



## What is a Sacrament

- An outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace given to us, ordained by Christ himself, as a means whereby we receive the same, and a pledge to assure us thereof. (BCP)
- Efficacious signs of grace, instituted by Christ and entrusted to the Church, by which divine life is dispensed to us. (CCC)
- A mystery

## Why Sacraments

- We are embodied creatures living in the world
- God chose to reveal himself to us by sharing in this embodied existence
- God continues to communicate the grace of Christ's presence through actions, words, signs and symbols

## Baptism

- Baptism = 'dipping' (Greek βαπτίζω)
- Dipping (or pouring) water essential part of baptism.
- Water symbolises washing (of sin), death (to sin, and sharing in death of Christ), birth and renewal (sharing in Resurrection)
  - John 3.5 "no one can enter the Kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit"

## Pre-Christian Baptism

- Ritual washing in religion of Israel (and elsewhere)
- Ceremony for reception of proselytes
- Qumran community – baptism following period of preparation
- John the Baptist – baptism for forgiveness of sins
- Disciples of Jesus also performed baptism

## Baptism of Christ

- Christ did not need forgiveness of Sins
  - Fitting 'to fulfil all righteousness'
  - Washing away of Israel's sins
  - Act of humility / self-emptying
- Something else – anointing with Holy Spirit
  - John 1.32 "He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain is the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit"
- Baptism a sharing in death and resurrection of Christ (Romans 6)

### Day of Pentecost

- **Acts 2.37**

Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brethren, what shall we do?"

And Peter said to them, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

- *Note baptism in name of JC. But baptism in name of Trinity in Matt 28.19, and became universal practice of Church*

### Early Practice

- Period of preparation (Catechumenate) taken very seriously
- Baptism at Easter vigil; dark, sense of mystery.
- Candidates descended into baptismal pool and immersed three times, then emerged from other side as new people
- Other ceremonies: oil, white garment, candle

### Didache

- Early text, end of first century
- "And concerning baptism, baptize this way: After reviewing all of this teaching, baptize in the Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, in living (running) water. But if living water is not available, then baptize into other water; and cold is preferred, but if not available in warm. But if neither is available, pour water three times upon the head in the Name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. But before the baptism, let the overseer fast, and also the one being baptized, and all others who are able; Be sure to instruct the one being baptized to fast one or two days before."

### Effects of Baptism

- Forgiveness of sins
- New birth as an adopted son/daughter of God
- Gifts of Holy Spirit – faith, hope, charity
- Incorporation into the Church, the body of Christ.
- Participation in the priestly and prophetic ministry of all the baptized
- An indelible spiritual mark ('character') – once only.

### Original Sin

- If Baptism is entry into Christian life, humans not Christians by nature
- Creation in a state of sin since first rebellion against God
- All human beings have a share in this sinfulness (do not depend on Augustinian understanding based on heredity and sex)

### Faith required?

- Subjective: baptism (and all sacraments) depend on faith of recipient
- Objective: sacramental grace automatic when outward form/matter performed.
  - Donatist controversy – does baptism depend on worthiness of minister?
  - Believers' baptism vs infant baptism
- *Ex opere operanto*: "from the work having been worked" – sacrament not wrought by the righteousness of the celebrant or the recipient, but by the power of God.
- But *fruits* of sacraments depend on disposition of recipient.

## Catholic Studies Course - Session 12 (Baptism)

### Infant Baptism

- Acts: baptism of whole households
- Early tradition
- If baptism a good thing, should not withhold it from children
- Baptism entry into a new community – just as relevant to infants as to adults.
- Baptism beginning of a process even in adults (though a decisive moment)

### Necessity of baptism

- Generally, yes. Mark 16.16 “He who believes and is baptised will be saved”. BUT...
- Sacraments are channels of God’s grace but he is not bound by them
- ‘Baptism of Blood’ – death of a martyr brings same benefits
- ‘Baptism by desire’
  - Even implicit Baptism by desire where someone would have desired baptism had they heard the gospel