

THE SACRAMENTS

The seven sacraments of the Catholic church are rites that most often can only be carried out by an approved member of the Catholic hierarchy (such as a Catholic priest). A "sacrament is an outward sign instituted by Christ to give grace" (Baltimore Catechism, 144 AS QUOTED IN Howe, 85). According to Catholic tradition, "Jesus has given His church sacraments as the very source of His presence within her. The sacraments sustain and give life to the Catholic church, and she builds her whole existence around them: they are the air she breathes, and the food she eats" (Chilson, 129 AS QUOTED IN Howe, 85). "There are seven sacraments: Baptism, Confirmation, Holy Eucharist, Penance, Anointing of the Sick, Holy Orders, and Matrimony" (Baltimore Catechism, 145 AS QUOTED IN Howe, 85).

This ritualism is seen in what the Catholic Church calls the Sacraments. According to Oscar Lukefahr:

“How did Christ enter the lives of His followers? The apostles believed that it was through signs of celebration and ritual given them by the Lord. On the first Pentecost, Peter told the crowds, “repent and be baptized” (Acts 2:38. A few years later, Paul reminded the Corinthians that they proclaimed Christ’s death and shared his body and blood by doing what Jesus did at the Last supper (1 Corinthians 11:23-27). Christ gave new life through the sign of Baptism; he was present through the sign of the Eucharist.

At first there was no organized theology of such sign, but one was gradually developed under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. By the thirteenth century the Church recognized seven signs, or sacraments, that had been given us by Christ. The Council of Trent declared as dogma that these are baptism, confirmation, Eucharist, penance, matrimony, holy orders, and anointing of the sick.” (Lukefahr 87-88)

The Bible does not speak of sacraments and the Catholic Church did not officially produce them until the time of the reformation in the 1500's (Lambert, 205, 207). There is no Biblical authority or use of the term sacrament as taught by the Catholics and their own attempt to use Ephesians 5:32 as justification has been dismissed by their own councils and authorities (Lambert, 205). Jesus did not command the observance of sacraments; rather, He said that those that worship the Father must worship Him in spirit and in truth (cf. John 4:23-24). Moreover, the life and source of spiritual nourishment is not found in these traditional, man-regulated, seven areas of worship, but in the words of Christ (cf. John 6:63; 15:1-7). The food that the church eats and is cleansed by are the words of Christ (cf. Mat. 5:6; Eph. 5:26-27).

Baptism

"Children should be baptized as soon as possible after birth" (Baltimore Catechism, 154 AS QUOTED IN Howe, 87). Catholic tradition teaches that a child is baptized as an infant based

upon the parents Catholic faith and desire to have that child raised to become Catholic as well. The child is also cleansed of "original sin" or the sin that Catholics teach are inherited by every child from Adam. The method of baptism is sprinkling or pouring water onto the head of a child.

Biblical baptism requires a belief and confession in Christ. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved" (Mark 16:16). "For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (Rom. 10:10).

Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus. And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. (Acts 8:35-38)

Biblical baptism requires the condition of belief and confession which are two states that an infant child cannot yet reach. Moreover, the Bible plainly teaches that man is not born with sin. This is clearly shown in the following verses.

Ezekiel 18:4 (KJV) Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sinneth, it shall die.

Ezekiel 18:20 (KJV) The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him.

Matthew 19:4 (KJV) And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made *them* at the beginning made them male and female,

Confirmation

"The Roman Catholic Church teaches that the sacrament of Confirmation perfects baptismal grace" (Baltimore Catechism, 157-161 AS QUOTED IN Howe, 90). It is a ritualistic ceremony where confirmees dress in robes and are officially confirmed by the local bishop after having completed a series of classes and service mandates that qualify confirmation status. According to Catholic tradition, the "one being confirmed also receives the gifts of wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude and fear of the Lord (Baltimore Catechism, 157-161 AS QUOTED IN Howe, 90).

Confirmation is not a Biblical practice or command. Biblical baptism saves (cf. 1 Pet. 3:21) and there no "perfecting" ceremony commanded after such to confirm it. Moreover, man grows in wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude and fear through study and application of the

scriptures not through a ceremonial ritual that magically produces such on site (cf. Pro. 2:1-9; 2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Pet. 3:18).

