a man baptizes it is really Christ Himself who baptizes."⁴

A sign is something external that stands for something else. For example, when we meet a friend whom we have not seen for a while, we usually shake that person's hand or give that person a hug. The handshake or hug is a sign that we care for our friend and that we are glad to see our friend. A handshake or a hug signifies friendship.

In the same way, the physical sign of each sacrament signifies what is happening in the sacrament. For example, water is life-giving. We need water in order to preserve life. In Baptism, the use of water signifies grace, God's life, which is given to a person through Baptism.

But the amazing thing about the sacraments is this: not only does the physical sign of each sacrament signify what is happening in the sacrament, but the sign actually brings about what it signifies. For example, in Baptism, the pouring of the water on a person's forehead, or the triple immersion of a person in water, and the speaking of the words of Baptism actually bring sanctifying grace to a person. In this way, the sacraments are unlike any other signs that we know. The sacraments really bring about what they signify.

If the other signs that are familiar to us actually brought about what they signify, our world would change radically. Take, for example, a stop sign. When we are driving along in a car, we encounter stop signs. A stop sign signals us to stop. But what if, instead of just signaling us to stop, the stop sign actually reached out somehow and stopped us? If this were to happen, the stop sign would be bringing about what it signified—namely, stopping us. We know that the signs we encounter each day do not actually bring about what they signify. The sacraments are different. They actually do bring about what they signify.



UNIT 1: THE SACRAMENTS—PERSONAL MEETINGS WITH JESUS

Since the sacraments bring about what they signify, we can say that, through the physical signs of the sacraments, not only does Jesus meet us and touch us in a physical way, but also he “touches” us spiritually. Jesus “touches” our souls in the sacraments. Through our sacramental meeting with Jesus, he gives us eternal life.

As was mentioned above, eternal life means life with God in heaven. But eternal life also means sharing God’s life here on earth. We call God’s life in us grace. Grace brings about a loving union of our souls with God. This union is what the rich young man was seeking. What the rich young man wanted to discover, Jesus gives to us freely in the sacraments. Jesus gives us grace (eternal life) in each of the Seven Sacraments.

The grace of each sacrament helps us to fulfill the purpose of that sacrament. For example, the grace of the Sacrament of Matrimony helps a married couple to love each other as husband and wife. As each sacrament is studied, we will see what the purpose of each sacrament is in more detail.

A sacrament, then, is a “place” where a person meets Jesus and where Jesus embraces the entire person, body and soul. No part of a person is excluded from the loving sacramental embrace of Jesus. Of course, Jesus is able to embrace us body and soul in the sacraments because he is God the Son.

Read this story about a man who experienced Jesus’ presence in the Sacrament of Matrimony.

The Prison Guard

Tom was a young man who was a guard at a men’s federal prison. He was a strong, husky man who stood about six feet tall. But, despite his size, it wasn’t easy for Tom to deal with the inmates of the prison each day. Obviously, they were a tough lot.

Tom’s philosophy was to treat everyone with dignity and respect, but there were times when he had to use force to keep order. This was a part of his job that Tom didn’t appreciate.

As time went on, Tom met a young woman named Julie. He fell in love with her, and the two of them decided to get married. However, there was a problem. Tom was not Catholic, and Julie was. And Julie wanted to be married in the Catholic Church. But in order to get married in the Catholic Church, they were required to attend a lengthy marriage preparation program taught by Julie’s priest, Father Kowalski.

The prospect of attending such a program did not sit too well with Tom. “What can some priest tell me about marriage?” Tom thought. “Priests don’t marry, so what can they know about marriage? Besides, I’ve learned plenty about married life from my friends.”

But because Tom loved Julie, and because he knew it was important to her to be married in the Catholic Church, he decided to give the program a try.

After meeting several times with the priest and discussing the Church’s teaching on sexuality, marriage, and family life, Tom began to change his mind about Father Kowalski and about married life.

Tom found out that the Church has a great deal to teach about marriage and that what he had learned from his friends about marriage wasn’t always accurate.



UNIT 1: THE SACRAMENTS—PERSONAL MEETINGS WITH JESUS

Even though he was not Catholic, Tom valued his relationship with Jesus, and he tried to live by the Gospel. So when Tom found out that the Catholic Church considered marriage a sacrament, and that Jesus would personally meet Julie and him on their wedding day, Tom was impressed. Marriage took on a whole new meaning for him.

Tom and Julie completed their marriage preparation course with Father Kowalski, and Tom gave much thought and prayer to what was going to happen on his wedding day. He thought about meeting Jesus with Julie and how this meeting would change them for the rest of their lives.

When the wedding day came, Tom was nervous. As a tough prison guard, he wasn't used to feeling this way. However, when the ceremony started, he had a big smile on his face. Tom knew that somehow, through the marriage vows that Julie and he would speak to one another, Jesus would meet them and unite them in the Sacrament of Matrimony.

After the ceremony, Tom talked with Father Kowalski. Tom said that celebrating the Sacrament of Matrimony was the most powerful experience he had ever had. Tom could feel Jesus' presence and his blessing on the marriage. Tom thanked Father Kowalski for the marriage instruction and for encouraging him to think about marriage as a sacrament.

Sometimes we are like Tom. We think we know all there is to know about Jesus and the sacraments. But Jesus always has more for us to learn and experience. Jesus showed that to Tom. Like Tom, we need to be open to Jesus. If we are, we will experience Jesus' powerful love in the sacraments just as Tom did.



Learn more about grace by reading YOUCAT 338.

