



“How do I get there?”

(The Power and Purpose of the Sacraments)



Opening Prayer

“He entered Jericho and was passing through. And there was a man named Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector, and rich. And he sought to see who Jesus was, but could not, on account of the crowd, because he was small of stature. So he ran on ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him, for he was to pass that way. And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, ‘Zacchaeus, make haste and come down; for I must stay at your house today.’ So he made haste and came down, and received him joyfully. And when they saw it they all murmured, ‘He has gone in to be the guest of a man who is a sinner.’ And Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, ‘Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have defrauded any one of anything, I restore it fourfold.’ And Jesus said to him, ‘Today salvation has come to this house, since he also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of man came to seek and to save the lost.’”

—Luke 19:1-10

Dive In: The Doldrums

For hundreds of years, the world was connected by sailboats. Sailing (or rowing) was the most efficient way to cross the large expanses of sea for travel, trade, or war. Sailboats have one fatal flaw, however, that led to their replacement by motorboats. If there was no wind, there was no movement.

The doldrums is a region stretching around the world's equator that, due to low air pressure, has very calm winds. Sometimes winds disappear entirely, trapping sailors for weeks at a time in the blistering heat.

The doldrums could be a sailor's worst nightmare! In the famous poem, "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner," Samuel Taylor Coleridge described what it was like.

*Day after day, day after day,
We stuck, nor breath nor motion;
As idle as a painted ship
Upon a painted ocean.
Water, water, every where,
And all the boards did shrink;
Water, water, every where,
Nor any drop to drink.*

