

## Article 9

# Sacraments: Signs of Redemption

We do not often use the word *redeem* in ordinary life, but it has its moments. We *redeem* coupons at a store. We might say something like, “This old table was *redeemed* from the scrap heap,” or “This afternoon I am going to the dry cleaner to *redeem* my shirts.” What can we learn from these uses of the word *redeem*?

Generally, we can say that to *redeem* something implies taking something from one state of being to another. A coupon is just another piece of paper until we *redeem* it and get some value in return. An old table is doomed until someone with a good eye *redeems* it and makes it useful and valuable again. Shirts will stay at the dry cleaner forever unless their owner comes and *redeems* them—gets them back to his closet where they belong.



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Have you ever purchased a raffle ticket? If you have the winning ticket drawn in a raffle, you have to redeem your ticket for the prize. Redemption can have deeper meanings as well, such as buying back, deliverance, or rescue.

## CATHOLICS MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Not all saints were originally saint material! [Saint Augustine](#) was born to his mother, Monica, a devout Christian, and his father, Patricius, a pagan, Roman official. Augustine lived his life as a testament to pagan beliefs and practices of excess. He admitted to stealing food, not because he was hungry, but because it was forbidden. He confessed to enjoying the sinful behavior. Much to his mother's distress, he continued to live a lifestyle of hedonism and sexual impropriety. He was incredibly bright, and his thirst for knowledge led him to commit himself to a variety of philosophical and heretical groups. His mother prayed every day for his conversion of heart and lifestyle. During this time, he took a lover and had an illegitimate son. Under pressure to marry, he abandoned them and fled to Milan. Monica never stopped praying for Augustine's redemption. Her prayers were answered when he came under the tutelage of Ambrose. He eventually converted to Christianity at the age of thirty-one, and went on to become a priest, a bishop, and an author! You can read his own account of struggle and redemption in his autobiography, *Confessions*.



### To Buy Back

The word *redeem* comes from a Latin word meaning “to buy back” or “to purchase.” Meanings for the word *redemption* include “deliverance” or “rescue.” At the time of Jesus, this is what many of the People of God were looking for. They were a conquered people, being ruled by the Romans. Faithful Jews were awaiting the Messiah who would deliver them from their oppression. It was at this time that God chose to send his Son into the world as its rescuer, its deliverer, and its redeemer, not just for the Jews but for all people.

As Jesus himself said, he did not come to destroy the Old Law but to fulfill it. When people were tithing their harvests of herbs and spices to give one tenth to the Temple, as the Law directed, he did not object. He commended them. But he also warned them not to neglect the bigger things, like mercy and fidelity. Jesus accused the leaders of being blind guides who were straining out gnats but swallowing camels (see Matthew 23:23–24)! In the New Law, Jesus gives us the grace of the Holy Spirit to reform our hearts to love as he does and to carry out God's commandments.

The People of God at the time of Jesus definitely needed **redemption**. They needed to be brought back to the truth about God and about themselves and into a graced relationship with God, freed from the burden of sin. So that was the mission of Jesus: to conquer sin and death, to redeem his people, and to bring them back to God, in freedom and in truth.

## What About Us?

Are love and faithfulness gaining ground in our time, in our lives? Are we concentrating on the bigger things in our lives and in our world? Or are we straining out gnats while swallowing camels? You may have heard the saying “Don’t sweat the small stuff.” Keep the bigger picture—what life is really about—in mind. How are you doing on that?

Fortunately for us, the teachings of Jesus and his work of redemption did not die in the tomb. His work of redemption reaches people of all times and all places.

The Paschal Mystery (the Passion, death, Resurrection, and Ascension of Jesus Christ) is a real, historical event; its saving power transcends history, making Christ’s saving work available to all people throughout all time. When Christ rose from the dead, he destroyed death. He conquered sin. His saving power is available to us in our time, especially in the liturgy and the sacraments. And that is not all. When we participate in the liturgy, we are given a participation in his divine, eternal life. Christ invites us to experience a small foretaste of Heaven, made present in the liturgy. ✱

# HMMMMMM...

What do you need to be redeemed or delivered from?

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**redemption** ► From the Latin *redemptio*, meaning “a buying back,” referring, in the Old Testament, to Yahweh’s deliverance of Israel and, in the New Testament, to Christ’s deliverance of all Christians from the forces of sin. As the agent of redemption, Jesus is called the Redeemer.

4. **Direct** the students to take notes. Conclude with the following points:

- Now you have a helpful overview of the Seven Sacraments of the Church. As we approach a more detailed study of the sacraments, you will be able to use this chart in the same way a contractor uses a blueprint to construct a building. Keep this chart so that you can refer to it when you need a quick reference.
- As we move forward, remember the following ideas. You should take notes.
  - Jesus Christ is the primary sacrament. The Seven Sacraments originate in Christ and all convey his presence.
  - Because the sacraments actually make Christ present to us, God’s redemptive love is made visible through our participation in the sacraments.
  - We celebrate the sacraments because they are efficacious signs of grace. That means they really work; they have a real and positive effect on us, making us holy and freeing us from sin.
  - Grace isn’t something that you “get,” but a relationship that God enables us to develop with him.



LEARNING EXPERIENCE 9 (Chapter 2)

**The Meaning of Redemption: A Matter of Unconditional Love**

Lead the students to better understand our human need for redemption and our need of the sacraments as signs of redemption. (U2, Q2, K8, K9, S12, S13)

1. **Prepare** by ensuring that all the students have read article 9 in the student book prior to this learning experience. Photocopy or download and print the handouts “The Meaning of Redemption: A Matter of Unconditional Love (Part 1)” (TX006770), on page 56, and “The Meaning of Redemption: A Matter of Unconditional Love (Part 2)” (TX006771), on page 57, one of each for each student. Be sure to collect several different kinds of coupons, lottery tickets, or any type of voucher or claim ticket, and have them available for the students to look at.

