

A Synopsis on the Sacraments

+ + +

- **What Are the Sacraments?**
 - Sacraments are outward and visible signs of inward and spiritual grace, given by Christ as sure and certain means by which we receive that grace.
 - A sacrament is a promise from God to meet with his faithful people in a tangible space. They are not magical formulas, but rather gifts from God through which by faith we can experience Christ in a unique way.
 - A sacramental theology affirms both the goodness of God's creation as well as God's involvement in the physical world. Indeed, God's ultimate purpose is to reunite heaven and earth together once again, something the sacraments anticipate and even enact.
 - Anglicans affirm the two great sacraments given by Christ to the church of Holy Baptism and Holy Eucharist as well as other sacramental acts that evolved in the church, including confirmation, ordination, holy matrimony, reconciliation of a penitent, and unction.

- **What Is Holy Baptism?** (Matt 28:18–20; John 3:1–8; Romans 6:1–4)
 - Holy Baptism is the sacrament by which God adopts us as his children and makes us members of the body of Christ, the church.
 - The outward and visible sign of baptism is water, in which the person is baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.
 - The inward and spiritual grace is union with Christ, birth into God's family, forgiveness of sins, and new life in the Holy Spirit.
 - Holy Baptism is the entryway into the church and therefore into all the other sacraments. It effects what it symbolizes—union with Christ—but not automatically; faith must be present.
 - Anglicans believe that Holy Baptism is not a mere witness to conversion, but is rather an instrument of conversion. Through the Spirit, God does something in the act of baptism.

- **What about Infant Baptism?**
 - Infant Baptism has nothing to do with mechanical grace; it is a recognition that God deals with people through families as well as individually.
 - Holy Baptism is the sign of the new covenant much like circumcision was the sign of the old covenant, which was administered to infants.

- Entire households were baptized in the early church (Acts 11:14; 16:15, 33; 18:8; 1 Cor 1:16). In the ancient world, when the head of the family acted, the whole household followed suit, so strong was family solidarity.
 - For the first 1500 years of church history, the church baptized children, and of the four initial streams of the Protestant Reformation, only one, the Radicals, began refusing to baptize children.
 - Infant Baptism stresses the initiative of God's grace in salvation; it bears witness to God's love for us before we even knew of God.
- **What Is Holy Eucharist?** (Luke 22:1–23; 1 Cor 11:17–26)
 - Holy Eucharist is the sacrament commanded by Christ for the continual remembrance of his life, death, and resurrection, until his coming again.
 - The outward and visible sign in the Eucharist is bread and wine, given and received according to Christ's command.
 - The inward and spiritual grace in the Eucharist is the Body and Blood of Christ, received by faith, which grants forgiveness of sins, the strengthening of our union with Christ and one another, and the foretaste of the heavenly banquet.
 - Anglicans believe in what is broadly called the doctrine of real presence, which says that Jesus' presence is real in the Eucharist, but how this is so is left undefined.
- **What about Other Sacraments?**
 - Confirmation is the rite in which we express a mature commitment to Christ, and receive strength from the Holy Spirit through prayer and the laying on of hands by a bishop (Acts 8:17; Heb 6:2).
 - Ordination is the rite in which God gives authority and the grace of the Holy Spirit to those being made bishops, priest, and deacons, through prayer and the laying on of hands by bishops (Acts 6:1–6; 1 Tim 3:1–13).
 - Holy Matrimony is Christian marriage, in which the woman and man enter into a life-long union, make their vows before God and the church, and receive the grace and blessing of God to help them fulfill their vows.
 - Reconciliation of a Penitent is the rite in which those who repent of their sins may confess them to God in the presence of a priest, and receive the assurance of pardon and the grace of absolution (John 21:15–19).
 - Unction is anointing the sick with oil, or the laying on of hands, by which God's grace is given for the healing of spirit, mind, and body (Js 5:14).
 - God does not limit himself to these rites; they are patterns of countless ways by which God uses material things to reach out to us. Sacraments sustain our present hope and anticipate its future fulfillment.