**"Totally love him, who
gave himself totally for
your love."**

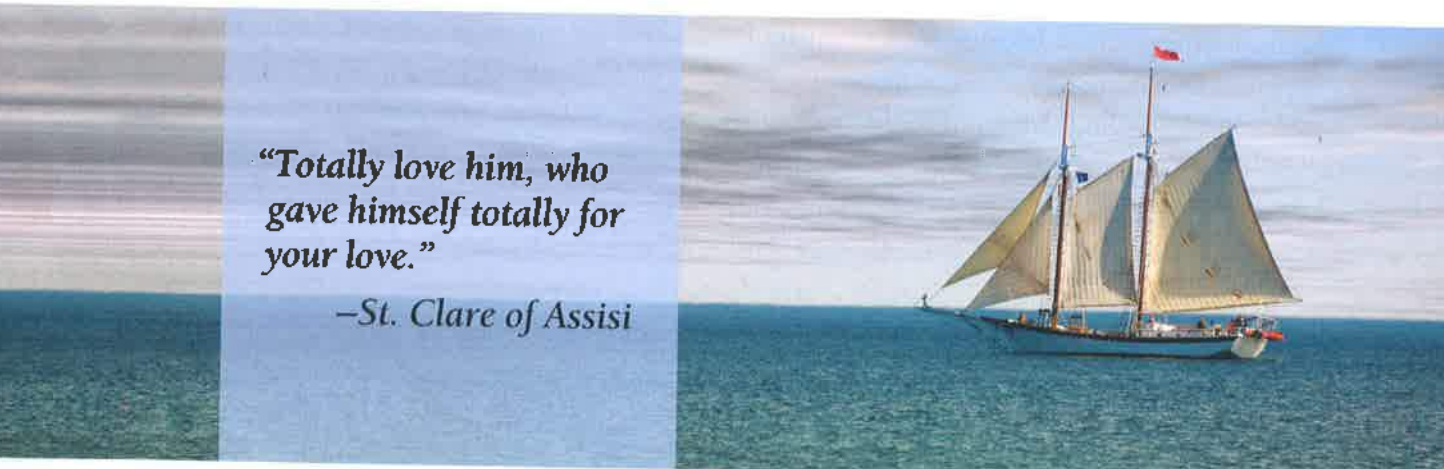
—St. Clare of Assisi

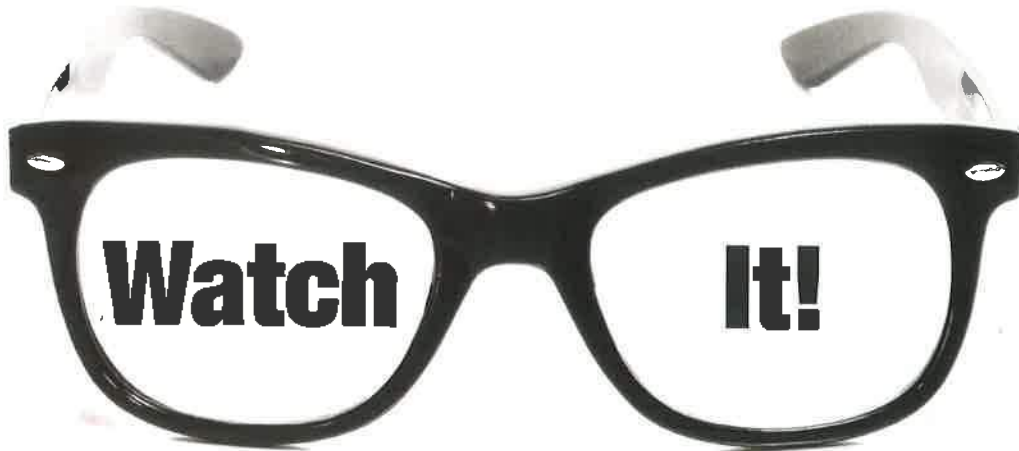
Doldrums could kill a crew if it held them long enough. You could have a million-dollar sailboat and the best-trained crew in the world, but without wind, that sailboat would sit and bob like a buoy.

There are many things that depend on something else to function properly. Cars need gas. No matter how cool its rims are or how high its spoiler, a car without gas is a useless heap of metal. Computers need power. A \$3,000 Mac with all the best software is nothing but an overpriced Frisbee if its battery won't work.

We're like that, too. We need an external "power source" to become who we are meant to be and to fulfill our purpose in life. We need fuel! We need God. We need grace. Grace doesn't just help us to become "religious"; it helps us to function the way God intended.

Today we're going to talk about what grace is and how God gives it to us.





Segment 1: The Gift of Grace

1. The word "grace" comes from the Latin word for _____.
A) power B) gift C) salvation D) holy
2. Through our _____ we become adopted sons and daughters of God.

Segment 2: What Is a Sacrament?

1. The sacraments are efficacious signs, instituted by Christ, entrusted to _____.
2. Like the manna given to the Israelites, Christ gives us the _____.

Segment 3: The Seven Sacraments

1. The three Sacraments of Initiation are Baptism, Confirmation, and the _____.
2. The two Sacraments of Healing are the Anointing of the Sick and _____.
3. The two Sacraments of Service are _____ and Holy Orders.



TO THE HEART with

I took a left and began the drive up the steep hill toward the cathedral. The sky seemed to be higher up than normal. It had been four months since I had last seriously thought about joining the Catholic Church. I wanted to believe; I wanted to be a part of the Church. The problem was that I just didn't believe ... yet.

As I continued the drive up the hill, the dome of the cathedral loomed ahead. A majestic gold cross crowned it and seemed to pull it up higher into the blue sky. "I don't know how to climb up to you!

How do I get to you?" I found myself unexpectedly screaming this prayer inside, quietly, without audible words. My eyes began to water, and for some unknown reason, I pulled into the parking lot and went inside the cathedral.

Not long after this day, I began the formal steps to become a Catholic. This experience of being unable to reach God, however, stayed with me. By our own powers, we cannot even grasp at God. And yet, I wanted to do so much more than grasp; I wanted to tell God "thank you" for the gift of life; I wanted to ask him how I could give my life back to him. I wanted to know God intimately.

In my simplicity and ignorance, I had stumbled upon the reality that without God coming to us, we truly cannot get to him. The sacraments are signs that not only point us where to go, but that bring God directly to us. The sacraments flood us with his

“*The sacraments are signs that not only point us where to go, but that bring God directly to us.*”



life and grace and make tangible and accessible a God who, despite his majesty, or precisely because of it, will not stay away from his children.

I didn't have to find a way to climb up to God; I had to let him climb down to me. I received Baptism, Confirmation, and First Holy Communion in one night. By the grace of the sacraments, I was made a child of God. And yet, the climb and struggle of faith does not just go away in an instant. God knows that we need him physically present to us. This is why in Baptism, veiled in the minister's triple pouring of (or immersion in) water as he says, "I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and

of the Holy Spirit," God enters our souls. This is why in Confirmation, veiled in the sacred chrism oil and the bishop's blessing, the **GIFTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT** are flamed into action in our very souls. And while all the sacraments communicate God's grace, it is in the Eucharist, veiled in bread and wine, that Jesus physically and substantially enters into our bodies and feeds us.

