

The Purpose of the Sacraments

Q. 195. Why did Jesus institute the sacraments?

Jesus instituted the sacraments to (1) sanctify mankind, (2) build up the Church, His Mystical Body, (3) render worship to God, and (4) instruct.

1. Jesus instituted the sacraments to sanctify mankind.

God uses the sacraments as the ordinary channels to impart His grace; therefore, they are necessary to keep and nourish the life of grace in our souls. St. John reminds us that Jesus gives us His grace in order to sanctify us: “And from his fullness have we all received, grace upon grace. For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ” (John 1:16-17).

2. Jesus instituted the sacraments to build up the Church, His Mystical Body.

Each of the sacraments have an indispensable role in the life of the Church, that is, the Mystical Body of Christ. Among them, Baptism, Confirmation, Marriage, and Holy Orders confer a distinct office within the Church.

Through Baptism we become children of God and members of Christ’s Mystical Body, the Church. The baptized are consecrated to be a holy priesthood, sharing in Christ’s divine Priesthood. Confirmation makes us mature and responsible Christians and increases our participation in Christ’s priesthood.

Holy Orders confers the actual power of the ministerial priesthood and provides for the continuation of the Church. In the sacrament of Marriage, a man and woman become one; it provides for the growth of the Body of Christ by conferring the vocation of parenthood and by guaranteeing the graces which enable parents to guide the new members of Christ.

The Anointing of the Sick prepares us for entrance into the ranks of the Church Triumphant in heaven. The sacrament of Penance grants us pardon for our sins and strengthens us to resist temptation. The Holy Eucharist nourishes our souls and gives us an increase of the power to love God and our neighbor.

3. Jesus instituted the sacraments to render worship to God.

Christ continually offers Himself to His Heavenly Father through the Eucharist, by means of the ministry of His priests in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. This is the supreme act of worship which can be given to God, because it is offered by the God-man in the spirit in which He offered Himself on the Cross for our redemption. All of us, members of Christ’s Mystical Body, can participate in this oblation, or offering, and thereby give worthy adoration, thanksgiving, and atonement to God.

For commentaries on each question with Cardinal Arinze, Sr. John Vianney and Fr. Straub (in Spanish), see Appendix E.

4. *Jesus instituted the sacraments to instruct.*

Signs are actions which convey an idea; words are signs which convey an idea. In the sacraments both the words and the actions make up the sacred sign.

#C15-22



Sacred Scripture

Come to him, to that living stone, rejected by men but in God’s sight chosen and precious; and like living stones be yourselves built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ... But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people, that you may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were no people but now you are God’s people; once you had not received mercy but now you have received mercy. *1 Peter 2:4-5, 9-10*

Catechism of the Catholic Church

1131 The sacraments are efficacious signs of grace, instituted by Christ and entrusted to the Church, by which divine life is dispensed to us. 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.

Summary Prayer

Lord God, Heavenly Father, Your only Son revealed Himself to us by becoming man. May we who share His humanity come to share His divinity through the grace of Your sacraments. May we hear Your Son’s words with faith and become Your children in name and in fact.

Father, our source of life, You know our weaknesses. Grant Your people Your protection and grace through Your sacraments. Give us health of mind and body, perfect love for one another, and the strength to remain always faithful to You. May we reach out with joy to grasp Your hand and walk more readily in Your ways. May the healing power of Your grace, received through the sacraments and prayer, free us from sin and help us to approach You with pure hearts. Keep us from our old and sinful ways and help us to continue in the new life of grace.

Lord God, we thank You for Your Church in which You bless Your family as we come to You in pilgrimage. In Your Church You reveal Your presence

by sacramental signs and make us one with You through the invisible bond of grace. You bring the Church to its full stature as the Body of Christ throughout the world so that it may reach its perfection at last in the heavenly city of Jerusalem, which is the vision of Your peace. In communion with all the angels and saints, we praise Your greatness forever and ever. Amen.



#E4-24

Doctrine • Moral • Worship Exercise (see Appendix B for answer key)

1. The sacraments build up the Body of Christ, the Church. Name the seven sacraments and explain how each one builds up the Body of Christ.
2. List ways you can lead others to the sacraments, including those in your own family and community.
3. Invite the members of your family to share their experiences with the sacraments. Recall memories of Baptisms, Confirmations, First Communions, weddings, ordinations, and other sacraments which have been received or witnessed. Discuss their meaning in your lives; then pray together, thanking Christ for instituting the sacraments.

Q. 196. Why does the Church encourage Catholics to receive the sacraments?

The Church encourages Catholics to receive the sacraments often and with great faith and eagerness because Christ instituted the sacraments to nourish Christian life.

Christ Himself made the sacraments the instruments through which He gives His grace to us. This is what we mean when we say that Christ instituted the sacraments. There are references in the Bible to Christ's institution of Baptism, Penance, the Eucharist, and Holy Orders (cf. Matthew 28:19-20; John 3:5, 6:52-

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58, 20:21-23; Acts 8:14-20; Romans 6:3-4; 1 Corinthians 10:16-17; 1 John 1:9). The Church infallibly teaches that He also instituted the other sacraments.

