

## What is a sacrament?

At the heart of the Christian faith is this dual conviction that we are made for God, but we cannot reach God using our own resources – God has to come to us. The first actor in the sacraments is God Himself who comes to us in Christ, his Son Incarnate. Through the sacraments, God comes to touch and renew us. The sacraments are the eruption of God into the heart of our world, occasions when, through the human language of symbolic rituals, God speaks to reveal himself, to act. And when God intervenes, something changes. The sacraments change us - they change our way of being.

### The seven sacraments are:

The sacraments of **initiation** into Christian life:

- **Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist**

The sacraments of **healing**:

- **Reconciliation, Anointing of the Sick**

The sacraments of **commitment** for life:

- **Matrimony and Holy Orders**

### An overview of the seven sacraments:

#### Baptism

Baptism is the first sacrament that we receive, the sacrament of new birth that makes us daughters and sons of God. Through Baptism, we commit ourselves to follow Christ in leading a new life inspired by the Gospel.

#### Confirmation

Confirmation is the sacrament that empowers us with the strength of the Holy Spirit in our lives and makes us co-responsible for the mission of the Church at the heart of the world. The grace of God, given to us through the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit, accompany and support us in our mission as Christians.

#### Eucharist

The Eucharist unites us to the gesture of Jesus who gave his life on the cross through love for his Father and for us. This sacrament is the source and summit of Christian life. We encounter Jesus personally in this sacrament each time we receive communion at mass. First Communion is of great importance.

#### Reconciliation

Learning to discern what is good from what is bad is essential and is achieved by referencing the law of love proposed by Jesus Christ. The Sacrament of Reconciliation renews in us the original forgiveness of Baptism ... we reject sin so to be reconciled with God and with one another. A particular emphasis is given to First Reconciliation.

#### Anointing of the Sick

In the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick, we encounter Jesus ‘physician and saviour’ who heals the sick who turn toward him. We are called to hope for healing and to give ourselves up to Jesus. Should illness lead us to death, the Sacrament of Anointing helps us to understand that we will not fall into the darkness and cold but into the warmth of the ‘maternal’ arms of God. This tender encounter with Jesus makes us stronger to overcome the ordeal of passing from health to illness or even from life to death or better still, from life to another life.

#### Matrimony

Marriage is a commitment of a man and a woman, one to the other, in love in a common life project that includes fidelity, mutual support, procreation and education of children. In the Sacrament of Matrimony, Christ is present to unite the couple, to communicate and to reveal in a particular way his faithful and complete love for his Church.

#### Holy Orders

Three ministries are of vital importance for the life of the Church and require ordination: the episcopate (bishop), the presbyterate (priest) and the diaconate (deacon). Chosen in the community, ordained ministers act in the name of Christ who is always Pastor of his Church. Successor of the Apostles, the bishop, is the pastor responsible for a diocese. Ordained by the bishop, priests are his primary collaborators for proclaiming the Gospel, celebrating the sacraments, especially the Eucharist and guiding the community. Distinct from the priest, the deacon is ordained for the service of the Word, the liturgy and charity.

### Who can receive a sacrament and when?

Sacramental initiation can happen at any time, be it in childhood, at school age with the accompaniment of parents or in adulthood. In the Diocese of Timmins, preparatory steps adapted to each of the seven sacraments are offered. Adults requesting the sacraments of initiation to Christian life undertake a specific journey: **(Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults – RCIA)**. Adults wishing to register for this process communicate with the pastor of the parish.

#### Baptism:

Every non-baptized person can receive Baptism, the gateway to all of the sacraments. In addition to the program for adults, there is an **initiation process** offered to parents of infants and to school age children. To receive Baptism, communicate with the parish pastor.

#### Reconciliation and Eucharist:

Every baptized person can receive Reconciliation and Eucharist. In addition to the program for adults, we have a **preparatory process** for children in Grades 3 and 4. Registration for the parent-child meetings is done in September. Please communicate with the parish.

#### Confirmation:

Every baptized person can receive Confirmation. In addition to the program for adults, there is a **preparatory process** for young people in Grades 7 and 8. Registration is done in September. Please communicate with the parish.

#### Anointing of the Sick:

Every baptized person afflicted with serious illness can receive the Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick on demand and at any time. Please communicate with the pastor of the parish.

#### Matrimony:

A man and a woman may marry who are free to contract marriage, who meet the requirements of the Catholic Church and who freely express their consent. Marriage preparation is obligatory and may be done in three ways: a weekend session, courses through correspondence or online. First of all there must be communication with the parish pastor at least eight months before the planned wedding date.

### Holy Orders:

Only a baptized person of the masculine gender can receive the Sacrament of Holy Orders. Celibacy is required for bishops and priests however men already married, may access the permanent diaconate. To discern a call to ordained ministry, please communicate with the pastor of the parish or the Coordinator of Vocations to the priesthood/diaconate at the Diocesan Centre.

### How to prepare?



*Partners in Faith Education*

### Preparation in partnership for school aged young people

(Reconciliation, Eucharist, Confirmation)

To support a meaningful process for the child, coordination of the different environments that awaken and support his faith life is necessary. The family, as well as the child, the parish and the Catholic school each have a specific role.

### The Parish:

- Invites and informs children and their parents of the process of preparation for the sacraments in the

parish and asks for the support of the Catholic school;

- **Receives** the registration forms and celebrates the commitment of the young people in the parish;
- **Offers** parents opportunities for growth in faith and enables them to journey with their child;
- **Explores** opportunities for involvement that will allow young people to take their place within parish life;
- **Prepares** the liturgical celebration and supports the active participation of the Catholic school.

### The parents:

- **Highlight** their unique role as the first educators of their child in the faith;
- **Create** an environment of family life that allows the child to make the connection between his faith and his concrete experience;
- **Register** their child and **participate** in preparation meetings and masses;
- **Make a public commitment** with their child in front of the parish community;
- **Accompany** their child in his journey (prayer corner/reading).

### The child:

- **Signs** the form of commitment for the sacramental process in the parish;
- **Makes a public commitment** with his parents in front of the parish community;

- **Participates** in the preparation meetings and Sunday masses;
- **Accomplishes** his responsibilities within the sacramental process (prayer corner, reading in his book / volunteer activities).

### The Catholic School:

- **Creates**, day by day, a climate of life that draws inspiration from the Gospel and collaborates with parents and the parish;
- **Assumes** its role of religious teaching and of support for the growth of the children of God;
- **Offers** a specific teaching to the approach of a sacramental process that delves deeper into the sacraments;
- **Informs** parents of the journey proposed to their children at the meeting for parents at the school;
- **Participates** in the liturgical celebration of the sacraments in order to encourage and support students in their faith journey.

It is said that it takes a village to raise a child. To the extent that each of the four partners fulfills its role, will we be able to journey together and offer an appropriate and meaningful sacramental formation to our children. In Jesus we form a single and great family.

His Excellency Serge Poitras, Bishop  
Diocese of Timmins, December 8, 2016

## SACRAMENTAL INITIATION



## PREPARATORY STEPS

- Baptism
- Confirmation
- Eucharist
- Reconciliation
- Anointing of the Sick
- Matrimony
- Holy Orders



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*“Together, we want to journey with Jesus to know him better and to encounter him so that we form an even more visible, dynamic and meaningful Church.”*