

Sacraments

Sacrament : pertaining to the sacred

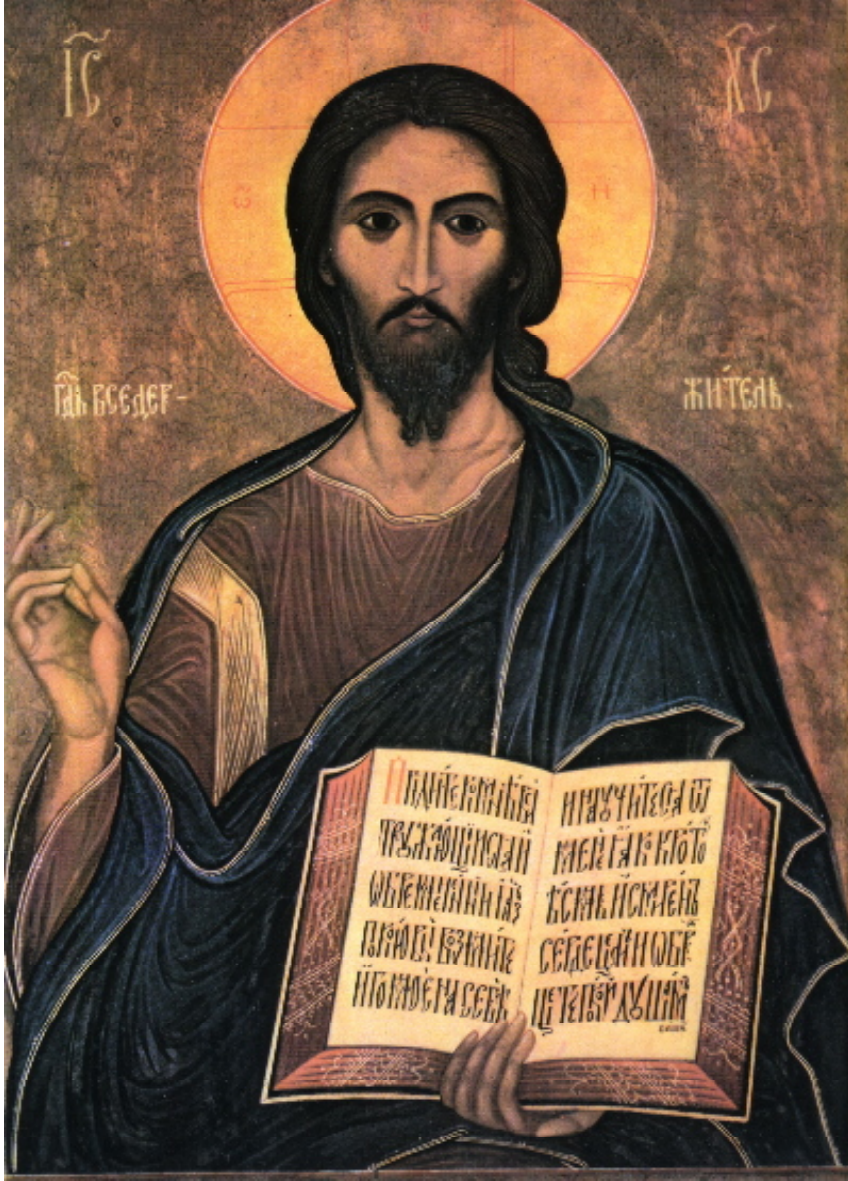
‘The sacraments sanctify (‘make holy’) people

build up the Body of Christ

give worship to God’(Vatican II SC 59)

Mystery : Something revealed by God in a way that is veiled perceptible only to faith

Symbol : brings together all the various aspects of reality and so ultimately reveals the divine.



Jesus is THE Sacrament,
THE Mystery
THE Symbol of God

‘The Word became flesh
and lived among us,
and we have seen his glory,
the glory as of a father’s only
son, full of grace and truth ...
From his fullness we have all
received, grace upon grace’(John
1:14,16).