Sometimes we are like Tom. We think we know all there is to know about Jesus and the sacraments. But Jesus always has more for us to learn and experience. Jesus showed that to Tom. Like Tom, we need to be open to Jesus. If we are, we will experience Jesus' powerful love in the sacraments just as Tom did.

UNIT 1: THE SACRAMENTS—PERSONAL MEETINGS WITH JESUS

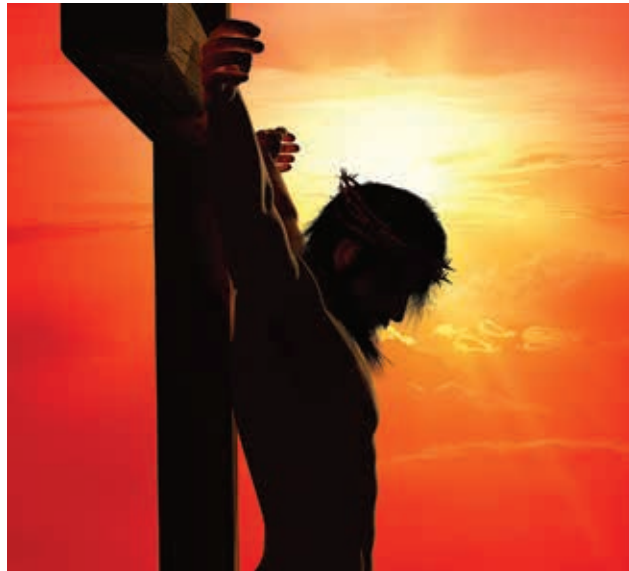
LESSON 3: WHERE DO THE SACRAMENTS COME FROM?

The sacraments come from Jesus. The sacraments were instituted by Christ and entrusted to the Apostles. The Apostles in turn entrusted the sacraments to the Church, and today we receive the sacraments from the Church. This is why the Church is the sacrament of our salvation because she is the outward sign and instrument through which God saves us and unites us to himself and to each other. “The Church in this world is the sacrament of salvation, the sign and the instrument of the communion of God and men” (CCC 780).



Learn more about why the Church is called apostolic by reading YOUCAT 137.

Specifically, the source of the sacraments is Jesus’ sacrifice of love on the Cross. Saint John the Apostle was present at the Crucifixion of Jesus. John tells us in his Gospel that after Jesus died, a soldier pierced Jesus’ side with a lance. “But one of the soldiers pierced [Jesus’] side with a spear, and at once there came out blood and water” (John 19:34). The blood and water indicated that Jesus was indeed dead and that his sacrifice of love was complete. By dying on the Cross, Jesus had given his entire life to the Father and had therefore returned God the Father’s love. Adam and Eve had sinned by choosing not to return the love of God the Father. But “he [Jesus] it was, and he alone, [is the one] who satisfied the Father’s eternal love.”⁵ God the Father was not compelled to send his Son to redeem us, nor did he send his Son out of necessity or some deficiency caused by sin. God the Father freely and out of merciful love sent Jesus to save us from our sins. Jesus reconciled us with God the Father, who “loved us and sent his Son to be the expiation for our sins” (1 John 4:10).



Not only did Jesus’ sacrifice of love on the Cross return or satisfy God the Father’s love; it also helps us to return God the Father’s love. Jesus’ sacrifice helps us to return God’s love because his sacrifice gives us grace, God’s life. Through grace, we are made capable of loving God.

It is good to be reminded of the teaching of the Church concerning our relationship with the Jewish faith when speaking of Jesus’ suffering and Death on the Cross. The Jewish people, neither those at the time of Christ’s Death nor those of today, cannot be blamed for his suffering and Death. The *Catechism* teaches us that “sinners were the authors and the ministers of all the sufferings that the divine Redeemer endured” (CCC 598).⁶

How does Jesus communicate his grace to us? The answer is, of course, through the sacraments. As the definition of the sacraments tells us, the sacraments give us grace. They receive the power to give us grace from the love that Jesus showed on the Cross. The blood and water that flowed from Jesus’

UNIT 1: THE SACRAMENTS—PERSONAL MEETINGS WITH JESUS

side on the Cross also signify the sacraments. Specifically, the blood stands for the Eucharist, and the water stands for Baptism.

How are the other five sacraments signified by the blood and water? Because of the primary importance of the Sacraments of the Eucharist and Baptism among all the sacraments, the other sacraments are considered to be signified by the blood and water, too. (When the sacraments of the Eucharist and Baptism are discussed, we will see why they are considered of primary importance among all the sacraments.)

The sacraments show us the power of Jesus' love. Because Jesus is God as well as man, his love reaches as high as God the Father, and it stretches through space and time to us today. Through the sacraments Jesus continues to love his Father, and Jesus meets us and helps us love his Father by giving us grace. Through the grace of the sacraments, Jesus points us to the future, because it is grace that will enable us one day to share everlasting life with God in heaven. There is no love more powerful than Jesus' love!

As powerful as Jesus' love is, Jesus doesn't force his love upon us. In order to receive his grace in the sacraments, we must want to receive this grace. In other words, we must be properly disposed to celebrate the sacraments. This means that when we celebrate the sacraments, we should be prepared and ready to meet Jesus and to receive his grace. We should be open to Jesus, as Tom was in the story "The Prison Guard".