Three of the sacraments, Baptism, Confirmation, and Holy Orders, produce in the soul a mark which can never be lost. This mark or character is a kind of badge of our membership in Christ, a participation in His eternal priesthood, by which we are dedicated to sacred worship. Baptism and Confirmation can be received only once. Holy Orders confers the grace of the diaconate, the priesthood, and the episcopate only once.

The greater the faith and charity we have when we receive a sacrament, the greater the grace that will be given us. We should not neglect this means God has given us to grow holy and pleasing to Him by sharing His divine life.



#HG-5

Sacred Scripture

So Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in you; he who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is food indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him. *John 6:53-56*

Catechism of the Catholic Church

1129 The Church affirms that for believers the sacraments of the New Covenant are *necessary for salvation*.¹ “Sacramental grace” is the grace of the Holy Spirit, given by Christ and proper to each sacrament. The Spirit heals and transforms those who receive him by conforming them to the Son of God. The fruit of the sacramental life is that the Spirit of adoption makes the faithful partakers in the divine nature² by uniting them in a living union with the only Son, the Savior.

Summary Prayer

Heavenly Father, may the frequent reception of Your sacraments make us Your obedient people. May the love within us be seen in what we do and lead us to the joy of heaven. Look upon our weaknesses, and through the power of the sacraments, bring us purity and strength. May the sacraments we receive cleanse us of our sins and free us from guilt. May our sins bring us sorrow and Your promise of salvation bring us joy. May Your

grace, received through the frequent use of Your sacraments, make our souls more pleasing to You. To You be all honor and glory. Amen.

Q. 197. What purpose do the sacraments serve?

The sacraments serve: (1) as sources of grace for individuals and communities and (2) as remedies for sin and the effects of sin. The sacraments are also signs of faith, as explained in question 192.

#S11-4



1. The sacraments serve as sources of grace for individuals and communities.

All the sacraments produce sanctifying grace. In addition, each sacrament gives its own particular actual graces and a right to future actual graces. The graces given benefit not only the person who receives the sacrament, but also the entire community of faith. The sacraments are instruments of divine life for the family of God.

2. The sacraments serve as remedies for sin and the effects of sin.

The sacraments are remedies for sin and the effects of sin. Mortal sin is the greatest evil in the world because it drives the supernatural life of sanctifying grace out of our souls and turns us away from God, the source of all life, peace, and joy. Our Lord protects our souls from serious sin by giving us more sanctifying grace in the sacraments.

The actual graces we receive through the sacraments give us the light we need to see what is evil and the strength we need to fight against it. Thus, we are strengthened against temptation.

For commentaries on each question with Cardinal Arinze, Sr. John Vianney and Fr. Straub (in Spanish), see Appendix E.

Catechism of the Catholic Church

Q. 197. Paragraphs **1262, 1302-1303, 1365-1383, 1391-1405, 1467-1469, 1496, 1519-1520, 1532, 1581-1584, 1638-1642.**

This is especially true of the Holy Eucharist. Just as bodily food repairs what we lose by daily wear and tear, so likewise this divine food is a remedy for the spiritual infirmities of each day. The sacramental grace we receive in the Eucharist is a remedy for our spiritual sicknesses and for all the effects of sin.



#E4_4-6

Sacred Scripture

“I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that a man may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if any one eats of this bread, he will live for ever; and the bread which I shall give for the life of the world is my flesh.” *John 6:48-51.*

Catechism of the Catholic Church

1134 The fruit of sacramental life is both personal and ecclesial. For every one of the faithful on the one hand, this fruit is life for God in Christ Jesus; for the Church, on the other, it is an increase in charity and in her mission of witness.

Splendor of Truth

But temptations can be overcome, sins can be avoided, because together with the commandments the Lord gives us the possibility of keeping them... Keeping God’s law in particular situations can be difficult, extremely difficult, but it is never impossible... For God does not command the impossible, but in commanding he admonishes you to do what you can and to pray for what you cannot, and he gives his aid to enable you. (*section 102*)

Vatican Council II

The purpose of the sacraments is to sanctify men, to build up the Body of Christ, and, finally, to give worship to God. Because they are signs they also instruct. They not only presuppose faith, but by words and objects they also nourish, strengthen, and express it. That is why they are called “sacraments of faith.” They do, indeed, confer grace, but, in addition, the very act of celebrating them most effectively disposes the faithful to receive this grace to their profit, to worship God duly, and to practice charity. *Sacred Liturgy, 59.*

Summary Prayer

Lord God, Maker of Heaven and earth and of all created things, You make Your just ones holy through Your sacraments. In You is fullness of life for Your faithful people; in You all hope resides. Lead us to everlasting happi-