2. **Display** to the class the redemption coupons you have brought, and begin a discussion with this prompt:

➤ What does *redeem* mean?

Briefly discuss what can be redeemed with the various kinds of coupons and vouchers you brought. Read the following sentences that all use a form of the word *redeem*:

Chapter 2: Sacraments 49

UNIT 1

Article 9  
Sacraments: Signs of Redemption

We do not often use the word *redeem* in ordinary life, but it has its moments. We *redeem* coupons at a store. We might say something like, “This old table was *redeemed* from the scrap heap,” or “This afternoon I am going to the dry cleaner to *redeem* my shirts.” What can we learn from these uses of the word *redeem*?

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Have you ever purchased a coffee ticket? If you have the winning ticket down in a coffee, you have to *redeem* your ticket for the prize. *Redemptions* can have deep meanings as well, such as buying back, deliverance, or rescue.

Article 9



56

Sacraments and God’s Grace

Name \_\_\_\_\_

UNIT 1

**The Meaning of Redemption: A Matter of Unconditional Love (Part 1)**

The following survey provides an opportunity for you to identify some areas of your life that you feel you need help to improve. Part 1 of this exercise is strictly personal; however, your reflections will help you with the group exercise that follows in part 2. Please do not mark in the box that best describes how you feel about each statement.

I need help with . . .	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Uncure	Agree	Strongly Agree
believing that I am an intelligent person					
doing my best in school					
expressing respect clearly					
making friends					
getting respect from my peers					
getting respect from adults					
feeling good about my appearance					
showing my love and affection to others					
being myself					
treating my friends better					
respecting my body					
dealing with social issues					
treating people					
loving others as they deserve					
depending on God more for help					

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57

Sacraments and God’s Grace

Name \_\_\_\_\_

UNIT 1

**The Meaning of Redemption: A Matter of Unconditional Love (Part 2)**

Discuss the following questions:

- Do you believe that love is gaining ground in our time? Give evidence for your answer.
- Describe anything you have experienced or read about that you believe has added or contrasted to life love or faithfulness.
- Describe anything you have experienced or read about that has nurtured love or faithfulness.
- If Jesus were in this room, inviting you to request anything you need to make the world a more loving and faithful place, what would you ask for?
- Do you think we need God’s presence and help to positively change the world?
- Do you think that you are in need of redemption? Explain. (Do not feel obliged to share personal information.)

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- Here are some common examples of the way we use the word *redeem*:
  - The exciting ending partially *redeemed* what was otherwise a boring movie.
  - He is working on *redeeming* his reputation.
  - You can *redeem* this coupon at any store that accepts credit cards.
  - This voucher can be *redeemed* for a free meal at several restaurants.
  - The company *redeemed* some of its stock.

Invite the students to answer the following question:

- Can you think of other ways this word is used?

By the end of this brief exercise, make sure the students know that the word *redeem* literally means “to buy back” something. If a student says, “Jesus redeemed us,” invite the students to ponder this question:

- How is the notion that Jesus redeemed us similar to or different from other ways the word *redeem* is used?

Briefly sum up the students’ most insightful comments, and be sure to include the following point:

- Jesus redeems us to bring us back into a graced relationship with God, freed from the burden of sin.

3. **Distribute** the handouts. Use this exercise to guide the students to become more conscious of the human need for redemption. Have the students complete part 1 in silence. Consider playing instrumental music as they work. You can have them complete part 2 as a class or in small groups.
4. **Comment** on part 1, after the students have completed it, using these or similar words:
  - If you agreed or strongly agreed with a number of these items, you are like most people. This brief exercise helps to remind us that none of us is self-sufficient; we are all in need of redemption. Now we will discuss the questions in part 2 of the exercise as a class (or in small groups).
5. **Conclude** the discussion by asking the students the following questions:
  - Do you believe our world is in need of redemption?
  - Do you believe you need redemption?

Continue in these or similar words:

- We profess that Jesus continues to be with us, to walk with us on the journey of life, through the sacraments. In faith, we believe that Jesus has redeemed us through our Baptism. And we also believe that Jesus’ presence and unconditional love continues to redeem us in the Eucharist. Finally, in faith we also believe that Christ will redeem us and carry us to our eternal home.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

## The Meaning of Redemption: A Matter of Unconditional Love (Part 1)

The following survey provides an opportunity for you to identify some areas of your life that you feel you need help to improve. Part 1 of this exercise is strictly personal; however, your reflections will help you with the group exercise that follows in part 2. Place a check mark in the box that best describes how you feel about each statement.

I need help with . . .	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Unsure	Agree	Strongly Agree
believing that I am an intelligent person.					
doing my best in school.					
expressing myself clearly.					
making friends.					
gaining respect from my peers.					
gaining respect from adults.					
feeling good about my appearance.					
showing my love and affection to others.					
liking myself.					
treating my friends better.					
respecting my body.					
dealing with sexual issues.					
trusting people.					
loving others as they deserve.					
depending on God more for help.					



## *Sacraments and God's Grace*

Name \_\_\_\_\_

# **The Meaning of Redemption: A Matter of Unconditional Love (Part 2)**

Discuss the following questions:

- Do you believe that love is gaining ground in our time? Give evidence for your answer.
- Describe anything you have experienced or read about that you believe has stifled or continues to stifle love or faithfulness.
- Describe anything you have experienced or read about that has nurtured love or faithfulness.
- If Jesus were in this room, inviting you to request anything you need to make the world a more loving and faithful place, what would you ask for?
- Do you think we need God's presence and help to positively change the world?
- Do you think that you are in need of redemption? Explain. (Do not feel obliged to share personal information.)

