

The Eucharist 1

An Introduction to the Sacraments

Word and Sacrament

- Salvation is through participation in Word and Sacrament
- **Word:**
 - Preaching the “Good News” (gospel), reading the bible
 - Involves language, addresses the mind
- **Sacrament:** a defined rite of the Church that:
 - Involves actions, material objects, as well as language
 - Addresses the senses and the unconscious, as well as the mind

Traditional Theology

- A sacrament involves an “outward, visible sign” that is a conduit for an “inward and spiritual grace”
- Imparting of grace is *ex opere operato*
 - Depends only on the “proper performance” of the sacrament
 - Does not depend on the godliness of the minister or the faith of the recipient
 - Minister must have proper intention
 - Recipient must set up no obstacles to receiving grace (such as contempt or gross disbelief)

Traditional Theology

- **“Outward and Visible Sign”**
 - 1. **Matter** – the material substance used
 - E.g. Water in Baptism
 - E.g. Bread and Wine in the Eucharist
 - 2. **Form** – ritual action, formula of words
 - E.g. Washing in Baptism
 - E.g. Breaking, Pouring, Eating, Drinking in the Eucharist

Traditional Theology

- **“Inward and Spiritual Grace”** = *“res”* = the presence of God. Two facets:
 - 1. The “symbolic reality” or “paschal mystery:” a description of the recipient’s “participation” in the divine
 - E.g. In the Eucharist: the partaking of the body and blood of Christ
 - 2. The benefits of this participation
 - E.g. strengthening of our bond to God, a foretaste of the heavenly banquet to come

Traditional Theology

- A sacrament is *regular* if performed according to the canons and laws of the Church
 - A matter purely of *Church discipline*
- A sacrament is *valid* when all the conditions required for the sacrament are fulfilled
 - 1. Proper matter and form
 - 2. Proper minister (good intentions)
 - 3. Proper recipient (not deliberately resisting grace)
 - A matter of *Church doctrine and theology*

Traditional Theology

- Number of sacraments
 - Augustine: 304 sacraments (sacred signs)
 - Early medieval period: 2 to 12 or more
 - Luther: 3 sacraments
 - Calvin: 2 sacraments
 - Anglicans, Catholics and Orthodox: 7 sacraments
 - BCP: Two “sacraments of the Gospel,” five not counted as sacraments of the Gospel

The Sacramental View of Reality

- **Three Views of Reality:**
 - **1. Materialism, Naturalism, or Realism**
 - True reality is “matter in motion”
 - The “spiritual” world is a delusion
 - **2. Spiritualism or Idealism**
 - True reality is mind and spirit only
 - Material world is unimportant, possibly evil
 - **3. Sacramental View**
 - True reality includes both material and spiritual worlds
 - The spiritual world “expresses itself ... acts and operates in the through the material”

The Sacramental View of Reality

“Earth’s crammed with heaven,
And every common bush afire with God;
But only he who sees takes off his shoes,
The rest sit round and plunk blackberries.”

- Elizabeth Barrett Browning

“To me, the meanest flower that blows can give
Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears”

- William Wordsworth

The Sacramental View of Reality

- Recognizes the duality of our experience in this world:
 - We are embodied beings in a very material world
 - We can feel intimations of beauty, mystery, meaning through this material world (a bush, a flower, a sunset...)
- Explains this duality:
 - The material world can be a “conduit,” a “door” to the sacred
 - God is “immanent” in God’s creation. Creation is charged with divine glory.