Holy Eucharist

The sacrament of the Holy Eucharist (or the doctrine of the "Real Presence") teaches that the wafer used during the Mass becomes the actual body and blood of Christ, although Christ remains under the appearances of bread and wine. The Holy Eucharist is considered the greatest of all sacraments because the bread and the wine are converted into the real presence of Jesus during the consecration at Mass. This process is considered a mystery and is known as "transubstantiation." This belief stems from the Roman Catholic Church's interpretation of John 6:54-55 (Baltimore Catechism, 162-167 AS QUOTED IN Howe, 91).

John 6:41-68 reveals the context of what was meant by Jesus in John 6:54-55. Jesus states that "the flesh profiteth nothing" but that the words he was speaking, "they are spirit, and they are life" (John 6:63). After hearing what Jesus spoke in verses 54ff, many of the disciples "went back, and walked no more with him" (John 6:66). When Jesus then asked the twelve if they would go, Peter answered, "Lord to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life" (John 6:68). Clearly, abiding in the words of Jesus is what is understood given the context of the entire discourse. In verse 51 Jesus states that he is giving his flesh "for the life of the world". The sacrifice that the Lord would give by submitting His body to death, would then make it possible for the world to have eternal life through the words and way that He provided through the gospel (death, burial, and resurrection- cf. 1 Cor. 15:1-4). Moreover, such obedience to the gospel and a life committed to Christ and His words likewise results in participating in the sacrifice of Jesus (cf. Rom. 6:4-5; Gal. 2:20). The Lord's Supper is taken to remember the sacrifice, not eat the sacrifice!

For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come. (1 Cor. 11:23-26)

The Catholic clergy lead a Mass in the ritual practice of ringing bells and converting the bread and fruit of the vine into a literal sacrifice of Christ's body and blood. However, such is inconsistent with scripture: "By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all ... But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God ... For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are

sanctified" (Heb. 10:10, 12, 14). That which is observed by the Catholic tradition is contrary to these plain teachings and is an act of man-made mysticism.

Penance

"Penance is the sacrament by which sins committed after Baptism are forgiven through the absolution of the priest. ... Only God can forgive sins. But He can decide for Himself how He wants to do it. And the way He has decided upon is to use priests as His instruments" (Baltimore Catechism 184-185, AS QUOTED IN Howe, 93). When the Catholic has sinned, he confesses his sins to the priest who, in the place of Christ, forgives the sins. Such a doctrine has created the demand for Catholic priesthood and hierarchy, separated further the people of that hierarchy from the "commoners", and given Catholic members the impression that "official priests" are essential in order for one to remain in a proper relationship with God.

The Bible however teaches something far different. First, the scriptures teach that there is only one mediator between God and man- and that is Christ. "For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (1 Tim. 2:5). Second, God has told His children that if they confess their sins, "He is faithful and just to forgive" them of their sins and to cleanse them "from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). Finally, Jesus alone is the Advocate for man and the propitiation for man's sins (cf. 1 John 2:1-2). There is no formula for an "official" priesthood within the New Testament; rather, all of God's children are priests with Jesus Christ being the high priest (cf. 1 Pet. 1:1; 2:5; Heb. 4:14).

Anointing Of The Sick

Anyone who is a faithful member of the Roman Catholic Church can receive this sacrament. It is administered by a priest. The sick one is anointed with oil blessed by the bishop. This anointing takes place on the forehead and on the hands of the sick person. The church teaches that the sick person receives a special grace that gives them comfort, peace, courage and even the forgiveness of sins" (Howe, 96).

James 5:14-15 states the following: "Is any among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: and the prayer of faith shall save him that is sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, it shall be forgiven him." This verse explains that the sick should call upon the elders of the church to have them pray over him and anoint him with oil. Given the qualifications of elders in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-11 and the charge for them to take care of the flock in Acts 20:28 and 1 Peter 5:1-4, it is understandable why God would instruct the sick to call on their shepherds (elders).

These qualified, godly, and righteous men who oversee God's people, are the proper people to have by the side of the sick and their prayers on their behalf would avail much (cf.

