Sacraments, a glossary of terms



**Absolution:** An essential part of the Sacrament of Reconciliation in which the priest pardons the sins of the person confessing, in the name of God and Church.

**Actual Grace:** God’s interventions and support for us in the everyday moments of our lives. Actual graces are important for conversion and continuing growth in holiness.

**Anointing of the Sick:** One of the seven sacraments formerly known as Sacrament of the dying in which gravely ill or dying person is anointed by the priest and prayed over by him and attending believers.

**Bishop:** A successor of the Apostles who has received the fullness of Christ’s priesthood.

**Catechumen:** An unbaptized person who is preparing for full initiation into the Catholic Church by engaging in formal study, reflection and prayer.

**Confirmation:** With Baptism and Eucharist one of the three sacraments of Christian Initiation . Through the outpouring of special Gifts of the Holy Spirit, Confirmation completes Baptism by confirming or “sealing” the baptized person’s

**Contrition:** An attitude of sorrow for a sin committed and a resolution not to sin again. It is a response to God’s graciousness.

**Conversion:** A change of heart turning away from sin and toward God.

**Covenant** - An intensely personal bond of love between the parties. It includes certain rights and responsibilities, and a personal commitment of both parties to the welfare of the other.

**Deacon:** A man specially ordained to the service of Church’s ministry. The role of the deacon is to assist priests in preaching, the conferral of baptism, performance of marriage, administration of parishes and similar duties**.**

**Decree of the Sacraments –** Written by the Council of Trent officially declaring that there were seven sacraments of the Catholic Church.

**Donatists –** An early church heretical group in the 4th century which, believed that a minister of the sacraments could not give others what he himself did not have. Disagreement was over dispensation of the sacraments-who was worthy of doing so.

**Eucharist:** Mass of the Lord’s supper-Thanksgiving, it is the central liturgical celebration established by Jesus at the last supper. In the Eucharist the sacrificial death and resurrection of Jesus are both remembered and renewed. The term sometimes refers specifically to the consecrated bread and wine that have become the Body and Blood of Christ.

**Examination of Conscience:** Prayerful reflection on and assessment of one’s words, attitudes, actions in light of the Gospel of Jesus; more specially, the conscious evaluation of one’s life in preparation for reception of the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

**Extreme Unction** – The anointing of the dying – the old term and practice for the Anointing of the Sick

**Form of the Sacrament** – Refers to the words used during the sacrament

**Grace:** Is a gratuitous gift on which man has absolutely no claim.

**Hermeneutics:** The art of science interpreting Sacred Scriptures and inquiring into their true meaning. It defines the laws that exegetes are to following order to determine and explain the sense of the revealed Word of God.

**Holy Orders:** The sacrament by which members of the Church are ordained for permanent ministry in the Church as bishops, priests and deacons.

**Holy Spirit:** The third person of the Trinity who is distinct from the Father and the Son but one in being coequal and coeternal with them, he is in the fullest sense God.

**Instinct of a Sacrament** – The Church’s knowledge of the importance of an action before formally declaring it a sacrament, e.g. we have no history of the action of the sacrament of Reconciliation being celebrated in the early Christian communities, however, the instinct for it can be found in Paul’s letters.

**Instrumental causality** – Proposed by Thomas Aquinas: Sacraments are the reservoirs of and the pipelines for grace; God “places” grace in the sacraments and the sacraments make grace available to us. CCC 1127-1134

**Intentional causality** – Taught by L. Billot (d.1931); the sacraments have an effect first upon those celebrating them.. By celebrating the sacraments, people become disposed- their hearts open to receive grace.