‘To see me is to see the
Father’(John 14:8)

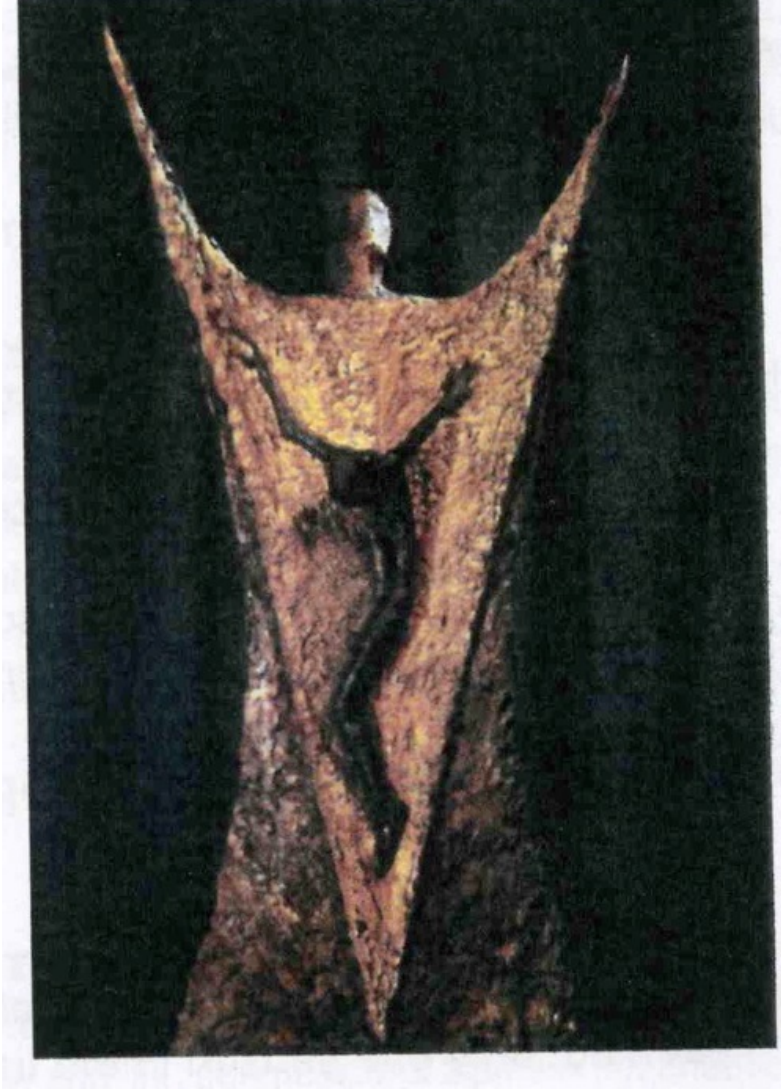
The Church is THE Sacrament

THE mystery

THE symbol of Jesus

As a community we are to be disciples of Jesus ‘the Way’
to the Father (John 14:10).

The Church is his ‘body’ in the world,
living the life given to us by his Spirit –
the Spirit he shares with the Father.



‘It is the Paschal mystery of Christ that the Church proclaims and celebrates in her liturgy, so that the faithful may live from it and bear witness to it in the world’(Catechism n. 1068).

- ‘Paschal mystery’ - Jesus’ self-giving on the cross and his being embraced by God in the Resurrection.

- ‘Mystery’ - Something revealed by God in a veiled way, perceptible only by faith.

‘It is in the liturgy,
especially in the divine sacrifice of the Eucharist,
that the work of our redemption is accomplished,
and it is through the liturgy especially
that the faithful are enabled
to express in their lives and manifest to others
the mystery of Christ
and the real nature of the true Church’(Vatican II On
the Liturgy SC 2).

Catechism n.1088

‘Christ is present in the sacraments so that when anybody baptises it is really Christ himself who baptises.