Jam. 5:16). If the child of God who is sick had committed sins and desired to repent of such, the prayers of faith would then grant him forgiveness (cf. 1 John 1:9), restore his soul (cf. Acts 8:18-24), and raise him up with the Lord (cf. 1 The. 4:15-17). However, as stated in the overview of the previous Catholic sacrament (Penance), the elders are not the one forgiving the sins; rather, sins committed by a child of God are forgiven when the one in sin has an attitude of repentance and seeks forgiveness by prayer through Jesus Christ the mediator (cf. 1 John 1:9; 1 Tim. 2:5). The oil referred to in this text "was probably olive oil, which is still very therapeutic" (Howe, 97). The oil would have especially been used frequently during this era. The first century culture did not have an efficient health system with a plethora of hospitals and the abundant supply and use of medicine that exists today was unheard of during that time.

Holy Orders

The sacrament of Holy Orders is how one becomes a part of the priesthood in the Roman Catholic Church. [The priesthood is] A specially appointed group of men [that] claim the exclusive right to perform the Sacrifice of Mass and to forgive sins committed against God. This claim rests on the idea that the apostles had men who would be their successors and that their authority was passed on to those successors today. A priest is ordained as a mediator. He then becomes a mediator between God and man, whose work is to unite man with God (Baltimore Catechism 211-215 AS CITED IN Howe, 97).

In the first century, the Apostles were known as "the twelve" (1 Cor. 15:5). Paul likewise became an apostle "born out of due time" and considered himself "the least of the apostles" because he had previously persecuted the church (1 Cor. 15:8-9). Therefore, after the resurrection of Christ, there were a total of 13 apostles based upon the New Testament's account. These apostles met certain qualifications. They had to have been a witness of the Lord's resurrection to become an apostle (cf. Acts 1:22), they performed miraculous gifts (cf. 2 Cor. 12:12), and only the apostles could give others the ability to perform miraculous gifts themselves. Regarding the third qualification just mentioned in the previous list, consider the following: Acts 8 reveals that Philip the servant (cf. Acts 6:2-5) did not bestow the Holy Ghost on those in Samaria, but waited for the John the apostle and Peter the apostle to come from Jerusalem to do so (cf. Acts 8:12, 14-15, 17); in Acts 19, Paul comes to Ephesus to give the Holy Ghost and upon doing so "they spake with tongues, and prophesied (cf. Acts 19:1-2, 6); and again in Acts 8 when Simon wanted the ability to do as Peter and John had done and give others the Holy Ghost, he was rebuked and told that he had neither lot nor portion in the matter (cf. Acts 8:18-21).

Considering the New Testament's account of there only being 13 apostles, the Catholic church is supposing, based upon the logic of their doctrine, that only these 13 men performed the "Sacrifice of Mass" and forgave sins during the first century. However, since the gospel had been proclaimed to all the world (cf. Col. 1:23), it would have been logistically impossible for the

entirety of the Christian membership to engage in worship and have their sins forgiven if only 13 men had the authority to provide such. Therefore, as the Bible proves, the priesthood, those qualified to worship and offer sacrifices to God, consisted of far more than just 13 men. Peter wrote to Christians (cf. 1 Pet. 1:18-19) that he called "strangers scattered throughout" and told them that they were "an holy priesthood" (1 Pet. 1:1; 2:5). All those who are Christians have become priests (cf. 1 Pet. 2:9).

However, Peter does make a distinction between all Christians, called priests, and those who serve in the office of a bishop/elder. As he is writing Christians, he states in 1 Peter 5:1, "The elders which are among you I exhort." Clearly, not all of the priesthood were considered bishops/elders. There was a special group of people among them that were "elders", but not all of them were of this office; however, all of them were of the priesthood. Therefore, it is understood that the priesthood consisted of all Christians, but that certain of those Christians held the office of an elder. This special office of elder/bishop is not granted based upon being an apostle, but was based upon meeting qualifications that had been plainly supplied by the Holy Spirit (cf. Acts 20:28; 1 Tim. 3:1-7; Tit. 1:5-10). Furthermore, the elders/bishops are to take care of and feed the flock of God (cf. Acts 20:28; 1 Pet. 5:2). Their duty is to oversee and rule the church in carrying out the commands of God (cf. Heb. 13:17). The Bible does not specially appoint any office or group of people within Christianity that have exclusive rights to being able to worship and sacrifice unto God- that duty is required rather of all Christians which make up the priesthood (cf. 1 Pet. 2:5, 9). Finally, as it has already been thoroughly discussed in the previous sacraments, no group of Christians hold the exclusive rights to petition God for the forgiveness of sins (cf. 1 John 1:9) and only One is the Mediator between God and man and that is Christ (cf. 1 Tim. 2:5).