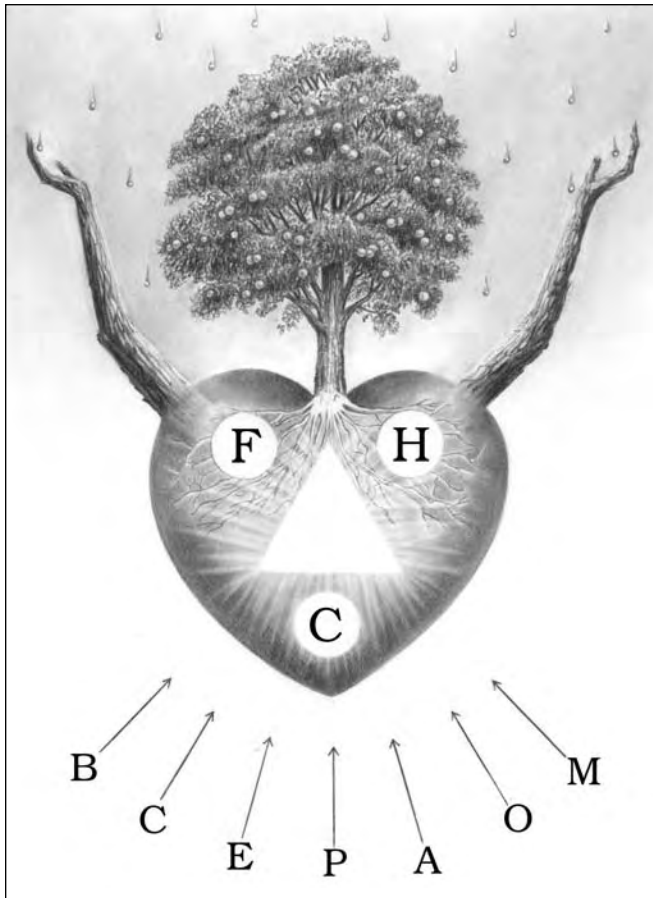
ness through the sacramental blessings given us in Your holy Church. Through the power of the sacraments deliver us from evil and from slavery to the senses, which blind us to goodness. Free us from all negligence and sloth, and give us joy in Your gifts of grace, through our Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Doctrine • Moral • Worship Exercise (see Appendix B for answer key)

1. Why is frequent reception of the sacraments beneficial for Catholics?
2. What dispositions of the heart should you possess to receive more graces and benefits from the sacraments?
3. Ask the Holy Spirit to increase your desire to benefit from the sacraments by receiving them with greater faith and charity.

Catechism by Diagram

#G6_1-1



Sanctifying Grace and the Sacraments. By means of sanctifying grace, a person dies to sin, shares in the divinity of the Son of God through the Spirit of adoption, and enters into close union with the Most Holy Trinity. God, the Author of life, communicates to us His own life (triangle in the heart) by giving us sanctifying grace (rays) through the sacraments (seven arrows, initials of each sacrament). The sacraments confer (two arms on the heart) actual grace (drops of water from above). The tree is a symbol of a virtuous life full of good deeds (fruit). It must have its roots in grace, which increases faith (F), hope (H), and charity (C).

Chapter Summary Prayer

Lord God, in Your great mercy, enrich Your people with Your grace, especially through the sacraments, and strengthen us by Your blessing so that we may praise You always. We come, reborn in the Spirit, to celebrate our sonship in the Lord Jesus Christ. Touch our hearts and help them grow toward the life You have promised. Touch our lives and make them signs of Your love for all men.

Let Your Word, Father, be a lamp for our feet and a light to our path, above all through frequent reception of Your sacraments and through prayer, so that we may understand what You wish to teach us and follow the path that Your light marks out for us. Help us and we shall be saved, Lord God; leave us, and we are doomed. May You remain with us always so that the fullness of life may be ours, through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Family Wisdom Library: Chapter 56

See Appendix A for more references.

Q. 195. Why did Jesus institute the sacraments?

Catechesis in Our Time, John Paul II, sect. 23;

Lumen Gentium (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church), Vatican II, sect. 11;

Sacrosanctum Concilium (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy), Vatican II, sect. 6, 8, 9, 59-65;

On the Holy Spirit in the Life of the Church and the World, John Paul II, sect. 53.

Q. 196. Why does the Church encourage Catholics to receive the sacraments?

Lumen Gentium (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church), Vatican II, sect. 11;

On the Holy Spirit in the Life of the Church and the World, John Paul II, sect. 63;

Sacrosanctum Concilium (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy), Vatican II, sect. 6, 8, 9, 59-65.

Q. 197. What purpose do the sacraments serve?

On the Holy Spirit in the Life of the Church and the World, John Paul II, sect. 63;

On Reconciliation and Penance, John Paul II, sect. 27;

Sacrosanctum Concilium (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy), Vatican II, sect. 6, 8, 9, 59-65;

Splendor of Truth, John Paul II, sect. 103.



Thought Provokers

Please see Appendix C for the answers.

- Q. 195: What do the Latin terms *ex opere operato* and *ex opere operantis* mean in reference to the sacraments?
- Q. 196: Do other Churches and ecclesial communities have the sacraments?
- Q. 197: The Catholic Church teaches that the sacraments are the ordinary means of salvation (see Canon 4, Session VII, Council of Trent). What does this mean?