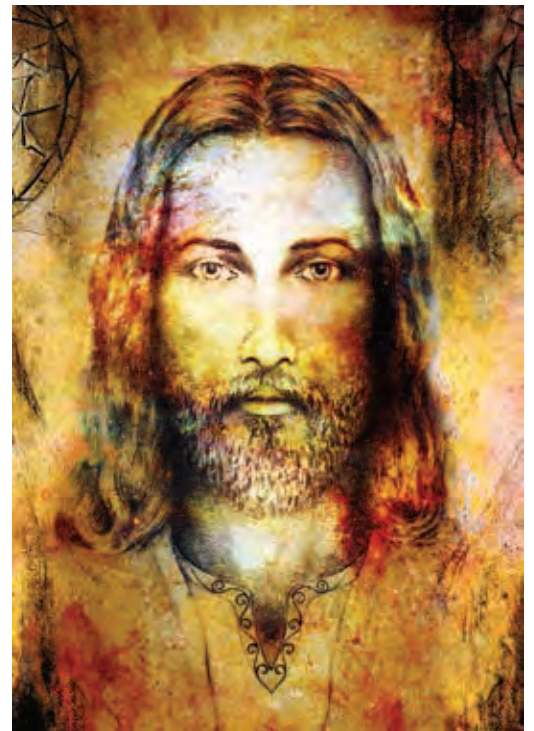
For example, in the Sacrament of Reconciliation, we should be sorry for our sins, and, with Jesus' help, we should intend not to sin again. If we are not sorry for our sins, we are not properly disposed to celebrate the sacrament, and we prevent Jesus from giving us his grace and forgiving our sins.

In order to celebrate properly the sacraments of Confirmation, Holy Eucharist, Holy Orders, and Matrimony, one must be in the state of grace; that is, one must already possess God's life and be in a loving relationship with him.

If one knowingly and freely chooses to receive any of these four sacraments without being in the state of grace, that person commits a very serious sin of sacrilege. Such a person is further alienated from God and is even more in need of the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

In order to receive the sacraments of Baptism, Reconciliation, and Anointing of the Sick, one need not be in the state of grace.

For example, a person about to be baptized would lack sanctifying grace because that person would still have Original Sin. Baptism takes away Original Sin and any personal sins a person might have and gives sanctifying grace. "The Most Holy Trinity gives the baptized sanctifying grace, the grace of *justification*" (CCC 1266; emphasis in original).



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A person coming to confession in the state of mortal sin would be without grace. The purpose of the sacrament is to take away sin and give grace.

Finally, an unconscious person who is in the state of mortal sin and is about to receive the Anointing of the Sick would be without grace. In such an instance, the mortal sin would be forgiven by the sacrament. However, Anointing of the Sick is a sacrament of the living and should normally be received in the state of grace.

So, the rich young man chose the right person to meet and to ask for eternal life. Jesus is the One who gives eternal life, God's life. Jesus loved the young man and wanted to give him eternal life. Jesus loves us, and he wants to meet each of us and give us eternal life, too. Where does he want to meet us and give us grace? In the sacraments!

UNIT 2: THE SACRAMENTS OF INITIATION

Vocabulary

catechumen: someone who is unbaptized and who is learning about the Catholic faith in preparation for initiation into the Church

initiation: an introduction or a welcoming of a new member into a group

sacraments of initiation: Baptism, Confirmation, and the Holy Eucharist. The reception of these three sacraments initiates a person fully into the Catholic Church.

LESSON 4: INITIATION INTO THE CATHOLIC CHURCH



Learn more about the importance of the sacraments by reading YOUCAT 173.

Sometimes when a person applies to become a member of a certain group or organization, that person goes through an initiation. As initiation is a kind of introduction or welcoming of a new member into a group.

For example, some of you might have fathers, uncles, or grandfathers who are members of the Knights of Columbus, a Catholic men's organization. Each man who wants to become a member of the Knights of Columbus goes through an initiation. After going through the ceremony, a man is officially a full member of the Knights of Columbus.

The Church's sacraments of initiation make a person officially a full member of the Catholic Church. The sacraments of initiation are Baptism, Confirmation, and the Holy Eucharist. Once we have received or celebrated these three sacraments, we are full members of the Catholic Church. We are fully initiated Catholics.

It is important to note that being initiated into the Catholic Church is like no other initiation. Other initiation ceremonies make people members of a purely human group or organization. The sacraments



UNIT 2: THE SACRAMENTS OF INITIATION

of initiation do much more for us. Baptism, Confirmation, and the Holy Eucharist make us full members of the Church, which is both a human and a divine organization. “The Church is essentially both human and divine, visible but endowed with invisible realities” (CCC 771).¹ Consequently, the Church is called the Mystical Body of Christ. “The word ‘Church’ means convocation.’ It designates the assembly of those whom God’s Word ‘convokes,’ i.e., gathers together to form the People of God, and who themselves, nourished with the Body of Christ, becomes the Body of Christ” (CCC 777).

Calling the Church the Mystical Body of Christ does not exclude the other titles of the Church. Each of the titles of the Church highlights a different aspect of the relationship of Christ to the members of the Church. For example, the Church is sometimes called the Bride of Christ.

“The unity of Christ and the Church, head and members of one Body, also implies the distinction of the two within a personal relationship. This aspect is often expressed by the image of bridegroom and bride” (CCC 796). “The Apostle [St. Paul] speaks of the whole Church and of each of the faithful, members of his Body, as a bride ‘betrothed’ to Christ the Lord so as to become but one spirit with him” (CCC 796).²

When we become members of the Church, we are united to Jesus himself. Saint Paul tells us this in many of his writings. For example, he writes to the church in Galatia: “For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:27–28). We are all one in Christ through the sacraments of initiation because through these sacraments Christ shares his life with us, uniting us to himself.