Modern Theology of the Sacraments

- *Broader definition:* A sacrament is the encounter with God when something of the material world becomes a conduit, a door to the sacred
 - Greek term *mysterion*: an experience of some higher, spiritual power
 - Eastern Orthodoxy often calls the seven traditional sacraments the seven “mysteries”

Modern Theology of the Sacraments

- *Using this broader definition:*
 - Creation is a **sacrament** of God
 - Jesus in his humanity is the **primordial sacrament** of God
 - The Church on earth is the **fundamental sacrament** of the Kingdom of God
 - Each Christian should be a **living sacrament** of God's love

Modern Theology

Creation as a Sacrament of God

“The Heavens announce the glory of God and the firmament proclaims his handiwork”

- Psalm 19

“Ever since the creation of the world, his invisible nature – eternal power and divine character – have been clearly perceptible through what he has made”

- Romans 1:19-20

Modern Theology

Creation as a Sacrament of God

“Nothing is a vacuum in the face of God. Everything is a sign of God.”

- St. Irenaeus

“The mystics offer us the best proof of this. St. Francis of Assisi immersed himself so deeply in the mystery of God that suddenly he found everything transfigured. Everything spoke to him of God and Christ: the worms along the wayside; the lambs in the field; the birds in the trees; fire, and death, which he came to call Sister Death”

- Leonardo Boff (Brazilian Liberation theologian)

Modern Theology

Jesus as Primordial Sacrament

- Edward Schillebeeckx *Christ the Sacrament*
1963
- Jesus *in his humanity* is the **primordial sacrament** of God:
 - Jesus took on material form and became fully human; yet he remained as well fully God
 - God is seen most fully in and through Jesus

Modern Theology

Jesus as Primordial Sacrament

“The man Jesus, as the personal visible realization of the divine grace of redemption, is the sacrament, the primordial sacrament, because this man, the Son of God himself, is intended by the Father to be in his humanity the only way to the actuality of redemption”

- Edward Schillebeeckx

Modern Theology

Jesus as Primordial Sacrament

- *Macquarrie*: Jesus is better termed “a supersacrament, a unique manifestation in visible form of the authentic life of God.”
- Jesus, the supersacrament, is:
 - 1. The *true minister* of the seven traditional sacraments
 - The human minister is a stand-in for Jesus
 - 2. The *content* of the seven traditional sacraments
 - The “inward and spiritual grace” = the *res*, is Jesus acting in the life of the recipient

Modern Theology

Jesus as Primordial Sacrament

“One might hear the word “baptism”, and think immediately of water. One might hear the word “unction”, and think immediately of oil. One might hear the word “eucharist”, and think immediately of bread and wine...but when one hears the word “baptism”, one should think of Jesus, when one hears the word “unction”, one should think of Jesus, when one hears the word “eucharist,” one should think of Jesus, and so on.”

- Kenan Osborne (Franciscan theologian)

Modern Theology

Jesus as Primordial Sacrament

The particular graces of Jesus acting in the life of the recipient:

1. Baptism: The Baptized One (grace of faith)
2. Confirmation The Confirmed One (grace of perseverance)
3. Reconciliation The Reconciler (grace of penitence)
4. Eucharist The Really Present One (grace of self-giving)
5. Unction The Healer (grace of wholeness)
6. Orders The Priest (grace of service)
7. Marriage The Lover (grace of love)

Modern Theology

Church as Fundamental Sacrament

- The Church is called to be a visible presence of God's will for Humanity and Creation
- The Church is called to be Christ present in the world

Modern Theology

Church as Fundamental Sacrament

“Now the Church is the continuance, the contemporary presence, of that real, eschatologically triumphant and irrevocably established presence in the world, in Christ, of God’s salvific will. . . . By the very fact of being . . . the enduring presence of Christ in the world, the Church is truly the fundamental sacrament, the well-spring of the sacraments in the strict sense.”

- Karl Rahner

Modern Theology

Christians as Living Sacraments

“...when any one of us chooses to act as Jesus was known to act, we too become living sacraments in our world. When I forgive my brother or sister from my heart, I become a sacrament of forgiveness; I unveil the face of God who forgives, just as Jesus himself did.”

- Beguerie and Duchesneau,
- *How to Understand the Sacraments*

Modern Theology

The Sacramental Economy of Salvation

Jesus, Primordial Sacrament



Church, Fundamental Sacrament



The Seven Traditional Sacraments



Christians as Living Sacraments

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