

The Catholic Sacraments

The preacher dunked
her head 3 times in the basin
& called out for the demons to leave
& then she spit water in his face.

So he extemporaneously added a fourth
& by the time she came up for air
the demons were considerably more
restrained.

– Story People

Sacraments of Initiation

Outward signs that come from God to show God's favor.

Discussion Questions

1. What do you think we do well as a parish/church when we initiate people into our community? What do we need or want to improve?
2. Is the understanding of Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist presented consistent with the way you were initiated?
3. Do you think the Sacraments of Initiation are one-time events?

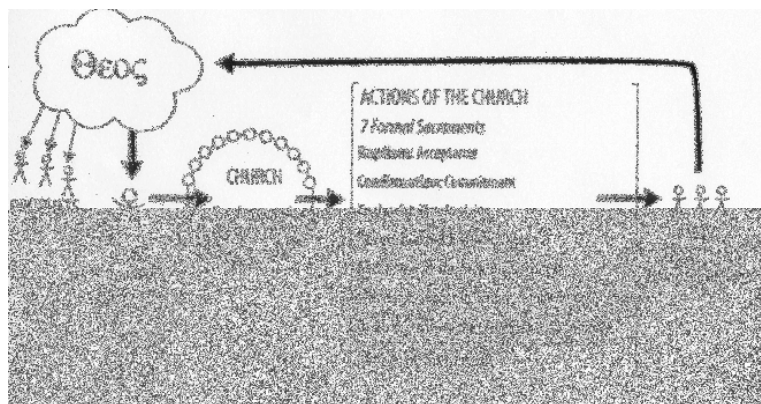
Review

Outward signs that come from God to show God's favor.

- Symbols & ritual are powerful tools for building community and our relationship with God. Rituals help us to experience, celebrate, and pass on the ideals of our community.

Review

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The sacramental cycle

Review

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- Eucharist is a loving, two-way relationship. We are required to be present. Christ is truly present. We listen to the Word. We offer our gifts to God. We re-member the Last Supper. We build our relationship with our savior. We are the Body of Christ. When the Mass is ended we go and serve the Lord!

Sacraments of Initiation

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- Sacraments of Initiation
 - Baptism – the beginning of new life
 - Confirmation – the strengthening
 - Eucharist – which nourishes
- Let's start with where we are today and then figure out how we got here!
 - Two views:
 - Baptism is the initiation into the Christian community
 - Baptism negates the effect of Original Sin
 - Confirmation is the mature affirmation of faith
 - Confirmation is being sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit.

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■ Two views

- One view is an emphasis on entering a community.
- The other view is one of receiving grace.
- To sort this out, we need to review a little church history.

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■ History of Baptism & Confirmation

- During the first 300 years, Christianity was a way of living that was contrary to the norm.
- Being a Christian was dangerous.
 - Initiation was a way to mark the transition from the "old you" to the "new you." The transition affected all aspects of life.
 - This was consistent with Jewish experience
- When the Roman Emperor declared that Christianity was the official religion, it obviously became the norm.
 - Initiation became primarily a spiritual transition.
 - Christianity changed from a way of life to a religion.

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■ History of Baptism & Confirmation

- After this shift, theologians tried to figure out how this spiritual transformation occurred
 - Augustine's theory of Original Sin
 - The sin of Adam is somehow passed down through the generations.
 - Sin is a breaking of the relationship with God.
 - A more contemporary understanding is that human beings have an attraction to sin (personal sin).
 - Also the sins of each generation are passed down via social norms (communal sin).

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■ History of Baptism & Confirmation

- Either way you look at it, Baptism removes the effects of Original Sin.
 - It restores the relationship with God
- Over time, as a person did less and less to become a Christian, and infant Baptism became the norm, this removal of Original Sin became automatic – requiring nothing of the person.

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■ History of Baptism & Confirmation

- The understanding of Baptism as automatic caused a new problem: "Baptized unbelievers"
- The understanding that all the Sacraments operate automatically multiplies the problem (lack of conversion of the heart!)
 - Baptized unbelievers.
 - Obligation to attend Mass is a rule.
 - Parental obligation to make sure our children "get" their sacraments.
 - Issues surrounding marriage and divorce in the Church.

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■ History of Baptism & Confirmation

- Why are automatic Sacraments a big problem?
 - Jesus' mission was one of salvation.
 - The Churches mission is one of salvation.
 - No conversion of the heart, no salvation.
- What's a Church to do?
 - Second Vatican Council!

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■ History of Baptism & Confirmation

- Second Vatican Council (1960s)
 - Re-establishes the Early Church understanding of Sacrament
 - Sacraments always require something of us –
 - » Presence!
 - » Faith!
 - Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist are referred to as Sacraments of Initiation.
 - After Vatican II, the Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults (RCIA) is established and is well received.
 - In the last 40 years there have been over 50,000 articles written about the Sacraments!
- So what did the Council teach?

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■ Sacraments of Initiation

- Baptism is the beginning of new life
 - When a baby is baptized, the parents promise to raise their child as a Christian.
 - If the parents do not have faith sufficient to raise the child as a Christian, the child should not be baptized.
 - When the child is old enough to affirm the parents promise, she may choose to be confirmed.
 - If an adult is baptized and confirmed, she or he promises to live as a Christian.
 - The process of “choosing Christ” removes the effects of Original Sin.
- Confirmation is the affirmation of faith
 - We receive the gifts of the Holy Spirit when we live as Christians.

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■ Sacraments of Initiation

- Eucharist is the nourishment
 - We have to be the Body of Christ to initiate someone into the Body of Christ.
 - When we initiate an "active" Christian into the church, the Body of Christ is nourished.
 - The active Christian is fed by the Body of Christ (all the understandings of Body apply).
 - The community is strengthened by the active Christian.
 - We reflect the Kingdom of God more fully.

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■ Sacraments of Initiation

- So what is it, exactly, that we are being initiated into?
 1. Sacrifice
 2. The Body of Christ
 3. Conversion and Forgiveness
 4. Faith
 5. Missionary Duty

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■ Initiated into Sacrifice

- We offer ourselves to God, through lives that are dedicated to living God's will.
 - We receive the support of the faith community as we build, and after we damage, our relationship with God.
 - We offer support to the faith community and to our neighbor.

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■ Initiated into the Body of Christ

- We die to our old self.
- We become inextricably linked into the life of the Trinity.

Inextricable:

- So intricate or entangled as to make escape impossible.
- Too involved or complicated to solve.

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■ Initiated into Conversion and Forgiveness

- By entering into relationship with the Trinity, God forgives our transgressions (evil behavior, sin).
 - Relationship is not a one time event, it is a conversion of the heart.



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■ Initiated into Faith

- Faith is a prerequisite of initiation
- Faith is an effect of initiation



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■ Initiated into Missionary Duty

- We are to give witness to Christ

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■ Summary

- The emphasis of the Sacraments of Initiation is on building a relationship with God within a community of believers, leading to salvation.
 - Adults do this through the RCIA with the support of the *believing community*.
 - Children also, and maybe more profoundly, do this through the believing community.
 - Either way, the emphasis is on our relationship with God and each other (Mt. 22:36 – 40).