

Saint Thomas the Apostle Parish
Religious Education Office
203 East Avenue
Norwalk, CT 06855
Tel: (203) 866 1189
<http://stthomasnorwalk.org>

Confirmation Class. Lesson No. 2; March 9, 2021 Handout No. 2

Dear Students,

It is rather self-explanatory to us - as people of the CATHOLIC faith that Jesus, in addition to the STORY ABOUT HIS LIFE and the GOOD NEWS he himself preached, that we can read on the pages of 4 CANONICAL GOSPELS, Christ also left us a very specific CODE of LIFE to follow, called **GOSPEL TEACHING**; and the MODE, WAY, ROUTINE, and EXPAMPLE that we should follow as we CELEBRATE the mysteries of our FAITH.

The most basic way to distinguish some of the RULES Jesus has left for us, to see how He Himself operated and wanted us to follow in the same way of operation; is to find out and understand the SACRAMENTS of the Church. In 7 SIMPLE WAYS, Jesus asked His Apostles, Disciples, and anyone who would like to be His follower, to practice, deepen, and share their FAITH in Him. We call these 7 WAYS of following – or being IN TOUCH with Jesus – SACRAMENTS.

The most basic definition of any given SACRAMENT can be understood in this or a similar way:

- A Sacrament is a **VISIBLE SIGN** of **INVISIBLE GRACE** that Jesus instituted for us and freely shares with us when we practice (RECEIVE) any of the Sacraments
- In other words: a Sacrament is an **OUTWARD SIGN** of **INWARD GRACE** established by Christ Jesus for us.

We can follow a simple division of 7 SACRAMENTS into:

- Sacraments of **CHRISTIAN INITIATION** (Baptism, Eucharist, and Confirmation)
- Sacraments of **HEALING** (Confession and Anointing of the Sick)
- Sacraments of **Christian Service** (Matrimony and Holy Orders)

Each of the Sacraments can be looked at individually, yet in general they all share some of the same very basic features and concepts;

According to Saint Thomas Aquinas (a great middle ages Saint, that systematized – put together – all the aspects and practical applications of our faith in God and Jesus) the Sacraments may be described in terms of their **matter and form**.

The idea is deeply rooted in PHILOSOPHICAL DISTINCTIONS that help us to understand the UNIVERSE (our surroundings) better; thus, for example, the *matter* for Baptism is water; the *matter* for the Eucharist is the bread and wine. The *form* of a sacrament consists of the words by which the Sacrament is effected.

Thus, Saint Thomas held that the form of Penance was "I absolve you. The term "matter" should be taken broadly to mean that which underlies the sacrament in a manner similar to the way in which matter underlies substance. Thus, the three acts of the penitent are taken to be the matter of Penance: repenting of one's sins, confessing them in words, and doing the penance assigned.

Secondly the form of a sacrament may take significantly different forms in different churches. Thus, for example, though Saint Thomas held the form of Confirmation to be "I sign you with the sign of the cross..." the Byzantine Rite uses the form "The sign of the seal of the Holy Spirit." The above are just very general explanations of the reality of what we call – SACRAMENTS – and in a more detailed way, we distinguish Matter and Form in each of the Sacraments:

- Each has its own specific **MATTER (substance)** and **FORM (how that substance is received, realized)**
- Each is ADMINISTERED by a specific Person (Baptism – anyone, Confession: Priest only, Confirmation: Bishop, etc.)
- Some can be administered (Received) only ONCE (Baptism, Confirmation, Holy Orders)
- Some can be repeated thru our lifetime (Confession, Communion, Anointing of the Sick, Matrimony)

Detailed Explanation:

| SACRAMENT | MATTER | FORM |
|-----------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|
| Baptism | Water | Words (Trinitarian) |
| Penance | Sins | Words (Absolution) |
| Eucharist | Bread and Wine | Words (Consecration) |
| Confirmation | Oil (Sacred Chrism) | Words (Be sealed ...) |
| Matrimony | Exchange (Wedding vows) | Man and Woman |
| Holy Orders | Laying on of hands | Words (Bishop's) |
| Anointing of the Sick | Oil (of the Sick) | Words (healing prayer) |

Please, always remember, that the FORM of each of the 7 SACRAMENTS (which are usually WORDS of prayer) are accompanied by the **INVOCATION (calling upon the presence) of the Holy Spirit!!!!**