

The Sacraments and the Office of the Keys

How do we decide what is a Sacrament?

- It must have been commanded by Jesus.
- It must have some physical means.
- It must have the promise of forgiveness of sins in the Bible.

Catechism:

IV. The Sacrament of Holy Baptism, as the Head of the Family Should Teach It In a Simple Way to His Household.

First.

What is Baptism? - Answer.

Baptism is not simple water only, but it is the water comprehended in God's command and connected with God's Word.

Which is that word of God? - Answer.

*Christ our Lord says in the last chapter of Matthew:
Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. [Matthew 28:19]*

Secondly.

What does Baptism give or profit? - Answer.

It works forgiveness of sins, delivers from death and the devil, and gives eternal salvation to all who believe this, as the words and promises of God declare.

Which are such words and promises of God? - Answer.

Christ, our Lord, says in the last chapter of Mark: He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.

Thirdly.

How can water do such great things? - Answer.

It is not the water indeed that does them, but the word of God which is in and with the water, and faith, which trusts such word of God in the water. For without the word of God the water is simple water and no baptism. But with the word of God it is a baptism, that is, a gracious water of life and a washing of regeneration in the Holy Ghost, as St. Paul says, Titus, chapter three: By the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which He shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ, our Savior, that, being justified by His grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life. This is a faithful saying.

Fourthly.

What does such baptizing with water signify? - Answer.

It signifies that the old Adam in us should, by daily contrition and repentance, be drowned and die with all sins and evil lusts, and, again, a new man daily come forth and arise; who shall live before God in righteousness and purity forever.

Where is this written? - Answer.

St. Paul says Romans, chapter 6: We are buried with Christ by Baptism into death, that, like as He was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

Kolb: pp. 215-27 Kinnaman: pp. 135-38

Two things are necessary for a true baptism:

- Putting water on the person, either just on the head or even totally under water
- Say the words, "I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit."

Usually, baptism is done by a pastor in a church. However, when necessary, any Christian can do it. It usually is done in front of other people so that everyone knows it has happened.

Why do we baptize?:

- Because Jesus told us to do it. (Mat 28:19, Mk 16:16, Acts 1:5)
- Because baptism "works forgiveness of sins, delivers from death and the devil, and gives eternal salvation." (Rom 6:3-4)
- Because baptism makes us part of God's church. (I Cor 12:13)
- Because through baptism we receive the Holy Spirit into our hearts and lives. (Mat 3:11, Titus 3:5, I Cor 12:13)
- Because through baptism God accepts us as His sons and daughters. (Gal 4:6-7)

Through baptism, then, we receive three great gifts from God:

- We know who we are. We are children of God. No matter what other people say about us or about our people, we know who we are in God's eyes.
- We know God is with us always. He will never leave us because He has accepted us into His family, now and forever. We need never be afraid, either in life or in death.
- We know God will always forgive us and hear our prayers. He is our loving Father in heaven. That is why in the Lord's Prayer, we say: "Our Father Who art in heaven"

Our baptism also gives us a great responsibility. Since everyone knows that we say we are children of God, we want to live as real children of God. Just as earthly children want to be like their parents, we want to be like our heavenly Father. We want to be loving like He is.

When a boy or girl does bad things, people think badly about their parents. When a Christian does bad things, people think badly about Jesus. We are given the name of “Christ” (“Christian”) when we are baptized. We want our life to help people think well of Jesus.

Luther advised that we remember our baptism each day when we wake up from sleep. Our baptism reminds us of God’s promises to us as His children. Our baptism reminds us of our responsibilities as His children. We start out our day in His Name.

What difference would it make in your life if you lived each day remembering your baptism?

Catechism:

The Sacrament of the Altar

As the head of the family should teach it in a simple way to his household.

What is the Sacrament of the Altar?

It is the true body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, under the bread and wine, for us Christians to eat and to drink, instituted by Christ Himself.

Where is this written?

The holy Evangelists, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and St. Paul, write thus:

Our Lord Jesus Christ, the same night in which He was betrayed, took bread: and when He had given thanks, He brake it, and gave it to His disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is My body, which is given for you. This do in remembrance of Me.

After the same manner also He took the cup, when He had supped, gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Take, drink ye all of it. This cup is the new testament in My blood, which is shed for you for the remission of sins. This do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of Me.

What is the benefit of such eating and drinking?

That is shown us in these words: *Given, and shed for you, for the remission of sins*; namely, that in the Sacrament forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation are given us through these words. For where there is forgiveness of sins, there is also life and salvation.

How can bodily eating and drinking do such great things?

It is not the eating and drinking, indeed, that does them, but the words which stand here, namely: *Given, and shed for you, for the remission of sins*. Which words are, beside the bodily eating and

drinking, as the chief thing in the Sacrament; and he that believes these words has what they say and express, namely, the forgiveness of sins.

Who, then, receives such Sacrament worthily?

Fasting and bodily preparation is, indeed, a fine outward training; but he is truly worthy and well prepared who has faith in these words: *Given, and shed for you, for the remission of sins.*

But he that does not believe these words, or doubts, is unworthy and unfit; for the words *For you* require altogether believing hearts.