He is present in his word since it is he himself who speaks when the holy Scriptures are read in the Church.

He is present when the Church prays and sings, for he has promised “where two or three are gathered together in my name there am I in their midst.” ’

- In the sacraments Jesus' self-giving (culminating on Calvary) and God's taking him into the risen life are re-presented (made present) for us and for our salvation.
- In the sacraments we gather as God's People to open our hearts to welcome the blessings that God is pouring out upon us.

Baptism

Greek baptizein = 'to be plunged into' 'overwhelmed by'



Perugino

Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. Just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending on him like a dove.

And a voice came from heaven, "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased."

‘You are my Son, the Beloved;
with you I am well pleased.’

Intimate Communion + Mission

(Isaiah 42:1-7).

‘Here is my servant, whom I uphold,
my chosen, in whom my soul delights;
I have put my spirit upon him;
he will bring forth justice to the nations.
He will not cry or lift up his voice,
or make it heard in the street;
a bruised reed he will not break,
and a dimly burning wick he will not quench;
he will faithfully bring forth justice.

Isaiah 42:1-7 (continued)

He will not grow faint or be crushed
until he has established justice in the earth;
and the coastlands wait for his teaching ...
I am the Lord, I have called you in righteousness,
I have taken you by the hand and kept you;
I have given you as a covenant to the people,
a light to the nations, to open the eyes that are blind,
to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon,
from the prison those who sit in darkness.'

We share in Jesus' Mission

‘You belong to Christ to bear fruit for God
in the new life of the Spirit’(Romans 7:4-6).

‘We are the aroma of Christ to God’(2Corinthians 2:15).

Anointed with Chrism

- Living the life of Jesus the priest: mediators of grace
- Living the life of Jesus the prophet: revealing God's word
- Living the life of Jesus the king:
contributing to the reign of God

Buried with Jesus to rise with him to a new life
‘The “plunge” into the water
symbolises the catechumen’s burial into Christ’s death,
from which he/she rises up by resurrection with Christ,
as a “new creature”(2Corinthians 5:17)’(Catechism n. 1214).

Giotto



Luke 12:49-50

‘I came to bring fire
to the earth, and
how I wish it were
blazing already!
There is a baptism I
must still receive,
and how great is
my distress until it
is over!’

Life experience teaches us that some ways of behaving
have their source in poisoned springs
are decidedly dysfunctional and destructive.
In baptism we die to these false values,
even if they are the values of our mother or father
or the social group with which we have been identifying.
We have found something, or rather someone,
in whom we experience God,
and we have discovered a love which is true and liberating.
In Jesus we have found a meaning
that awakens the energy of our soul.
To follow him we have to embrace him on the cross,
but we choose to do that and we go down into the tomb with him
to renounce behaviour that does not lead to life.
He raises us with him into communion with God.

Confirmation

Closely linked with Baptism is the Sacrament of Confirmation, which completes and confirms the grace received at Baptism.

