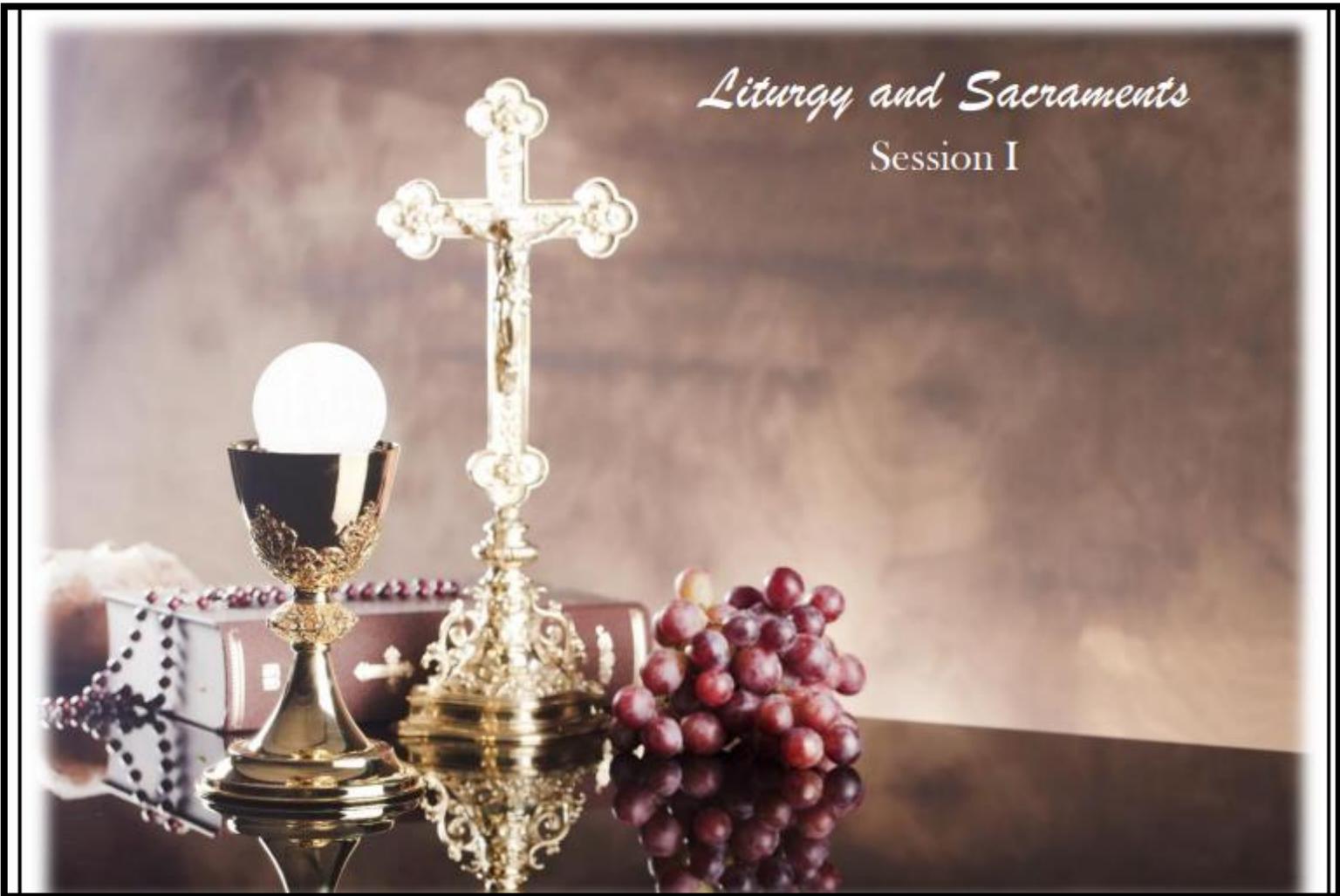


Liturgy and Sacraments

Session I



Jesus is the primordial Sacrament in which God is revealed in divine fullness. By instituting the Church (see Matthew 16:18-19), Jesus legitimized the Church as a Sacrament itself, as a sign and an instrument of salvation. The liturgy then is an “action of God” that unites us to Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit. With these definitions as background, for the next two months, with the deacons will address the topics of Liturgy and the Sacraments. When we read in the scriptures about God and Jesus we can’t separate the Church as an institution of salvation, a visible sign of God’s grace through the liturgy and the sacraments.

What is liturgy? What is the etymology of the word Liturgy: Latin/Medieval Latin liturgia “public service, public worship”. So, The public service and the ministries were exercised in Rome and Greek not only worshiping God but also worship their gods. According to the history, the Greeks worshiped 12 different gods, however we, as Christians we worship one God who is almighty and everlasting. In our Christian tradition, when we speak of the word liturgy, it is understood to mean the People of God participating in “the work of God.” You and me are participating in the work of God. The answer is found in JOHN 6:28-29 Therefore they said to Him, “What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?” Jesus answered and said to them, “This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent.”