So, initiation into the Catholic Church is like no other initiation because, through the sacraments of initiation, Jesus personally meets us, welcomes us as members of the Church, and makes us one with him by sharing his life with us. No other initiation can claim to do anything close to what the sacraments of initiation do for us!

As Pope Francis teaches: “The Sacraments express and realize an effective and profound communion among us, for in them we encounter Christ the Saviour and, through him, our brothers and sisters in faith. The Sacraments are not mere appearances, they are not rituals; they are the power of Christ; Jesus Christ is present in the Sacraments.”³

LESSON 5: THE CELEBRATION OF THE SACRAMENTS OF INITIATION

For most of us, the celebration of the sacraments of initiation happens over a number of years. Most of us receive the Sacrament of Baptism as infants. Our parents and godparents bring us to church, and we are baptized either at a Mass or at a ceremony apart from Mass.

However, parents who present their children for Baptism must promise to raise their children in the practice of the Catholic faith. Parents should not have their children baptized and then neglect to educate them in the very meaning and purpose of Baptism, which is to clothe oneself in Christ and to live as a Christian. Such neglect would betray a lack of reverence for the sacrament and would be unfair to the children.

UNIT 2: THE SACRAMENTS OF INITIATION

★ Learn more about infant Baptism by reading **YOUCAT 197**.

Usually we celebrate the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist for the first time when we are about seven or eight years old. This sacrament is preceded by the celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation. First Holy Communion initiates us into the reception of the Body and Blood of Christ under the appearances of bread and wine.

Finally, usually in junior high or high school, we receive the Sacrament of Confirmation. At this time we make a commitment to spread and defend our Catholic faith in a mature way. With this sacrament, our full initiation into the Catholic Church is completed. By the time we are in our early teens, we are fully initiated members of the Catholic Church.

As you know, the word “catholic” means “universal”. Some of the Eastern rites of the Catholic Church celebrate Confirmation at the time of Baptism; that means, infants are baptized and confirmed at the same ceremony. You may have some fellow students who were confirmed at Baptism—for example, those who belong to the Maronite Rite of the Catholic Church. This shows the unity in diversity of the Church. These rites are loyal to the Magisterium, and present the same mystery of Christ in the sacraments and show fidelity to the Sacred Tradition of the Church. These diverse traditions are beautiful examples of the catholicity of the Catholic Church, for although they might differ slightly, the Church holds them all to be equal and wishes to preserve them.

Another way of celebrating the sacraments of initiation occurs when a person becomes a Catholic as an adult. If a person who has not been baptized wants to become Catholic, that person usually receives all the sacraments of initiation on the same day. Read the following story about someone who celebrated the sacraments of initiation in just this way.

A Mother Celebrates the Sacraments of Initiation

Susan was born in the United States. Her father was a United States citizen, but her mother was from Japan. Susan’s father and mother met in Japan when her father was in the United States Armed Forces and was stationed in Japan. Susan’s parents fell in love and were married.

After her father’s tour of duty in the service was completed, Susan’s parents decided to settle in the United States. Susan was the first child to be born to her parents, and then came Peter and little Mary.

When Susan was old enough, she began to attend Mass on Sundays with her parents. Susan soon noticed that, when it came time to go to Communion, her father would go to Communion, but her mother would not. Susan was curious and asked her mother one day after Mass why she did not go to Communion.

Her mother answered that she was not Catholic and therefore was not able to receive Communion. In fact, Susan’s mother had



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not been baptized in any religion. She had been raised in a religion different from the Catholic religion. Susan's mother went on to explain that she had learned something in Japan about the Catholic faith by attending Mass and catechism lessons with a Catholic friend of hers.

As the years went by, Susan and her family prayed together, and on Sundays they attended Mass together. One day, when Susan was just beginning eighth grade, Susan's mother had a surprise for Susan. Her mother told Susan that she was going to attend the catechumenate program at their parish, Saint Joseph's.

Susan's mother explained that the catechumenate program is for people who are unbaptized and who are interested in becoming Catholic. Through several months of instruction and liturgical ceremonies, a person is prepared to celebrate the sacraments of initiation (Baptism, Confirmation, and the Holy Eucharist) at the Easter Vigil on Holy Saturday (the evening before Easter Sunday). This year Father Hughes would be teaching the classes, which would meet every Thursday evening.

Susan was excited for her mother. Susan offered to help her father take care of Peter and Mary while her mother was at class. Susan also prayed every day for her mother.

Susan enjoyed listening to the things that her mother was learning in the catechumenate classes. Since English was not her mother's native language, Susan helped her to understand some of the ideas that Father Hughes taught in class. Susan was also able to share with her mother the things that she was learning in her religion classes at Saint Joseph's School.

As part of the catechumenate program, there were several liturgical celebrations that all the catechumens attended. These celebrations were usually during Sunday Masses. During these liturgies, the congregation prayed for all the catechumens at Saint Joseph's. Susan attended each celebration and prayed especially hard for her mother.

Soon Holy Saturday evening arrived. It was time to celebrate the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. It was also time for the catechumens to be initiated fully into the Church. Susan's mother was very nervous as the family prepared to go to the Easter Vigil ceremony. Susan noticed her mother's uneasiness, and, as the family left the house, Susan gently squeezed her mother's hand and gave her a big smile.

When the family arrived at church, Susan's mother went to be seated with the other catechumens. Susan and the rest of the family were seated close by the catechumens.