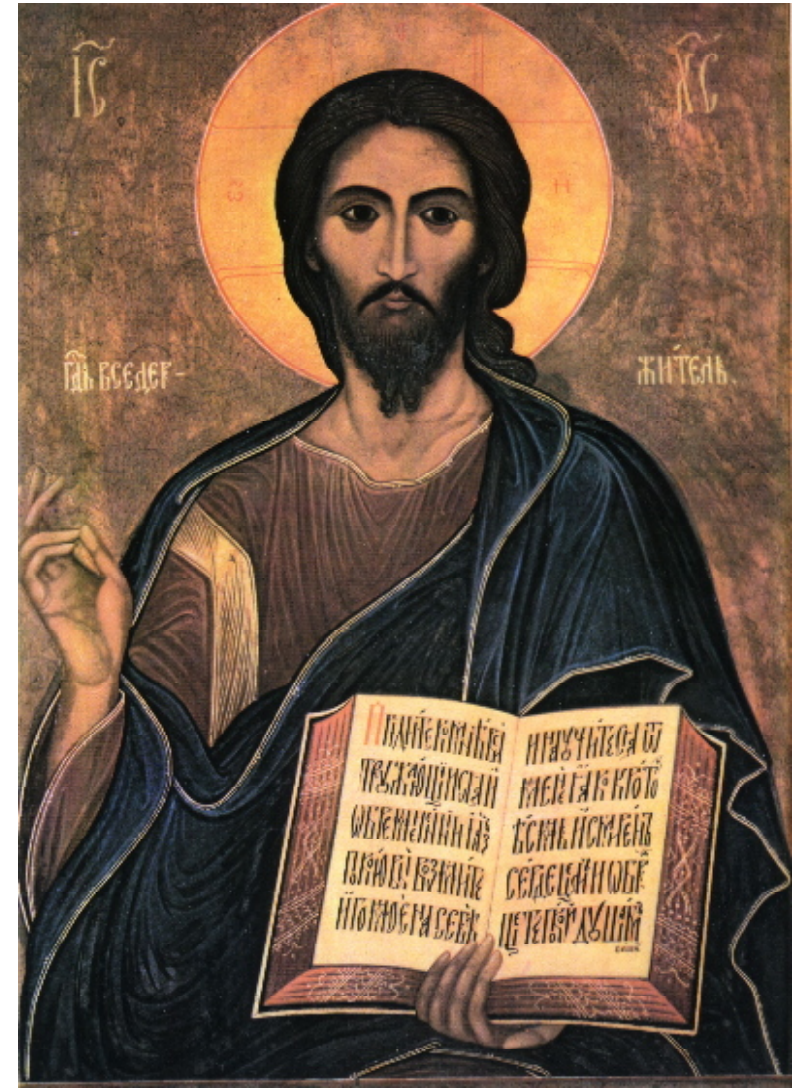
- The focus of baptism is on our dying and rising with Jesus. The focus of Confirmation is on Jesus giving us his Spirit, the Spirit who is the love binding Jesus to God.
- The Gospel of Luke highlights the place of the Spirit in Jesus' conception (1:26-38).

Confirmation

- Luke describes how the Holy Spirit came down upon him at his Baptism (3:22), and how ‘Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness’(4:1), after which ‘Jesus, filled with the power of the Spirit, returned to Galilee’(4:14).

In the Nazareth synagogue, Jesus chose the following text from Isaiah to describe how he saw his mission:

‘The spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners; to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour’ (Isaiah 61:1-2; Luke 4:18-19).





‘Jesus said: “It is finished”.
Then he bowed his head
and gave up his Spirit ...
One of the soldiers pierced
his side with a spear, and at
once blood and water came
out ... As Scripture says:
“They will look on the one
whom they have pierced.”’
(John 19:30, 34, 37).



‘From the heart of Jesus pierced on Calvary, I see a new world coming forth: a great and life-giving world, inspired by love and mercy; a world which the Church must perpetuate on the whole earth’

(Jules Chevalier, 1900).



‘When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together, when suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting.

Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit”(Acts 2:1-4).

It is the Spirit of God that fills all things.
Now, raised to the fullness of life by his Father,
it is the Spirit of God in Jesus -
the Spirit of love which binds him to the Father -
that fills all things, giving life wherever it is welcome.
The sacrament of this Spirit,
the place where Jesus' Spirit
is powerfully effective
is the community of the Church,
an extension in the world of Jesus' body,
carrying out the will of God
and bringing about on earth the reign of God's love.

‘The Risen Christ is now at work in human hearts through the power of his Spirit, animating, purifying and reinforcing the noble aspirations which drive the human family to make its life one that is more human and to direct the whole earth to this end’(Vat II, G&S, §38).

‘The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long suffering, kindness, goodness, faith, gentleness and self-control’(Galatians 5:22-23).

