18 - Sacraments of Initiation

I. Sacraments of Christian Initiation

A. Baptism

B. Confirmation

C. Eucharist

D. by reception of these three sacraments that a person is fully received into communion with the Church and is made a partaker in the divine life of Christ.

1. Baptism and Confirmation are unrepeatable and give the recipient an indelible mark.

2. The Eucharist, will be discussed in more detail later.

II. Baptism

A. The word “baptize” means to plunge or immerse

1. the “plunge” into the water symbolizes the catechumen’s burial into Christ’s death

2. from which he rises up with Him as a “new creation”

B. prefigured several places in the Old Testament

1. In creation, where water was overshadowed by the Holy Spirit (Gen.1:2)

2. In the Flood of Noah, where he and his family “were saved through water” (1 Pet. 3:20).

3. In the crossing of the Israelites through the Red Sea, where the people were set free from slavery and the Egyptians were washed away (Ex. 14).

4. In the crossing of the Jordan River by the Israelites, where the People of God entered into the Promised Land, an image of eternal life (Jos. 3).

5. The cleansing of Naaman the Syrian in the River Jordan (2 Kings 5:14).

C. The Baptism of Christ

1. Christ Himself says that He submits to baptism to “fulfill all righteousness” (Matt. 3:15).

2. It is a manifestation of His self-emptying and identification with humanity, which stands in need of God’s grace and forgiveness (CCC 1224). Similarly, he was circumcised according to the precepts of the Mosaic Law, even though circumcision symbolized a cutting off of sin, which Jesus did not have.

3. It inaugurates His messianic mission, wherein He is anointed by the Spirit for His ministry (Luke 4:16-20). See also: CCC 536

4. In His baptism, Christ sacramentally sanctifies the waters for us, prefiguring the baptism He was to later inaugurate.

5. His baptism reveals what occurs spiritually every time a Christian is baptized. When we come to the Holy Font, the heavens are opened, the Spirit descends, and the Father pronounces, “You are my beloved son.”

D. Baptism is often called the door to the other sacraments and is the first sacrament a Catholic receives.

1. It washes away all sin original and actual

2. It is also the reception of a Christian into fellowship with the Church. In the loosest sense, a Christian can be identified as anyone who has been baptized.

E. The matter of baptism is water; the form is the words “I baptize you….”

F. For a valid baptism, the water must come in contact with the body

1. Immersion

2. Aspersion (sprinkling)

3. Affusion (pouring-on)

a. This threefold immersion is a symbol of the Three Persons of the Trinity

b. as well as the three days of Christ in the grave.

G. Spiritual Effects of Baptism

1. The initial grace of justification (sanctifying grace) is given to us

2. Baptism effects the remission of all sin, original and actual.

3. Baptism also remits all of the temporal punishments due to sin.

4. Baptism also gives man a right to those special graces which are necessary for attaining the end for which the sacrament was instituted and for enabling him to fulfill the baptismal promises as well as infuses within him the supernatural virtues of faith, hope and charity.

5. Baptism incorporates one into the Church, the Body of Christ, and gives him a spiritual bond with all of the other baptized, whether they be on earth, in heaven, or in a state of purification.

H. The ordinary minister of baptism is a bishop, priest or deacon

III. The Sacrament of Confirmation

A. Baptism and Confirmation are related

B. The Sacrament of Confirmation is associated with the giving of the Holy Spirit

C. The apostles, in fulfillment of Christ’s will, imparted to the newly baptized by the laying on of hands the gift of the Spirit that completes the grace of Baptism

D. In addition to the laying on of hands, sacred oil (chrism) was very early on added to the rite in order to better highlight the name “Christian,” which means “anointed.”

E. Effects of Confirmation

1. an outpouring of the Holy Spirit in a special way

From this fact, Confirmation brings an increase and deepening of baptismal grace:

a. It roots us more deeply in the Divine Sonship.

b. It unites us more firmly to Christ.

c. It increases the gifts of the Holy Spirit in us.

d. It renders our bond with the Church more perfect.

e. It gives us a special strength of the Holy Spirit to spread and defend the Faith

2. Like Baptism, it confers an indelible spiritual mark

3. It perfects the common priesthood of the faithful.

F. Any baptized person who has not already been Confirmed can be Confirmed

G. One must be in a state of grace to receive Confirmation and should have first made a sacramental confession

H. The Minister of the Sacrament is the Bishop (fullness)

I. Biblical References to the Sacrament of Confirmation

1. Act 8:14-17: after the Samaritan converts had been baptized by Philip the deacon, the Apostles "sent unto them Peter and John, who, when they were come, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost…”

2. Acts 19:1-6: St. Paul "came to Ephesus, and found certain disciples; and he said to them: Have you received the Holy Ghost since ye believed…Having heard these things, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had imposed his hands on them, the Holy Ghost came upon them…"

3. 1John 2:20, 27: "Let the unction [chrisma], which you have received from him, abide in you."

4. Hebrews 6:1-4: "leaving the word of the beginning of Christ, let us go on to things more perfect, not laying again the foundation . . . of the doctrine of baptisms, and imposition of hands…”

5. 2 Cor. 1:20, 21: "He that confirmeth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God, who also hath sealed us, and given us the pledge of the Spirit in our hearts…"