Kolb: pp. 228-43 Kinnaman: pp. 160-63

Do you believe in miracles? The Lord's Supper (also called "Holy Communion" or "The Eucharist") is a miracle. A miracle is something that happens by the power of God alone. In the Lord's Supper, God comes to us through the bread and the wine.

Jesus said, "This is My Body.... This is my Blood." As Luther said, "Under the bread and wine," Jesus comes in His Body and Blood. No man can do this. Only God can.

In the Lord's Supper, God does something else only He can do. He forgives us our sins, as Jesus said when He began the Lord's Supper: "Given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins."

Through the Lord's Supper, God comes to each of us directly:

- He comes into our body.
- He comes into our soul.
- He comes into our spirit.
- He comes into our personal life.

When they give us the bread and the wine, they say "The Body of Christ given for you." "The Blood of Christ shed for you." We can feel Jesus coming to us in our body.

Each of the titles given to this Sacrament has a special meaning:

- "Lord's Supper" means it is Jesus Who invites us. He wants to give Himself to us through the bread and wine. He wants to give us "forgiveness of sins, life and salvation." We love to receive His invitation.
- "The Eucharist" comes from a Greek word meaning to "rejoice, give thanks." Coming to the Sacrament is a time of great joy and giving thanks. We leave the altar with a smile on our face because Jesus has once again given us "forgiveness of sins, life and salvation."

- “Holy Communion” reminds us that this Sacrament is a holy communion with Jesus. It is also a communion with other Christians. It is even a communion with those who are already in heaven, at table with Jesus. (Mat 26:29) Taking the bread and the wine is indeed a holy time.
- “Sacrament of the Altar” reminds us that there are two Sacraments. The other one is baptism. It is called the “Sacrament of the Font,” since most baptisms take place at a baptismal font in a church. Most Lord’ Supper celebrations take place at an altar. The name Sacrament of the Altar also reminds us of Jesus’ sacrifice of His life on the cross for our sin. Before Christianity, altars were used to sacrifice animals – or even people – in hopes of gaining a god’s forgiveness. Jesus’ altar was His cross. This Sacrament brings us the forgiveness of sin that Jesus won for us, and the altar reminds us of His sacrifice.

Who should go to Communion? Anyone who is baptized and knows they need forgiveness and help from God in their lives. We want to go to receive this blessing from God as often as we can. He wants us to come as often as we can.

How do you feel when you take Holy Communion? Do you feel the joy and thanksgiving that God wants for you?

Catechism:

THE OFFICE OF THE KEYS AND CONFESSION

What is the Office of the Keys?

The Office of the Keys is the special authority which Christ has given to His Church on earth: to forgive the sins of the penitent sinners, but to retain the sins of the impenitent as long as they do not repent.

Where is this written?

The evangelist writes, John 20:22-23: “Jesus breathed on His disciples and said to them, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; and if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.’”

What is Confession?

Confession consists of two parts: one, that we confess our sins; the other, that we receive absolution, or forgiveness, from the pastor or confessor as from God himself, and in no way doubt, but firmly believe that our sins are thereby forgiven before God in heaven.

What sins should we confess?

Before God we should acknowledge ourselves guilty of all sins, even of those which we do not know about, as we do in the Lord's Prayer. But before the pastor or confessor we should acknowledge those sins only which we know and feel in our hearts.

Which are these?

Here consider your own situation according to the Ten Commandments, whether you are a father, mother, son, daughter, employer, employee; whether you have been disobedient, dishonest, lazy; whether you have injured anyone by word or deed; whether you have stolen, neglected, wasted anything, or done any harm.

Kolb: pp. 276-86 Kinnaman: pp. 139-45

When God uses the church to forgive sins, it is called "The Office of the Keys." Keys are used to open locked doors. The word "office" means "authority." When the church uses its authority to forgive sins, here is what "Office of the Keys" means:

- "Keys" = authority
- Door = forgiveness
- Entrance = heaven
- Owner of Entrance = God
- Representative of owner = one trusted to hold keys

God has trusted His Church to forgive sins in a right way.

Why does God ask His Church to do this? Of course, God could forgive sins directly. He does forgive directly whenever anyone asks with a sincere heart. Why does God want to use His Church to do this?

We are physical creatures. We need to hear and see things. When we pray to God for forgiveness, we usually do not hear anything in reply. God wants us to hear His reply. That is why He asks His Church to tell people they are forgiven.

In worship services, this forgiveness is usually announced by the pastor as God's representative to the congregation. However, individual Christians also can be God's representative to forgive sins. If someone comes to ask your forgiveness for a wrong they have done, you can say, "As a representative of God, I forgive your sin in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."

It brings us great comfort to tell someone our sin. We can clear our conscience and hear the words of forgiveness. We gain courage and strength to make a new start in life.

When someone is told these sins in “Private Confession,” they are required to keep those sins secret. Pastors in particular have taken a vow that they will never tell anyone what has been confessed to them.

Usually the words of confession and forgiveness are followed by advice on how to live a better life. Sometimes people will decide how they will make right what they have done wrong. They may decide what good things they might do to make up for what they have done wrong.

The purpose of the Office of the Keys is to help people know they are forgiven and give them strength to lead a new life.

Is there a sin that you need to confess to a representative of God? Do you want that comfort and strength for a new life?