

Introduction to the Sacraments

Lesson 17 Summary

Lesson Learning Objectives

- The participants will recognize signs, symbols, and rituals and understand their importance in the Sacraments.
- The participants will be introduced to the Seven Sacraments.

Content Summary

1. A sign refers to an object that represents something else. A simple sign has a direct and unmistakable connection to the reality it represents.
2. The word *symbol* is based on a Greek word meaning “to throw together or compare.” So to think symbolically means to take something concrete and throw it together with something else that exists on an invisible or abstract level.
3. Rituals are symbols that include actions and words. A short definition of a *ritual* is “a symbolic action.” Like other symbols, rituals are actions that have a deeper meaning than what immediately meets the eye.
4. Some of the symbols used in the Sacraments receive their meaning from salvation history.
5. Some symbols are universal—that is, they seem to carry the same meaning no matter where or when you live. Usually these are symbols associated with nature.
6. A Sacrament is not simply a human-made symbol or ritual. In a Sacrament, Jesus himself acts in and through the ritual, offering new life, forgiving sins, giving his own body and blood, healing, uniting, consecrating. So a Sacrament does more than just symbolize a spiritual reality—it actually makes that spiritual reality present at the place and time the Sacrament is celebrated.
7. Grace is the religious name we give to the free and undeserved gifts we receive from God. Grace is the experience we have of being loved as a child of God and empowers us to live lives of love in service to God and others.
8. The seven official Sacraments of the Catholic Church are rooted in two things: (1) the life and ministry of Jesus Christ, and (2) the Tradition of the Catholic Church—the Church’s wisdom, teaching, and practice handed down through the ages under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.
9. Sacramentals are symbols and rituals related to the Sacraments but established by the Church rather than by Christ.

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