I had longed to know God, to find him, to be with him. The beauty and gift of being a Catholic is that I have come to realize that his longing is greater than my own. He comes down to us in the sacraments so that we may come to him.

Sister Amelia, O.P.

Find It!

What famous painting by Jean-Francois Millet depicts two workers in a field pausing to reflect on the Annunciation—inspiring Vincent van Gogh to portray a similar work decades later?



Hero of the Week



Born:

January 2, 1873

Died:

September 30, 1897

Memorial:

October 1

Patron Saint of:

- missions
- pilots
- AIDS patients
- florists

St. Thérèse of Lisieux

“After my death, I will let fall a shower of roses. I will spend my heaven doing good upon earth. I will raise up

a mighty host of little saints. My mission is to make God loved . . .”

—St. Thérèse of Lisieux

The last words of this young nun, who died of tuberculosis at the age of twenty-three, were prophetic. Today, the “Little Flower” is regarded as both the patron saint of missions and as one of the four women doctors of the Church.

Even as a child, young Thérèse loved roses, plucking them and scattering their petals before the Blessed Sacrament. When she told her dad that she wanted to join the Discalced Carmelites (a community of nuns who devote their entire lives to prayer and who live physically separated from the outside world), he plucked a little flower from the ground and gave it to her. She took it to mean she was going to be replanted somewhere else to grow and thrive.

Convent life was never going to be a source of dramatic adventure for the young woman who wanted to be a saint. Nothing extraordinary was going to happen to her, but she did small things with great love. She saw God’s love and care everywhere in nature and recorded her thoughts in simple yet profound prose. In her autobiography, *The Story of a Soul*, she writes:

“If all flowers wanted to be roses, nature would lose her springtime beauty, and the fields would no longer be decked out with little wild

flowers. So it is in the world of souls, Jesus’ garden. He has created smaller ones and those must be content to be daisies or violets destined to give joy to God’s glances when he looks down at his feet. Perfection consists in doing his will, in being what he wills us to be.”

St. Thérèse of Lisieux believed that simple acts of love and sacrifice not only paved her “little way” of holiness, they helped to save the world! Every slight was an opportunity for humble sacrifice—a smile instead of a scowl, an apology instead of an explanation. She lived every moment, every act, all for the love of God. She knew that God loved her not because she was accomplishing great deeds, but because her small deeds were accomplished with great love.

Her autobiography, *The Story of a Soul*, not only shares the story of her life; it explains in detail her approach to living a sacramental life. The book became a worldwide hit. The young woman who wanted to do small things with great love became a saint who accomplished great things for God along her “little” way.

St. Thérèse of Lisieux, pray for us. Teach us your little way, that we may show our love daily to God who loves us.

Challenge of the Week

- Do something small for God.** Read a child a story from the Bible. Pick up trash around your school or neighborhood. Do an extra chore. (This one works best if you're just a little "sneaky" so no one else notices!) In the space below, describe what you did ... and how it felt.
- Ask God to help you to sincerely forgive someone who has hurt you.** Offer something to God as a spiritual gift for this person's well-being (i.e., extra effort at school and chores, your next Eucharist, or avoiding sweets for the week). In the space below, describe what you did and how you felt.
- Take advantage of the sacraments!** In addition to Sunday Mass, try going to Mass during the week, and take note of the impact this has on your day. Write about it in the space below.

✠ Closing Prayer

"I can do all things in him who strengthens me."

—*Philippians 4:13*

Lord, you strengthen us with your grace through the sacramental life of the Church. In the sacraments, we encounter you in a personal and intimate way and receive a share in your divine life.

Walking with you in this way changes everything, as we begin to see ourselves and our lives more clearly, with greater hope and with a holy joy. Give us the grace to cling to the sacraments all the days of our lives and to become the best people we can be. Amen.

Taking It Home

For next week's "Review Game," be sure to read over the following ...

1. **Watch It!** questions (page 67)
2. **Wrap-Up**
3. **"What's That Word?"**
4. **Memory Verse**

Don't forget to do your **Challenge of the Week** (page 71)

Wrap-Up

When Adam and Eve sinned, the connection they had shared with God was broken. And just as they hid when God wanted to walk in the garden with them,² we often try to hide our brokenness from God and resist his efforts to reach out to us.

God sent Jesus to walk here on earth, proclaiming the kingdom of God and shedding his blood to restore our connection with God. Jesus also established seven sacraments, transforming channels of grace that fill us with his divine life.³ The seven sacraments are Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist, **PENANCE** (Confession), Anointing of the Sick, **HOLY ORDERS**, and **MATRIMONY**.

