

Celebration of the Christian Mystery

Session 4

Scripture

Luke 24: 28-35

Luke

Chapter 24

28

As they approached the village to which they were going, he gave the impression that he was going on farther.

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But they urged him, "Stay with us, for it is nearly evening and the day is almost over." So he went in to stay with them.

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And it happened that, while he was with them at table, he took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them.

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With that their eyes were opened and they recognized him, but he vanished from their sight.

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Then they said to each other, "Were not our hearts burning (within us) while he spoke to us on the way and opened the scriptures to us?"

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So they set out at once and returned to Jerusalem where they found gathered together the eleven and those with them

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who were saying, "The Lord has truly been raised and has appeared to Simon!"

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Then the two recounted what had taken place on the way and how he was made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

Catechism

THE PASCHAL MYSTERY IN THE CHURCH'S SACRAMENTS

1113 The whole liturgical life of the Church revolves around the Eucharistic sacrifice and the sacraments.²⁹ There are seven sacraments in the Church: Baptism, Confirmation or Chrismation, Eucharist, Penance, Anointing of the Sick, Holy Orders, and Matrimony.³⁰

This article will discuss what is common to the Church's seven sacraments from a doctrinal point of view. What is common to them in terms of their celebration will be presented in the second chapter, and what is distinctive about each will be the topic of the Section Two.

[29](#) Cf. SC 6.

[30](#) Cf. Council of Lyons II (1274) DS 860; Council of Florence (1439) DS 1310; Council of Trent (1547): DS 1601.

I. The Sacraments of Christ

1114 "Adhering to the teaching of the Holy Scriptures, to the apostolic traditions, and to the consensus . . . of the Fathers," we profess that "the sacraments of the new law were . . . all instituted by Jesus Christ our Lord."^{[31](#)}

1115 Jesus' words and actions during his hidden life and public ministry were already salvific, for they anticipated the power of his Paschal mystery. They announced and prepared what he was going to give the Church when all was accomplished. the mysteries of Christ's life are the foundations of what he would henceforth dispense in the sacraments, through the ministers of his Church, for "what was visible in our Savior has passed over into his mysteries."^{[32](#)}

1116 Sacraments are "powers that comes forth" from the Body of Christ,^{[33](#)} which is ever-living and life-giving. They are actions of the Holy Spirit at work in his Body, the Church. They are "the masterworks of God" in the new and everlasting covenant.

[31](#) Council of Trent (1547): DS 1600-1601.

[32](#) St. Leo the Great Sermo. 74, 2: PL 54, 398.

[33](#) Cf. [□](#) Lk 5:17; [□](#) 6:19; [□](#) 8:46.

II. The Sacraments of the Church

1117 As she has done for the canon of Sacred Scripture and for the doctrine of the faith, the Church, by the power of the Spirit who guides her "into all truth," has gradually recognized this treasure received from Christ and, as the faithful steward of God's mysteries, has determined its "dispensation."^{[34](#)} Thus the Church has discerned over the

centuries that among liturgical celebrations there are seven that are, in the strict sense of the term, sacraments instituted by the Lord.

1118 The sacraments are "of the Church" in the double sense that they are "by her" and "for her." They are "by the Church," for she is the sacrament of Christ's action at work in her through the mission of the Holy Spirit. They are "for the Church" in the sense that "the sacraments make the Church,"³⁵ since they manifest and communicate to men, above all in the Eucharist, the mystery of communion with the God who is love, One in three persons.

1119 Forming "as it were, one mystical person" with Christ the head, the Church acts in the sacraments as "an organically structured priestly community."³⁶ Through Baptism and Confirmation the priestly people is enabled to celebrate the liturgy, while those of the faithful "who have received Holy Orders, are appointed to nourish the Church with the word and grace of God in the name of Christ."³⁷

1120 The ordained ministry or ministerial priesthood is at the service of the baptismal priesthood.³⁸ The ordained priesthood guarantees that it really is Christ who acts in the sacraments through the Holy Spirit for the Church. The saving mission entrusted by the Father to his incarnate Son was committed to the apostles and through them to their successors: they receive the Spirit of Jesus to act in his name and in his person.³⁹ The ordained minister is the sacramental bond that ties the liturgical action to what the apostles said and did and, through them, to the words and actions of Christ, the source and foundation of the sacraments.

1121 The three sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and Holy Orders confer, in addition to grace, a sacramental character or "seal" by which the Christian shares in Christ's priesthood and is made a member of the Church according to different states and functions. This configuration to Christ and to the Church, brought about by the Spirit, is indelible,⁴⁰ it remains for ever in the Christian as a positive disposition for grace, a promise and guarantee of divine protection, and as a vocation to divine worship and to the service of the Church. Therefore these sacraments can never be repeated.

³⁴ [□](#) Jn 16:13; cf. [□](#) Mt 13:52; [□](#) 1 Cor 4:1.

³⁵ St. Augustine, *De civ. Dei*, 22, 17: PL 41, 779; cf. St. Thomas Aquinas, *STh III*, 64,2 ad 3.

³⁶ LG 11; cf. Pius XII, *Mystici Corporis* (1943).