Matrimony

Christ raised matrimony to the dignity of a sacrament. This sacrament is to be used as a symbol of God's faithfulness and His unconditional love. A marriage is celebrated at a Mass with the presence of a priest and several witnesses. A "mixed" marriage occurs between a Catholic and a non-Catholic. This marriage must be approved with the permission of the "ecclesiastical authority." The couple must agree to raise their children in the Roman Catholic doctrine. Marriage, as a sacrament, bestows upon the spouses the grace necessary to attain holiness in their married life and to accept with responsibility the gift of children and to provide for their education (Howe, 98).

Jesus stated in Matthew 19:4-6, "Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore, God hath joined together, let not man put asunder." Marriage is between one man, one woman, and God. There is not declaration here made by Christ that marriage is a "sacrament." There is no instruction regarding marriage needing to take

place during a "Mass." There is no "ecclesiastical authority" involved and as a matter of fact, such an official, universal hierarchy does not exist at all throughout the pages of the New Testament.

Review Questions:

Question 1) What is a sacrament and what are the seven sacraments?

Question 2) Where are sacraments commanded in the Bible and when were they first officially used by the Catholic Church?

Question 3) When does the Catechism say baptism should occur?

Question 4) Why do Catholics say baptism should occur when they say it should occur and what does the Bible state regarding their justification for such?

Question 5) Define and explain confirmation and compare this doctrine to the scriptures.

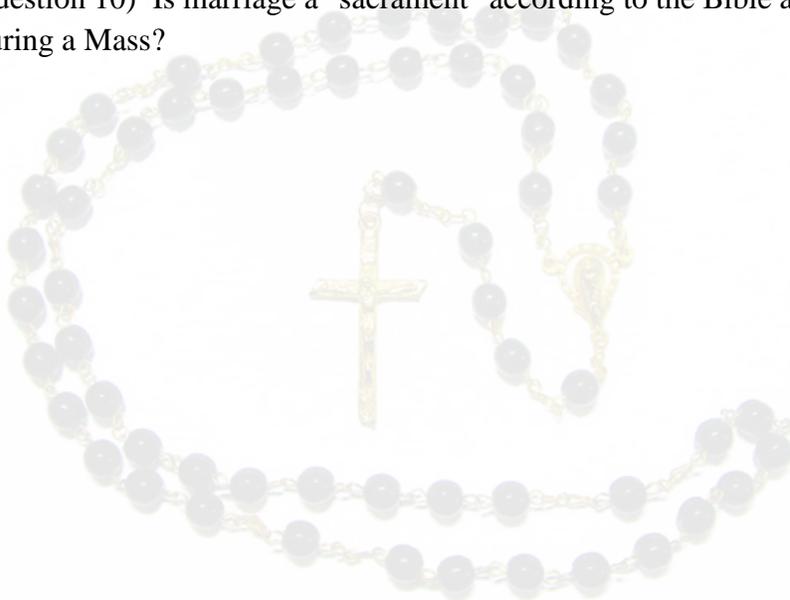
Question 6) What is the "Holy Eucharist" and explain the Lord's Supper as taught by the Lord?

Question 7) Who forgives sins and mediates between man and God through "Penance" and what does the Bible say about this?

Question 8) Explain "Anointing of the Sick" and the correct Biblical teaching regarding it.

Question 9) What are "Holy Orders" and discuss the position and timeframe of the apostles as taught by the Bible?

Question 10) Is marriage a "sacrament" according to the Bible and does it need to take place during a Mass?



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