**Liturgy** –Derives from the Greek word “leitourgia” meaning “people and work, it is defined on Sacrosanctum Concilium (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy) as the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed (and) it is also the fount from which all her power flows” CCC 1067-69,335, 2691, 2695, 1088-8989

**Liturgy of the Eucharist** – The second part of the Mass that includes the preparation of the gifts, Eucharistic prayer, the Communion rite. CCC 1324-27,1330

**Liturgy of the Word** – The first part of the Mass that includes the readings, the homily, profession of faith and general intercessions CCC1103, 1154, 1349, 2183

**Magisterium:** The Church’s living teaching office, which consists of all bishops, in communion with the Pope.

**Mass** – This term comes from the dismissal rite of the service which means “sending forth” CCC 1088, 1331-44, 1382, 2192

**Matrimony:** A lifelong covenant modeled on that between Christ and the Church, in which a baptized man and baptized woman make an exclusive and permanent commitment to faithfully love each other and care for their children.

**Matter of Sacrament** – Refers to the liturgical symbol or gesture used during the sacrament

**Moral causality** – Taught by John Duns Scotus (d. 1308); when people celebrate a sacrament , the sacramental celebration reminds God of his love for humankind and God then gives his grace directly to those asking for it.

**Mortal sin:** An action so contrary to the will of God that it results in a complete separation from God and His grace.

**Mystagogy:** A period of catechesis following the reception of the sacraments of Christian Initiation that aims to more fully initiate people into the mystery of Christ.

**Mystery:** The term signifies that which is unknowable.

**Oil of the Sick:** Blessed olive oil used in the Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick to anoint the forehead and hands of people who are seriously ill or near death.

**Paschal Mystery:** The work of salvation accomplished by Jesus Christ mainly through his life, Passion, death, Resurrection, and Ascension.

**Reconciliation:** One of the Seven Sacraments of the Church, the liturgical celebration of God’s forgiveness of sin, through which the sinner reconciled with both God and the Church.

**Redemption:** From Latin redempio, meaning “a buying back” referring in the Old Testament, to Yahweh’s deliverance of Israel and, in the New Testament to Christ’s deliverance of all Christians from the forces of sin.

**Ritual:** The established form of the words and actions for a ceremony that is repeated often. The actions often have a symbolic meaning.

**Sacrament:** An efficacious and visible sign of God’s grace, instituted by Christ and entrusted to the Church, by which divine life is dispensed to us.

**Sacrament of Baptism:** The first of the seven sacraments by which one becomes a member of the Church and new creature in Christ.

**Sacramental economy:** The communication or dispensation of the fruits of Christ’s Paschal Mystery in the celebration of the Church’s sacramental liturgy.

**Sacramental grace** – Grace conferred through the celebration of the sacraments CCC 1084, 1127, 1131

**Sacraments of Christian Initiation:** The three sacraments Baptism, Confirmation and the Eucharist through which we enter into full membership in the Church.

**Sacred Chrism:** Perfumed olive oil consecrated y the bishop that is used for anointing in the Sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and Holy Orders.

**Sanctifying grace:** The grace that heals our human nature wounded by sin and restores us to friendship with God by giving us a share in divine life of the Trinity. It is a supernatural gift of God, infused into our souls by the Holy Spirit, that continues the work of making us holy.

**Sin of Omission:** Willful neglect or positive refusal to perform some good action that one’s conscience urges one to do so. Such omission is morally culpable and its gravity depends on the importance of what should have been done.

**Symbol:** An object or action that points us to another reality. It leads us to look beyond our senses to consider a deeper mystery.

**Transubstantiation:** The complete change of the substance of bread and wine into substance of Christ’s body and blood by a validly ordained priest during consecration of the Mass.

**Trinity**: From the Latin trinus, meaning “threefold”, referring to the central mystery of the Christian faith that God consists as a communion of three distinct and interrelated Divine Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The doctrine of the Trinity is a mystery that is inaccessible to human reason alone and is known through Divine Revelation.

**Venial Sin:** An offense against God which does not deprive the sinner of sanctifying grace. The relationship may be restored.

**Viaticum** – The last sacrament, the Eucharist, a person receives before death