³⁷ LG 11 # 2.

³⁸ Cf. LG 10 # 2.

39 Cf. [□ Jn 20: 21-23](#); [□ Lk 24: 47](#); [□ Mt 28: 18-20](#).

40 Cf. Council of Trent (1547): DS 1609.

III. The Sacraments of Faith

1122 Christ sent his apostles so that "repentance and forgiveness of sins should be preached in his name to all nations."⁴¹ "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."⁴² The mission to baptize, and so the sacramental mission, is implied in the mission to evangelize, because the sacrament is prepared for by the word of God and by the faith which is assent to this word:

The People of God is formed into one in the first place by the Word of the living God.... the preaching of the Word is required for the sacramental ministry itself, since the sacraments are sacraments of faith, drawing their origin and nourishment from the Word.⁴³

1123 "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.'"⁴⁴

1124 The Church's faith precedes the faith of the believer who is invited to adhere to it. When the Church celebrates the sacraments, she confesses the faith received from the apostles - whence the ancient saying: *lex orandi, lex credendi* (or: *legem credendi lex statuat supplicandi* according to Prosper of Aquitaine [5th cent.]).⁴⁵ The law of prayer is the law of faith: the Church believes as she prays. Liturgy is a constitutive element of the holy and living Tradition.⁴⁶

1125 For this reason no sacramental rite may be modified or manipulated at the will of the minister or the community. Even the supreme authority in the Church may not change the liturgy arbitrarily, but only in the obedience of faith and with religious respect for the mystery of the liturgy.

1126 Likewise, since the sacraments express and develop the communion of faith in the Church, the *lex orandi* is one of the essential criteria of the dialogue that seeks to restore the unity of Christians.⁴⁷

41 [□ Lk 24: 47](#).

[42](#) □ Mt 28: 19.

[43](#) PO 4 ## 1, 2.

[44](#) SC 59.

[45](#) Ep. 8.

[46](#) Cf. DV 8.

[47](#) Cf. UR 2: 15.

IV. The Sacraments of Salvation

1127 Celebrated worthily in faith, the sacraments confer the grace that they signify.⁴⁸ They are efficacious because in them Christ himself is at work: it is he who baptizes, he who acts in his sacraments in order to communicate the grace that each sacrament signifies. the Father always hears the prayer of his Son's Church which, in the epiclesis of each sacrament, expresses her faith in the power of the Spirit. As fire transforms into itself everything it touches, so the Holy Spirit transforms into the divine life whatever is subjected to his power.

1128 This is the meaning of the Church's affirmation⁴⁹ that the sacraments act ex opere operato (literally: "by the very fact of the action's being performed"), i.e., by virtue of the saving work of Christ, accomplished once for all. It follows that "the sacrament is not wrought by the righteousness of either the celebrant or the recipient, but by the power of God."⁵⁰ From the moment that a sacrament is celebrated in accordance with the intention of the Church, the power of Christ and his Spirit acts in and through it, independently of the personal holiness of the minister. Nevertheless, the fruits of the sacraments also depend on the disposition of the one who receives them.

1129 The Church affirms that for believers the sacraments of the New Covenant are necessary for salvation.⁵¹ "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 nature⁵² by uniting them in a living union with the only Son, the Savior.

[48](#) Cf. Council of Trent (1547): DS 1605; DS 1606.

[49](#) Cf. Council of Trent (1547): DS 1608.

[50](#) St. Thomas Aquinas, STh III, 68, 8.

[51](#) Cf. Council of Trent (1547): DS 1604.

[52](#) Cf. [□](#) 2 Pet 1:4.

V. The Sacraments of Eternal Life

1130 The Church celebrates the mystery of her Lord "until he comes," when God will be "everything to everyone."[53](#) Since the apostolic age the liturgy has been drawn toward its goal by the Spirit's groaning in the Church: Marana tha![54](#) The liturgy thus shares in Jesus' desire: "I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you . . . until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God."[55](#) In the sacraments of Christ the Church already receives the guarantee of her inheritance and even now shares in everlasting life, while "awaiting our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Christ Jesus."[56](#) The "Spirit and the Bride say, 'Come . . . Come, Lord Jesus!'"[57](#)

St. Thomas sums up the various aspects of sacramental signs: "Therefore a sacrament is a sign that commemorates what precedes it - Christ's Passion; demonstrates what is accomplished in us through Christ's Passion - grace; and prefigures what that Passion pledges to us - future glory."[58](#)

[53](#) [□](#) 1 Cor 11:26; [□](#) 15:28.

[54](#) [□](#) 1 Cor 16:22.

[55](#) [□](#) Lk 22:15.

[56](#) [□](#) Titus 2:13.

[57](#) [□](#) Rev 22:17, [□](#) 20.

[58](#) St. Thomas Aquinas, STh III, 60, 3.

IN BRIEF

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.

1132 The Church celebrates the sacraments as a priestly community structured by the baptismal priesthood and the priesthood of ordained ministers.

1133 The Holy Spirit prepares the faithful for the sacraments by the Word of God and the faith which welcomes that word in well-disposed hearts. Thus the sacraments strengthen faith and express it.

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.