What does believe in Jesus means? **Whoever believes in him will not be condemned, but whoever does not believe has already been condemned, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God. And this is the verdict, that the light came into the world, but people preferred darkness to light, because their works were evil. For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come toward the light, so that his works might not be exposed. But whoever lives the truth comes to the light, so that his works may be clearly seen as done in God.” (Jn. 3)**

The church has two primary duties: 1) to provide a means of calling others to reconciliation and peace with God, and 2) to provide the full counsel of God to help the called know God and become holy. This is the vocation, the work, of all Christians under God. So, the Church through the liturgies is showing, teaching, and guiding us to the light, every time that you participate, means participate in any Church celebration... you receive the light of Christ, the knowledge of the true, however you are free to accept and reject. **that the light came into the world, but people preferred darkness to light, because their works were evil. For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come toward the light, so that his works might not be exposed. But whoever lives the truth comes to the light, so that his works may be clearly seen as done in God.”**

There are 17: Adultery, Fornication, Uncleaness, Pride, Lust, Homosexuality, Idolatry, Witchcraft, Hatred, Wrath, Conflict, Seditious, Heresies, Envy, Murders, Drunkenness, Laziness.

Why then is so important the liturgy and the active participation in the Liturgy? Bc Liturgy is centered on the Holy Trinity. At every liturgy the action of worship is directed to the Father, from whom all blessings come, through the Son in the unity of the Holy Spirit. We praise the Father who first called us to be his people by sending us his Son as our Redeemer and giving us the Holy Spirit so that we can continue to gather, to remember what God has done for us, and to share in the blessings of salvation.

Remember this scripture, **“It is better for you that I go. For if I do not go, the Advocate will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you” (Jn 16:7).**

The prayers of the Church are directed to God to send His Holy Spirit through Jesus Christ our Lord...this is the mystery of the Holy Trinity.

Taking into consideration the importance of the liturgy, Jesus then established the Sacraments as sanctification grace.

So, the word sacrament is found in the Bible or just it is an initiative of the Church? Let me explain: the etymology of the word sacrament: **The word sacrament comes from Latin word Sacramentum. The Greek word musterion is equivalent to Sacramentum and it is used by Paul in some of his letters.**

Obviously in the vernacular Bibles, means in the English or Spanish Bible you will not see the word Sacrament, however, remember that the language of the apostles, and Paul was Greek.

So, if you can read Greek and have a Greek Bible you will see the word, “mysterium” in English mystery. However, if we translate, Mysterium from Greek to Latin is Mystery. Two examples: “**Let a man so consider us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. 2 Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful.:** (1 Cor. 4:1-2)

“**Let us acknowledge our sins and so prepare ourselves to celebrate these sacred mysteries”**

Sacraments are ‘powers that come forth’ from the Body of Christ, (the Church) 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.

“Christ instituted the sacraments of the new law... The seven sacraments touch all stages and all the important moments of Christian life: they give birth and increase, healing, and mission to the Christian’s life of faith. There is thus a certain resemblance between the stages of natural life and the stages of the spiritual life.

In other words, the Sacraments give two kinds of grace: Sanctifying grace (the grace which confers on our souls a sharing in the life of God Himself) and sacramental grace (special grace that helps us to carry out the particular purpose of the sacrament)

The Sacrament is an invisible grace given by God revealed through a visible action of the Church. For example, in Baptism it is water, in the Eucharist it is bread and wine, but the Sacrament also has a form or formula, words of spiritual significance given to the matter when it is conferred. A Sacrament, in a very broad sense of the term, combines two elements:

one visible, the other invisible – one can be seen, or tasted, or touched, or heard while the other remains unseen to the eyes of the flesh.

In a summary, The word Sacrament is the conjunction of the Latin word sacer (**holy**) with the Greek word mysterion (**secret rite**). “**A man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. This is a great mystery [Sacrament] but I speak concerning Christ and the Church”** (Eph 5:31-32)

Finally, The Christian life is lived in freedom from the norms and expectations of the world because Christians live by divine standards; it is lived in celebration because they claim to live in the reign of God.

In a summary, it is a freely decision of the person who live by divine standards, parents that commonly says, “I prefer that my son/daughter chose his/her faith are not living by Christian neither divine standards.” Why because they do not care about the spiritual journey and salvation of their children. They care more about what is material.



SESSION - II -The 7 Sacraments: The meaning of liturgy is "public service, public worship". Basically, any time that you attend a Church public service like a adoration, retreat, mass, etc... you as a Church member participate in the church two primary duties: 1) to provide a means of calling others to reconciliation and peace with God, and 2) to provide the full counsel of God to help the called know God and become holy.

SACRAMENT: The meaning of Sacrament is found in the scriptures as a mystery or mysteries. Two examples: "*Let a man so consider us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. 2 Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful.*" (1 Cor. 4:1-2)

"Let us acknowledge our sins and so prepare ourselves to celebrate these sacred mysteries" In other words, the Sacraments give two kinds of grace: Sanctifying grace, we become holy through the grace of God. and sacramental grace means that we are now children of God and members of His Church able to receive all the sacramental graces.

