

Preview Sheet – Overview of the Sacraments

Required Reading: *Luke 24:13-35; Acts 8:26-40; Acts 9:1-20*
 Catechism of the Catholic Church 1066 – 1155
 Catholic Update – What are Sacraments? (Martos)
 Catholic Update – Have Sacraments Changed? (Francis)

At some time in our lives, we learned the definition of a sacrament. Some of us may still remember that famous definition from the *Baltimore Catechism*: “A Sacrament is an outward sign instituted by Christ to give grace.” Perhaps just hearing the word “sacrament” reminds you in some way of your own experience receiving the sacraments. Yet, the word *sacrament* has ancient roots and a deep theological meaning with broad, profound implications for the way we as Catholics do liturgy, as well as the way we live.

This class is designed to provide you with an overview of the sacraments. Therefore, rather than concentrating on one or even on a group of sacraments, we will briefly explore the theology and Scriptural foundations of the sacraments in general. This will prepare you for an in-depth examination of each of the seven sacraments.

1. What do the three New Testament readings have in common? Do you see a relationship between them and the sacraments?
2. What does it mean to say that Christ instituted the seven sacraments? How does this relate to the idea that each of the sacraments is rooted in Christ’s death and resurrection?
3. Why do we have seven sacraments? What is common among them?
4. Recall the time that you first received the sacraments; for example, your First Communion, First Penance, or Confirmation. What do you remember? Why do you think these memories have persisted?
5. Has the Church changed how the sacraments are celebrated since you were young? If any, what are the differences? What *hasn't* changed?
6. Think about the rituals or celebrations in your own family (birthdays, graduations, *etc*). Do these celebrations follow a basic pattern across societies and over time?
7. What do you think the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council meant when they described the Church as the Sacrament of Christ in the world?