‘The Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. And God, who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. All things work together for good for those who love God’(Romans 8:26-28).



The sacrifice of the Mass

The sacrifice of the cross

On the cross Jesus offered his life, his love, his very self to God and to us in order to draw us into communion with God.

To be in communion with God = to be made holy : *sacrum facere*

sacrifice

Jesus took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks [eucharistico], he broke it and gave it to them saying: This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me' (Luke 22:19).

Tintoretto 16th cent.



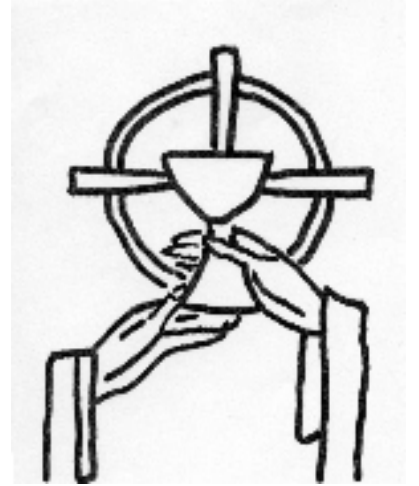
Tintoretto

‘The Lord Jesus on the night when he was handed over took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, “This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.”



‘In the same way he took the cup also, after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.”

Jesus wants his disciples to ‘remember’ when his life is so brutally taken from him that he is not just a victim of his enemies. He has always given himself for them. On the cross this self-giving will reach its consummation



(“He loved me and gave himself for me”, Galatians 2:20). When he breaks bread this evening, and when he pours out the blood-red wine, he invests them with a special meaning, symbolising the final offering he is about to make. When they take and eat this bread, he wants them to know that it is his body that they are taking, given as a gift of love to them to nourish them on their journey. When they take and drink this wine, he wants them to know that it is his life poured out for them that he is offering their thirsting souls.

^{Revelation 1:10-16}
The Book of the Apocalypse is set on ‘the Lord’s day’,
and is to be read on that day to the assembly.

‘I saw seven golden lampstands, and in the midst of the
lampstands I saw one like the Son of Man, clothed with a
long robe and with a golden sash across his chest.

His head and his hair were white as white wool, white as
snow; his eyes were like a flame of fire, his feet were like
burnished bronze, refined as in a furnace,
and his voice was like the sound of many waters.

In his right hand he held seven stars,
and from his mouth came a sharp, two-edged sword,
and his face was like the sun shining with full force.’

Hebrews 12:22-24

‘You have come to Mount Zion
and to the city of the living God,
the heavenly Jerusalem,
and to innumerable angels in festal gathering,
and to the assembly of the firstborn who are
enrolled in heaven,
and to God the judge of all,
and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect,
and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant.’

- Nourished by Jesus, those partaking in the Eucharist receive the grace to carry out their priestly mission as sacraments of Christ the priest, the one mediator between God and mankind.

- and so they are graced to live the life of a prophet, given them in Baptism, whereby they speak God's Word to others, in word and deed.

- In this way, sharing in the mission of Christ the king, they bring about the reign of God's love in the world, drawing everyone to a redemption that is eternal and to full communion with the living God.

‘Do this in remembrance of me’

- ‘I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done.’ (=wash one another’s feet) (John 13:14-15).
- to ‘love one another as I have loved you’(John 15:12).

To ‘eat this bread’

- to unite oneself with the ‘flesh given for the life of the world’(John 6:51).
- to hunger for ‘every word that comes from the mouth of God’(Matthew 4:4).
- to welcome God’s gift of our ‘super-substantial bread’(Matthew 6:11).

To 'drink this wine'

- to drink the wine of Jesus, the bridegroom (Cana - John 2).
- to drink the wine of Jesus' love 'poured into our hearts'(Romans 5:5).
- to commit oneself to say 'Yes' to Jesus: 'Can you drink the cup that I must drink, or be baptised with the baptism with which I am to be baptised?'(Mark 10:38)