The Sacrament is an invisible grace given by God revealed through a visible action of the Church.

As we know through the sacred scriptures, Jesus established 7 sacraments, but why 7? The number seven is also a spiritually significant number; it appears in many biblical passages and is associated with perfection or completeness.

The Church has divided the 7 sacraments into three parts taking into consideration the purpose of each one: The first three are called, "The Sacraments of Initiation." Then, the sacrament of Healing: "Reconciliation and Anointing of the Sick" and the Sacraments of Service, "Matrimony and Holy Orders."

The first three sacraments—Baptism, Confirmation, and First Communion—or the Sacraments of Initiation "whose unity must be safeguarded." Means they need to be completed.

From here we can understand the other four sacraments. Once we are received into the Church through the three Sacraments of Initiation, our life within the Church doesn't stop there. We also regularly receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation or Penance which restores us when, during our life, we through sin fall from the grace we have received in

our baptism. Serious sin cuts us off from God's grace (called a grave sin because it kills God's divine life in the soul), while sacramental confession restores it.

Also, Anointing of the Sick, Extreme Unction, or Last Rites. It is when we receive the prayer and blessing of the Church to strengthen the soul as we transition from this life to the next. The sacrament is also administered to those who are seriously ill or in danger of death.

The sacraments of service – Matrimony (or “Marriage”) and Holy Orders – are both calls from Our Lord to share our lives with others in special ways.

Marriage: The commitment made by a couple, through the Sacrament of Matrimony, is a sign of God’s love and faithfulness. The Christian community shares their joy as they prepare to enter a new life together in the holy Sacrament of Marriage. A sacramental Marriage celebrated in the Catholic Church acknowledges the importance of God in the lives of both husband and wife.

Matrimony or marriage has two purposes: Complementarity of the couple and procreation. The model was established and blessed by God since the beginning of Creation. Any other model is not a covenant neither includes God. It will be then a human invention.

Holy Orders: The Sacrament of Holy Orders is the sacrament through which baptized men are called to serve in the name and in the person of Christ, the Head, in the midst of the community. The model of priesthood is found in the scriptures where we find the words, “**You are a priest forever in the order of Melchizedek.**”

So now let us focus on the sacrament of initiation: The easiest way to understand why there are three Sacraments of Initiation (and not just one) is by viewing them **in light of the Holy Trinity**. The Holy Trinity is the Christian doctrine of God's nature: the unity of three Divine Persons in one God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Each of the Sacraments of Initiation reveal one of the three Persons of the Holy Trinity.

Baptism is always the first sacrament to be received; it is the gateway into the Church and plants the seed of divine life into our souls, which is then increased by degree through the other sacraments throughout our lives. It can be received only once...Baptism is universal when the words of Jesus are used, “*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...Mt.28:19, Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved; whoever does not believe will be condemned.*

These signs will accompany those who believe: in my name they will drive out demons, they will speak new languages. They will pick up serpents [with their hands], and if they drink any deadly thing, it will not harm them. They will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover.” Mk. 16: 15

The Sacrament of Baptism: The removal of the stain of original sin and becoming a Christian, a son or daughter of God the Father.

The Sacrament of Confirmation: The seal or completion of baptism; the reception of the mark of God the Holy Spirit and His seven sanctifying gifts.

The Sacrament of Holy Communion: The reception of the God the Son in the Holy Eucharist; the body, blood, soul, and divinity of the Incarnate Jesus Christ.

So we see that the three Sacraments of Initiation follow a Trinitarian formula: being received into the divine life of the Triune God through each of the Divine Persons.

THE ROLE OF THE PRIEST: The sacraments, as external rites, are performed by the priest who acts in persona Christi. This means that the priest, in virtue of apostolic succession, acts in the very person of Christ as he administers the sacraments to the faithful. The sacraments impart divine life into our souls through the power and authority of Jesus Christ in the person of the priest.

The seven sacraments of the Catholic Church are injections of divine grace to help us live our lives, from birth to death, in harmony with the will of God, which is intended for our happiness and well-being in this life. They are marvelous gifts of God intended to purify our souls and bring us to eternal life with Him in heaven, and we should be very grateful for them!

How should you receive the sacraments? You should receive the sacraments by faith in Christ, with repentance and thanksgiving. Faith in Christ is necessary to receive the grace of the sacraments, and obedience to Christ is necessary for the benefits of the sacraments to bear fruit in my life.

What is the role of the parent in evaluating a child's readiness to be baptized? Parents bear primary responsibility for the condition of their children's souls. They are to: Teach their children God's commands (Deuteronomy 6:7) "*Therefore, you shall love the LORD, your God, with your whole heart, and with your whole being, and with your whole strength. Take to heart these words which I command you today. Keep repeating them to your children. Recite them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you get up.*" Train their children up in the way they should go (Proverbs 22:6). "*Train the young in the way they should go; even when old, they will not swerve from it.*"

Bring their children up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord, "*Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up with the training and instruction of the Lord*" (Ephesians 6:4).