The Easter Vigil liturgy was beautiful. Susan was so happy for her mother. After the homily, Father Hughes called the catechumens, with their sponsors, into the sanctuary. After the litany of the saints, Father blessed the water that would be used to baptize Susan's mother. Then Susan's mother and the other catechumens expressed a desire to turn away from sin in their lives. They also made a profession of faith, proclaiming their belief in all that the Catholic Church teaches.

Finally, the moment for Baptism arrived. Tears came to Susan's eyes as she watched Father Hughes pour water over her mother's head and speak the words of Baptism. Susan looked at her father and her brother and sister, all of whom smiled at Susan with tears in their eyes.

Because Father Hughes had prepared Susan's mother for reception into the Catholic Church, he was permitted to confirm her, too. This he did by anointing her forehead with sacred chrism and saying the words of Confirmation.

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After the Confirmation, Susan's mother and the others who were newly baptized and confirmed returned to their pews. The Mass continued. Then the time came for Holy Communion. Father Hughes had made arrangements for the newly initiated and their families to receive Communion together.

Now, for the first time, Susan and her mother could go up to receive the Body of Christ together. Again, this was a very emotional moment for Susan and her entire family. After many months of study and prayer, Susan's mother had completed her full initiation into the Catholic Church. This was an occasion for a joyous celebration.

When Mass was over, there was a reception in the parish center for the newly initiated. Many of the parishioners came to congratulate Susan's mother. For her congratulations, Susan gave her mother a big hug. This was one of the happiest moments in Susan's life (and in her mother's as well)!

Initiation into the Catholic Church is like no other initiation because, through the sacraments of initiation, Jesus personally meets us, welcomes us as members of the Church, and makes us one with him by sharing his life with us. No other initiation can claim to do anything close to what the sacraments of initiation do for us!

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Vocabulary

actual sin: any sin that we ourselves commit

baptismal character: a change in us, caused by the Sacrament of Baptism, that makes us more like Christ in a permanent, indelible way. Because of the baptismal character, one is made capable of receiving the other sacraments. This indelible spiritual sign consecrates us for Christian worship, especially the Mass.

godparent: a member of the Church who presents a person for Baptism, and who, after Baptism, helps the person to live the Catholic faith

indelible: unable to be eliminated; remaining forever

grace: a free gift from God in which he shares his divine life and friendship with us; helps us to live as persons created in the image of God

sanctifying grace: “heals our human nature wounded by sin by giving us a share in the divine life of the Trinity ... making us ‘perfect,’ holy, and Christlike” (CCC, Glossary)

actual grace: God’s intervention and help to conform our lives to his will

original holiness: the state of friendship with God shared by Adam and Eve before they sinned; Adam and Eve shared in divine life before they sinned

original justice: before sin, the mastery or governance that Adam and Eve experienced over themselves; freedom from death

Original Sin: the first sin of Adam and Eve. We inherit Original Sin and its effects from Adam and Eve. We are conceived and born in need of the grace of salvation won for us by Christ (see CCC 1250). Without the grace of salvation, we are not able to respond fully to God’s love here on earth and cannot live with God in heaven.

consequences or effects of Original Sin: the results of the sin of Adam and Eve. We are conceived and born without original holiness and original justice. We are in need of the grace of salvation won for us by Christ (see CCC 1250). We inherit darkened minds, weakened wills, and concupiscence (we find it difficult to express truth and love through our bodies; and we suffer and die).

triple office of Christ: prophet, priest, and king

sacred chrism: a mixture of olive oil and balsam which is consecrated by the bishop on Holy Thursday for use in the sacraments throughout the year.

LESSON 6: BAPTISM—THE FIRST OF THE SACRAMENTS

Baptism is the first of the sacraments of initiation. Through Baptism, Jesus meets us and gives us God’s life (sanctifying grace). In giving us sanctifying grace, Jesus takes all of our sins away, he makes us members of the Church, and he makes us capable of living in heaven someday.



Learn more about how Baptism is administered by reading **YOUCAT 195**.

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The sign of the Sacrament of Baptism is very simple. After the profession of faith is made by the person being baptized or, for infants, by the parents and godparents, water is used and words are spoken. As the water is poured three times over the forehead of the person to be baptized or the person is immersed three times in water and then raised up, the priest or deacon says at each pouring or each immersion the invocation of one of the persons of the Holy Trinity: “I baptize you in the name of the Father (pour or immerse), and of the Son (pour or immerse), and of the Holy Spirit (pour or immerse).”



The minister of the Sacrament of Baptism is usually an ordained person (deacon, priest, or bishop), but, in case of an emergency (danger of death), *anyone* can and should baptize by pouring water on the person’s head while the words “I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit” are said. It is also necessary for the person to have the intention and “to will to do what the Church does when she baptizes” (CCC 1256). For example, hospitals usually have nurses who are trained to baptize in emergency situations. Read the following story about someone who was baptized in an emergency.

Andrew’s Baptism

Jim and Jane Lee were overjoyed when they found out that they were going to have their first baby. They had been looking forward to this for such a long time. In their excitement, they wondered if the baby would be a boy or a girl, and they wondered, “Who would the baby look like?” In their more reflective moments, they prayed that the baby would be healthy.

As the time for birth approached, Jim and Jane and their doctor decided to have some tests done on the baby in Jane’s womb. They wanted to see if the baby had any health problems. If there were any, the doctor would tell them what could be done to cure the problems. When the tests were complete, the doctor asked Jim and Jane to come to the medical office to discuss the results.

