

05 - Introduction to the Sacraments

“Wisdom has built her house, she has hewn out her seven pillars.” (Proverbs 9:1)
Christ has built His Church, He has hewn out her seven sacraments.

Definitions

- Mystery: μυστήριον (Greek) - "Revealed Secret"
 - Something not understood or beyond understanding, a religious truth that one can know only by revelation and cannot fully understand
 - Seven Mysteries: Channels by which we receive the grace and blessings of the Holy Spirit, and were instituted by the Lord Jesus Christ
- Sacrament: *sacramentum* (Latin) - "Consecration"
 - When the Church started to speak Latin, the word μυστήριον was translated to the Latin *sacramentum*
 - It was used to describe the sacred Christian ceremonies (e.g. baptism, Eucharist, etc.) that served as visible signs of an invisible, divine grace
- The Holy Mysteries serve as visible signs of an invisible divine grace

Visible Sign, Invisible Grace

- To a materialist: a mountain is a mountain; the sunset is the sun setting
- To a poet, artist, or saint: a mountain tells the power of God; the sunset tells of His beauty
- A spoken word
 - Visible: sounds that were uttered
 - Invisible: meaning behind the word
- A joke
 - Visible: words are there, anyone can hear them
 - Invisible: only someone who understands the joke will find it funny
 - If a horse heard the joke, he would hear the words, but would not laugh! He only gets the visible part
- A handshake
 - Visible: two hands touching and shaking... it can be seen and felt
 - Invisible: the communication of friendship; or the communication of agreement
- A kiss
 - Visible: it is physical and visible
 - Invisible: the affection and the love behind it
 - This is why Christ asked Judas: "are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?"
- do you use the sign of affection to betray?
- The Bronze Serpent

- “Then the Lord said to Moses, “Make a fiery serpent, and set it on a pole; and it shall be that everyone who is bitten, when he looks at it, shall live.” So Moses made a bronze serpent, and put it on a pole; and so it was, if a serpent had bitten anyone, when he looked at the bronze serpent, he lived.” (Numbers 21:8-9)
- Visible: Bronze Serpent
- Invisible: Healing
- Invisible Level 2: Typology
 - Another layer of invisible here is not revealed until the Lord speaks to Nicodemus in John 3
 - “And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.” (John 3:14-15)
 - The Bronze Serpent looked like the serpents that had bit them - just as Christ, being Crucified with the guilty (sin), would look guilty (sin). But really He is without guilt (sin) as the Bronze Serpent was without venom
 - The Bronze Serpent looked like the serpents that brought death - just as Christ died. But really the bronze serpent brought life, just as Christ came back alive
 - The serpents were conquered by a serpent, as death was conquered by Death.

Sacraments & the Nature of Christ

“And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness:

God was manifested in the flesh,
Justified in the Spirit,
Seen by angels,
Preached among the Gentiles,
Believed on in the world,
Received up in glory.”

(1 Timothy 3:16)

- Christ's Nature is:
 - Divine and Human united in One Nature
 - Eternal and Temporal united
 - Invisible and Visible united
- Why did He take flesh and become man?
 - Because we are man
 - If we were angels or spirits, He would not take flesh to save us, but because we are composed of matter, so He took matter.
- In the same way, because we are composed of Matter, the Holy Spirit works through matter and the material world in the Sacraments to confer the immaterial grace

Sacraments

- Requirements for a Sacrament
 1. Instituted by Christ
 2. Outward Sign (Visible)
 3. Conferred Grace (Invisible)
- Efficacy of a Sacrament
 - “He [The Holy Spirit] will take of what is Mine [Christ] and declare it to you.” (John 16:14)
 - Christ's Passion, Death and Resurrection
 - The Work of the Holy Spirit
 - **Sacraments cannot be separated from the work of God**
- Prefigured in the Old Testament
 - There is Christological Typology - types of the Cross, Resurrection, etc.
 - There is also Sacramental Typology - types of Baptism, Chrismation, Eucharist, etc.

Validity of a Sacrament

1. Canonically Ordained Orthodox Priest to Administer
 - Authority given by the laying of hands
 - Acts as an agent of God by the power of the Holy Spirit
 - “Neither do we the laity perform any of the offices belonging to the priesthood; as, for instance, neither the sacrifice (Eucharist), nor baptism, nor the laying on of the hands (Priesthood), nor the blessing, whether the smaller or the greater: for “no one takes this honor to himself, but he that is called of God.” [Heb. 5:12] For such sacred offices are conferred by the laying on of the hands of the Bishop. But a person to whom such an office is not committed, but he seizes upon it for himself, he shall undergo the punishment of Uzziah. (2 Chronicles 26:19-21)” (Apostolic Constitutions Section 7, X)
2. Proper Ritual: Method & Material
 - Baptism: Water, Oil
 - Confirmation: Myron Oil
 - Eucharist: Bread, Wine
3. Invocation of the Holy Spirit
 - Liturgical Prayers that accompany the Sacraments

The Seven Mysteries (Sacraments)

1. Baptism
2. Confirmation
3. Repentance & Confession
4. Eucharist
5. Matrimony
6. Unction of the Sick
7. Priesthood

Redemptive vs. Non-Redemptive

- These can be split into redemptive and non-redemptive.
- Redemptive Sacraments are necessary for the salvation of a believer:
 1. Baptism
 2. Confirmation
 3. Repentance & Confession
 4. Eucharist
- Non-Redemptive Sacraments are not necessary for the salvation of a believer, and not all believers will receive them:
 1. Matrimony
 2. Unction of the Sick
 3. Priesthood

Preventative, Curative, Supplementary

- Physical Healing has three types of medicine
 - Preventative (e.g. vaccination)
 - Curative (e.g. medicine prescribed after a diagnosis)
 - Supplementary (e.g. vitamins to give energy, immunity, strengthen the body, etc.)
- Same with the Mysteries
 - Preventative
 - Chrismation
 - Matrimony
 - Curative
 - Baptism
 - Repentance & Confession
 - Eucharist
 - Unction of the Sick
 - Supplementary
 - Eucharist
 - Priesthood

Repeatable vs. Non-Repeatable

Certain Church Sacraments are performed with an imperishable feature and must not be performed again

- Baptism
- Confirmation
- Matrimony
- Priesthood

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