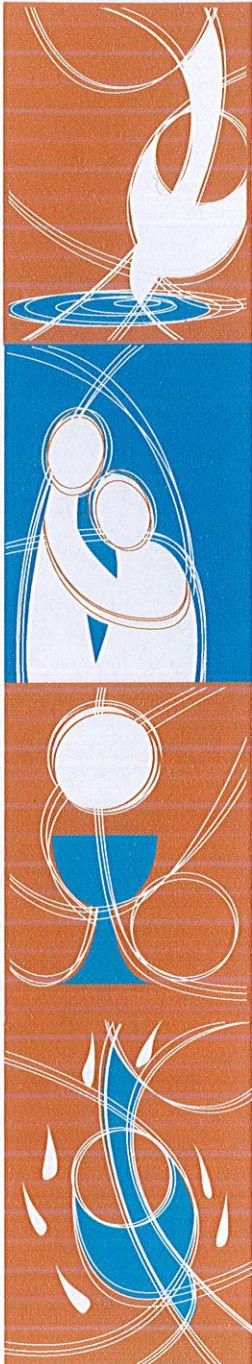


Sacraments

God made flesh



Sacraments: Our Life in the Church

Relationships grow through communication. Communication is more than just words. We also communicate with gestures like smiles, handshakes, hugs, gifts, cards, flowers. In our relationship with God, we too can connect with him through words and also through gestures.

But how does God communicate with us? In the same way really; in words and gestures. There are the scriptures which are God's words to us and there are the sacraments which are gestures of God's love. The Church has named and formally recognised seven sacraments as powerful examples of God reaching out to connect with God's people. Pope John Paul II said that a sacrament made visible the invisible mystery of God. The Sacraments of the Church are visible signs that God's presence is real and is among us. They are signs that God loves us.

Each of the seven sacraments of the Church emphasises a different dimension of our relationship with our loving God.

The Sacraments of Initiation (Baptism, Holy Communion and Confirmation) highlight our relationship with each person of the Trinity:

- In **Baptism** we become a child of **God the Father** as we are reborn spiritually. We use the symbol of water to signify this rebirth (recalling the waters of our natural birth). Many of the prayers of baptism express belonging, being part of the family of God, and being an heir in God's kingdom, just like a real son or daughter.
- At our first **Communion** we unite with **Jesus**. When we eat his body and drink his blood, his body and blood mingles with ours and we become 'one flesh'. That's why it's called 'communion': we become one body and one spirit with Jesus.
- In **Confirmation**, we recommit to our baptismal vows (made on our behalf by our parents and Godparents) and consciously welcome the gifts of the **Holy Spirit**. We are empowered as adult members of the Church to live the Christian life with conviction.

The Sacraments of Healing (Reconciliation, Anointing of the Sick) highlight the merciful nature of God, while **the Vocational Sacraments** (Matrimony, Holy Orders) illuminate our call to intimacy with God and to share God's love with others.