After some preliminary conversation, the doctor pointed out something very disturbing about the test results. There were certain indications that Jim and Jane’s baby had Down syndrome. This meant that the baby probably would develop certain distinctive physical and mental characteristics typical of people with Down syndrome. The doctor also informed Jim and Jane that their baby would most likely need minor surgery shortly after birth. The doctor indicated that, even though the surgery was minor, their baby would die without it.

As Jim and Jane left the doctor’s office, they were numb. Then, after a while, they began to talk with each other about their baby. Because they were people of strong faith, they knew that each baby is a precious gift from God. Even though their baby had Down syndrome, they knew that their child was a person, created in the image of God, and that their baby was precious, too. With God’s help, they resolved to accept their precious gift from God and to love their baby with both their hearts.

From the ultrasound, Jim and Jane knew that their baby was a boy. And so, even before he was born, they decided to give him a name. They named him Andrew James.

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Jim and Jane were expecting a nine-month pregnancy with Andrew, but Andrew had a different idea. He decided to come early. He was born prematurely.

Because Andrew was premature, and because of complications from his Down syndrome, the doctor was not sure if Andrew would live. When the doctor informed Jim and Jane of this, they were frightened. They were afraid for Andrew's physical health, but they were more concerned that Andrew would have a spiritual relationship with Jesus. In this regard, the first thing that they thought of was Baptism. They should have little Andrew baptized.

Immediately, Jim called his parish priest, Father Simon. Jim talked to Father and told him about little Andrew's condition. Without a moment's hesitation, Father Simon asked the name of the hospital where Andrew was and said that he was on his way.

When Father Simon arrived at the hospital, Jim met him and brought him to the hospital room where medical staff cared for all the premature infants. The room had several incubators, each with a little, premature baby inside. When Jim and Father arrived at Andrew's incubator, they saw a tiny, pink, and wrinkled baby boy, struggling to live. Jane was there, too, her eyes fixed on her baby.

Father Simon talked quietly to Jim and Jane for a few moments. Then Father Simon asked the nurse for an eyedropper and some water. After putting his stole around his neck, Father began the prayers of Baptism. When the time for Baptism came, Father filled the eyedropper with water, reached inside the incubator, and, as the water dripped from the eyedropper onto Andrew's tiny forehead, Father spoke the words of Baptism: "Andrew James, I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit."

After he finished the prayers of Baptism, Father Simon again spoke with Jim and Jane. Then, after giving each of them a gentle hug, he left. Andrew James Lee was baptized. And Jim, Jane, and Father Simon knew that tiny Andrew had met Jesus himself through Baptism and that, no matter what happened, Andrew was in Jesus' hands.



LESSON 7: BAPTISM BRINGS ABOUT WHAT IT SIGNIFIES

In the Sacrament of Baptism, water is used and words are spoken. We call the water and the words the physical sign of the sacrament. The water and the words physically touch the person being baptized.

Through the physical sign of Baptism, Jesus meets the person being baptized in a bodily way. But, in addition, through the physical sign of Baptism, Jesus meets the person being baptized in a spiritual way. Jesus blesses the person with sanctifying grace, which "touches" the spiritual part of the person—namely, the soul.

Remember that the sacraments truly bring about what they signify. The Sacrament of Baptism signifies three things: cleansing, life, and a participation in the Death and Resurrection of Jesus, which

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means an insertion into the life of the Trinity. Baptism signifies these things and actually brings them about.

First of all, in Baptism, water is used. Water signifies a cleansing. In everyday life, we use water to clean our bodies. However, the water in Baptism is a sign of a different kind of cleansing. Baptismal water signifies a spiritual cleansing from sin. But not only does the water used in Baptism signify a cleansing from sin, it actually brings about such a cleansing. Through the sanctifying grace of Baptism, all of our sins are taken away, both Original Sin and any actual or personal sins that we might have committed.

Second, in addition to cleansing, water also signifies life. Living beings on this earth need water to live. As human beings, we need water to sustain our human life. The water in Baptism signifies life, but a different kind of life. Baptismal water signifies God's life, sanctifying grace. However, the water used in Baptism not only signifies sanctifying grace; it truly brings sanctifying grace into our lives. Through Baptism, we come to share God's life. We receive sanctifying grace, which heals our human nature wounded by sin by giving us a share in the divine life of the Trinity. Sanctifying grace makes us holy and Christlike. As Saint John Paul II wrote, "Baptism [is] the Sacrament in which the element of water symbolizes and realizes in man *the unspeakable gift of trinitarian life* [God's life]."¹

In a sense, Baptism is like being born a second time. We can say that the first time we were born, we began to live a new life outside of our mothers' wombs. Through Baptism, we begin to live a new life, too. We begin to live the life of God, because in Baptism we receive God's life. So Baptism is like being born for a second time.

Third, in addition to cleansing and life, Baptism signifies and brings about a participation in the Death and Resurrection of Jesus. One of the ways that a person can be baptized is by immersion in water. In this form of Baptism, a person is completely immersed in a pool of water and then brought up out of the water. This type

of Baptism clearly signifies what happened to Jesus. Jesus died on the Cross and was buried in a tomb. But, three days later, Jesus rose from the dead to new life. When a person being baptized is immersed in a pool of water, that person signifies Jesus' Death and burial in a tomb. The person "dies" and is "buried" under the water. And then, when the person rises up out of the pool of water, Jesus' rising to a new life is signified.