Now, Jesus didn't establish the sacraments of the Church because God needs rituals, but because

we do. Every culture throughout history—from the jungles of South America to the urban centers of Europe—has had rituals, with ceremonies ranging from burial rites to birthday cakes to social greetings. Something inside us longs for meaningful ritual, which provides a sense of identity and order.

Religious rituals serve a similar purpose in the spiritual world. If, like the angels, we were pure spirits, we would simply worship God with our intellects and wills. However, since we are **SPIRIT** and matter, soul and body, we need to encounter and express unseen realities in tangible, external ways. Our Creator recognizes this, and he meets us where we are through the sacraments he entrusted to the Church.



“What’s That Word?”

GRACE

Grace is God’s gift of his life to us. Without grace, we are spiritually dead and unable to share in the eternal life of heaven. Grace makes it possible to live in the heroic, holy way that God calls us to live; to believe, hope, and love in ways that would otherwise not be available to us. Though we cannot “see” or “feel” grace, we can observe its effects in the lives of holy people, and it is often associated with our own sense of being “really alive.”

The word *grace* comes from the Latin for “gift.” Because grace is a gift, we do not deserve it. God generously bestows his grace on us for our benefit. Anyone who has given a gift only to have it rejected knows that gifts must be received. Grace is not magic; it does not automatically make us holy, but needs to be accepted and cooperated with in order to become effective. (See also **ACTUAL GRACE** and **SANCTIFYING GRACE**.)

SACRAMENT

A *sacrament* is a “sacred sign” that Christ gave to the Church to deliver grace to us, share his divine life with us, and make us holy.⁴ A sacrament includes *matter*, a physical part (for example, water, bread, or oil), and *form*, the accompanying words or prayers that make it effective (for example, “I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit”). The physical sign points to a spiritual presence of grace and its effects. For example, in Baptism, through the triple pouring of (or immersion in) water as the minister says the words, “I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit,” we are really washed clean from sin and God really pours **SUPERNATURAL** life into our souls.

The seven sacraments are Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist, Penance (Confession), Anointing of the Sick, Holy Orders, and Matrimony. (See also **SACRAMENTS OF INITIATION**, **SACRAMENTS OF HEALING**, and **SACRAMENTS OF SERVICE**.)

Memory Verse:



“I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. Every branch of mine that bears no fruit, he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit.”

– John 15:1-2

SALVATION

Salvation is the restoration of our relationship with God. It can be understood in two ways because we are always saved *from* something and saved *for* something. Salvation includes the forgiveness of sin—we are saved from sin and its result, eternal death—and we are saved for life with God here on earth and forever with him in heaven. “Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved” (Mark 16:16, NAB).

God saves us by sharing his life with us, something we call sanctifying grace, when we receive him reverently and worthily in the sacraments.⁵ For this reason, Confirmation is not an ending, but the beginning of a deeper life of faith.

Did You Know?

There are many documented Eucharistic miracles. For example, consecrated hosts stolen in 1730 from a church in Siena, Italy, and later returned, have not decayed for nearly 300 years.⁶

Any questions?

Where are the seven sacraments in the Bible?

The sacraments are gifts from Jesus Christ to his Church. All seven sacraments can be found throughout the Bible. Here are just a few examples.

Anointing of the Sick: The scriptural roots of this sacrament can be traced to James 5:14-15, in which the apostle describes the “prayer of faith” that brings healing and forgiveness.

Baptism: Jesus told his apostles to “make disciples of all nations, baptizing them ...” (Matthew 28:19-20).

Confession (Penance): Jesus says to the apostles, “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained” (John 20:22-23).

Confirmation: Confirmation is described when the apostles laid hands on those who had been baptized, “and they received the Holy Spirit” (Acts 8:14-17).

Eucharist: Jesus instituted this sacrament at the Last Supper.⁷ Evidence that the Eucharist was celebrated from the beginning of the Church is found in 1 Corinthians 11:23-26.

Holy Orders: We find the election of bishops when Matthias is “enrolled with the eleven apostles” (Acts 1:24-26). The ordination of clergy (including deacons) is found in Acts 6:2-6 and 2 Timothy 1:6.

Matrimony: Ephesians 5:25-32 speaks of the “great mystery” (*sacramentum*) of the relationship between Christ and the Church, revealed through **MARRIAGE**.