But not only are Jesus' Death and Resurrection signified by the person's being immersed; that person actually participates in Jesus' Death and Resurrection. The sacrament brings about what it signifies. How? By going under the waters of Baptism, a person does really die, but not in a physical way. The person dies to sin. Sin is truly put to death, or taken away, by Baptism. By coming up out of the water, the person being baptized truly rises to a new life. The person shares God's life, which

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means an insertion into the life of the Trinity and a participation in it, something that the person did not share before Baptism. In Baptism, it is as if Christ personally takes us by the hand and brings us with him on a journey from the Cross, through the grave, to the Resurrection. (It should be noted that the most common form of Baptism is for water to be poured over the head of the person being baptized. This form of Baptism also signifies dying and rising with Christ, but not so clearly as does immersion.)

Dying and rising with Christ in Baptism is what Saint Paul writes about when he says, “Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life” (Romans 6:3–4).

Baptism brings about what it signifies. The sacrament signifies a cleansing from sin, the reception of God’s life, and participation in the Death and Resurrection of Jesus, which means an insertion into the life of the Trinity. Thus Baptism actually brings about these realities in us through a personal meeting with Jesus.



Learn more about what happens in Baptism by reading YOUCAT 200.

LESSON 8: MEMBERS OF THE CHURCH

When Jesus meets us in Baptism, he also makes us members of the Church. We are not fully initiated members of the Church through Baptism; yet, we are members. As members of the Church, we have clothed ourselves with Christ, and we have taken on the responsibility to act like Christ. Oftentimes, after being baptized, the person is clothed in a baptismal garment (usually white) that symbolizes that the person has been clothed with Christ.

How have we clothed ourselves with Christ through Baptism? How have we put on Christ? We are made prophets, priests, and kings through Baptism, in a way similar to Christ, who is a prophet, a priest, and a king. We call prophet, priest, and king the “triple office of Christ”. By Baptism, we share in the triple office of Christ, and we have the responsibility of acting as Christ acts. We have the responsibility of acting as prophets, priests, and kings. As a sign of being made prophets, priests, and kings by Baptism, the newly baptized person is anointed with sacred chrism on the crown of the head. Just as Jesus was anointed with the Holy Spirit (see Acts 10: 38), so is the newly baptized anointed and made a sharer in Jesus triple office.



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As a prophet, Christ always tells the truth. In fact, Christ called himself “the truth” (John 14:6). As the truth, Jesus witnesses to the whole truth about God and us. As a priest, Jesus offered sacrifices to God the Father to show his love for God the Father and us. By his sacrifice of love on the Cross, Jesus manifested his great love. Finally, as a king, Jesus exercises discipline over himself, and he uses the things of the world for the benefit of others. Jesus’ ability to undergo his Passion and Death willingly, without running from them, shows us his tremendous self-discipline. The use of things, such as bread and wine, for the sacraments, shows that Jesus used things to benefit people. As a king, Jesus exercises his dominion over creation.

It is important to note that, free from Original Sin, Jesus was free from its effect of concupiscence. So Jesus’ self-discipline was not to overcome concupiscence, but to give us an example of how to overcome sin and its effects in our lives. “By his obedience unto death (cf. Phil 2:8–9), Christ communicated to his disciples the gift of royal freedom, so that they might ‘by the self-abnegation of a holy life, overcome the reign of sin in themselves’” (CCC 908).²

Having become members of the Church and having clothed ourselves with Christ, we share in the triple office of Jesus. This means that we should try our hardest to live out this office—to imitate Jesus and to act as prophets, priests, and kings. As prophets, we should be witnesses to the truth about God and ourselves. As priests, we should offer sacrifices to God to show our love for God and others. As kings, we should be self-disciplined and use the things that we possess for the common good of others, and in these ways exercise dominion over creation.

The grace of the Sacrament of Baptism helps us to act as prophets, priests, and kings. This is the purpose of the sacrament. Jesus doesn’t give us a share in his triple office and then expect us to exercise these offices without his help. Rather, Jesus meets us and makes us prophets, priests, and kings in the Sacrament of Baptism, and then he shares his life with us to help us live as prophets, priests, and kings. Strengthened by grace and living our share in the triple office of Jesus, we, like Christ, are called to be a light for the world. “I am the light of the world; he who follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life” (John 8:12). To symbolize this, a candle lit from the Easter candle is presented to the newly baptized or, in the case of an infant, to a member of the family or a godparent.

We say that we receive a special character with Baptism. The baptismal character changes us and makes us more like Christ in a permanent way. This is another way of saying that, through Baptism, we become members of the Church and we are made capable of receiving the remaining sacraments. This indelible spiritual sign consecrates us for Christian worship, especially the Mass. Receiving the special character of Baptism also means that, once we are baptized, we are baptized forever. Christ will never forsake his baptismal meeting with us. Consequently, we receive this sacrament only once.



Learn more about the baptismal character by reading CCC 1272–74.

LESSON 9: MORE ABOUT BAPTISM

As members of the Church, we hope to share God’s life here on earth and someday in heaven. Baptism makes heaven possible for us. The Church wants everyone to share God’s life here on earth and to share heaven together someday. Sharing God’s life here on earth and sharing his life in heaven are

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possible even for the tiniest of persons (as we read in “Andrew’s Baptism”). Consequently, the Church advises parents to have their babies baptized within the first weeks after birth, so that their babies will begin to share God’s life as soon as possible.

Jesus himself pointed out the importance of Baptism to a Pharisee named Nicodemus. Nicodemus recognized that Jesus was a great teacher and that Jesus was from God. One night, Nicodemus came to Jesus to talk with him. In their conversation, Jesus said to Nicodemus, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God” (John 3:5). In other words, Jesus was telling Nicodemus that, in order to share God’s life here on earth and someday in heaven, Baptism was required.

“The Lord himself affirms that Baptism is necessary for salvation” (CCC 1257).³ The necessity of Baptism raises some important questions. If Baptism is required to share God’s life here on earth and someday in heaven, what about all the people who have never been baptized? Can they ever share God’s life? Can they ever live in heaven? The best way to answer such questions is to say that Baptism is the usual or ordinary way in which one is initiated into God’s life. That is why the Church, like the Apostles, goes out to all people to bring them the Gospel and to encourage them to be baptized. “‘The Church on earth is by her nature missionary since, according to the plan of the Father, she has as her origin the mission of the Son and the Holy Spirit.’ The ultimate purpose of mission is none other than to make men share in the communion between the Father and the Son in their Spirit of love” (CCC 850).⁴

But God works in many ways so that people can come to share his life here on earth and in heaven. As the *Catechism* teaches: “*God has bound salvation to the sacrament of Baptism, but he himself is not bound by his sacraments*” (CCC 1257; emphasis in original). He works with those who are baptized, but he does not abandon those who are not baptized.

If people have never had the opportunity to be baptized, if they recognize that there must be a God, and if they try to follow their consciences, God shares his life with them and they can come to live with him in heaven. “Those who, through no fault of their own, do not know the Gospel of Christ or his

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Church, but who nevertheless seek God with a sincere heart, and, moved by grace, try in their actions to do his will as they know it through the dictates of their conscience—those too may achieve eternal salvation” (CCC 847).⁵ Even little infants who die without the benefit of Baptism are taken care of by God in a way known only to him. “With respect to children who have died without Baptism, the liturgy of the Church invites us to trust in God’s mercy and to pray for their salvation” (CCC 1283). Still, Baptism is the necessary, usual, or ordinary way in which God wants to share his life with us and make us his children.

Through the water and words of Baptism, we begin our initiation into the Church. Through Baptism, Jesus meets us and welcomes us for the first time into his family. He makes us like himself, because in Baptism we are clothed with Christ. But, as we have seen, Baptism carries with it certain responsibilities. These are the responsibilities of acting as Christ acted—namely, as prophet, priest, and king. Yet Christ does not expect us to bear these responsibilities on our own. He shares his life with us to help us to imitate him and to help us come to the life of heaven someday.

Where does the Sacrament of Baptism come from? It comes from Christ himself. Jesus showed us the importance of Baptism when he was baptized by John the Baptist at the River Jordan (Matthew 3:1–17). John’s baptism was not the Sacrament of Baptism. But the people who chose to be baptized by John were showing that they wanted to be cleansed from their sins.

Even though Jesus is totally free from sin, he submitted to the baptism of John as an example for us. By being baptized, Jesus was showing us that we too should be baptized. But, unlike Jesus, we do have sin, which is taken away by Baptism.

Baptism was given to us by Jesus after his Resurrection from the dead, but before his Ascension into heaven. Jesus took the Apostles up on a mountain and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and behold, I am with you always, to the close of the age” (Matthew 28:18–20).

The Sacrament of Baptism, like each of the other sacraments, comes from Jesus. He instituted Baptism and entrusted it to his Apostles. The Apostles, in turn, entrusted Baptism to the Church, and today Baptism is celebrated by the Church. The Church is apostolic. She is built on a lasting foundation: “the twelve apostles of the Lamb” (Revelation 21:14).

The power of Baptism to give sanctifying grace comes from Jesus’ sacrifice of love on the Cross. Remember, the water that flowed from Jesus’ side when he was pierced by the soldier’s lance symbolizes Baptism.

Great importance is attached to Baptism because it is the first of the sacraments received and it introduces us into a close, personal relationship with God. Consequently, if a person is being baptized as an adult, that person should be well-prepared and open to meeting Jesus in the sacrament (as Susan’s mother was in the story in Unit 2, “A Mother Celebrates the Sacraments of Initiation”). On the other hand, if a baby is being presented to the Church for Baptism, the parents and godparents should be aware of their serious responsibility to educate the baby in the Catholic faith as the baby grows and matures. Usually parents give their child the name of a saint in order to encourage their child to develop a special friendship with a saint.

Baptism is the first of the sacraments of initiation. Through Baptism, Jesus meets us and gives us God’s life (sanctifying grace). In giving us sanctifying grace, Jesus takes away Original Sin and

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all actual sins (if any), he makes us members of the Church, and he makes us able to live in heaven someday. We are enabled to act as persons created in the image of God and to imitate the image of the invisible God, Jesus Christ. Imitating Jesus constitutes the moral life, and through the power of grace, we grow more loving in our relationship with God. Because Baptism does all this, it is easy to see why Baptism is included with the Eucharist as a sacrament of primary importance among the Seven Sacraments of the Catholic Church.

In the Eastern rite churches, such as the Maronite Rite Church, the three sacraments of initiation are celebrated in the same ceremony, even if the one receiving the sacraments is an infant. This means that an infant brought for Baptism is baptized, but is also confirmed and receives the Eucharist, all in the same ceremony. “The Eastern Churches maintain a lively awareness of the unity of Christian initiation by giving Holy Communion to all the newly baptized and confirmed, even little children, recalling the Lord’s words: ‘Let the children come to me, do not hinder them’ (Mk 10:14)” (CCC 1244; see CCC 1318).

Activity

On a separate sheet of paper, answer the following question.

The following items can be seen at a Baptism. Of what does each item remind us, or what does the item symbolize?

sacred chrism
candle
water
white garment
Sign of the Cross