



A Family of Faith: Volume II

November Lecture Notes

THE SACRAMENTS OF INITIATION AND BAPTISM

Introduction

- I. The Sacraments of Initiation
- II. The Sacraments of Initiation insert us into the life and mission of the Church
- III. The Sacrament of Baptism
- IV. Sacred Art Discussion: *The Baptism of Christ*

Introduction

A. Opening Questions

- 1. We all belong to a family.
- 2. How did you become a part of your family?
 - a. People become family most commonly by birth, but also through marriage and adoption.
- 3. What groups or clubs do you belong to?
- 4. How did you become a member?
 - a. Guide families to compare and contrast the ways they become part of a family vs. part of a club.
- 5. What promises came along with becoming part of a family or other group? What challenges?
 - a. Continue to compare and contrast families and other groups. Spouses promise and are challenged to love and honor each other in good times and in bad, while business partners promise and are challenged to deal honestly with each other and represent their company honorably. The role of a new husband or wife is to love his or her spouse and help him or her get to heaven; a new business partner receives the mission of helping the business succeed.
- 6. What new role or mission did you receive?
 - a. Connect this pattern of promise, role and mission with the Sacraments of Christian Initiation, which you will begin learning about. They are called the Sacraments of Initiation because they introduce us to and make us members of the Church, strengthen

us for our life's journey, and give us our vocation, or mission, as Christians.

B. Our role and Mission in the Church

1. We receive a new role and mission when we become part of the Church.
2. The Sacraments are essential to the Christian mission.

(Depending on the background knowledge of your group, you may also briefly introduce the doctrine of grace:)

3. God constantly draws us into a relationship with Him. He not only reveals Himself to us (divine revelation), but He gives Himself to us (grace) so that we will have the supernatural means to live the life that we are made for—beholding God in Heaven, or eternal Beatitude. It is only by God's grace that we can go to Heaven.
4. Grace is favor, the free and undeserved help that God gives us to respond to his call to become children of God, adoptive sons, partakers of the divine nature and of eternal life (CCC 1996).
5. The seven Sacraments are the chief source of grace, the “masterworks of God” (CCC 1116).

I. The Sacraments of Initiation

A. Last time we discussed what a Sacrament was. We know the Church has seven of them. (Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist, Penance, Anointing of the Sick, Holy Orders and Holy Matrimony)

B. We divide these seven into three types:

- Initiation (Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist)
- Healing (Anointing of the Sick, Penance and Reconciliation)
- Service of Communion (Holy Matrimony and Holy Orders)

1. Today we are going to begin discussing the first set, Initiation.

D. Why do we call them Sacraments of Initiation?

1. Many of us are part of groups or organizations or our children are part of groups or organizations that have initiations (Cub Scouts, Knights of Columbus, Girl Scouts, Fraternities, Sororities, etc.)
2. Think about some of the things these initiations have entailed: taking an oath, passing a challenge, enduring a trial, etc.
3. For example, does anyone know someone who has gone through the process of becoming a U.S. Citizen? Let's compare for a moment the “initiation process of becoming an American Citizen” to the Sacraments of Initiation. To become a citizen you have to first live here legally for five years with Permanent Resident status. You then have to fill out a

long application, go through a process of waiting and when they finally finish processing your application you go through several steps to get initiated:

- a. You take a test to prove you know enough about the History of the United States and are invested in making a life here and contributing to the good of the nation.
 - b. After passing the test you are sworn in.
 - c. At the swearing in ceremony you have to renounce all ties to your former country and pledge to live as a faithful citizen.
 - d. You then get all the rights that come with being an American citizen and are eligible for all sorts of things you can't get when you aren't a citizen (government aide, the right to vote, etc.) The American government considers you just as much an American as someone who was born and raised here. With all the privileges of being a citizen also comes the responsibilities, calling if you will of being a responsible and contributing member of American society and culture.
- E. The Sacraments of Initiation do this on a supernatural level. The Sacraments of initiation bring you permanently into God's family and afford you all the graces you need to live your life as a Disciple of Christ.
1. Last time we talked about the Sacraments being more than simple rituals and rites of passage. They affect real change in us.
 - a. The Sacraments of Initiation are what make someone Catholic.
 - b. We do not become Catholic simply because we say we are nor do we decide not to be Catholic simply by saying we aren't, NO!
 - c. The Sacraments freely given to us make us Catholic, make us Children of God and after we receive them there is nothing we can do to no longer be considered God's Children.
 - d. The reality of the effects of the Sacraments of Initiation goes so much deeper than the initiation process of becoming a Citizen or joining any other club or society.
- F. Baptism
1. Begins with Baptismal Promises
 2. Through Grace We are made members of Christ's Body
 3. We receive our Mission

This Session is about exploring how the Sacraments of Initiation call us to a mission and how that calling begins in Baptism.

G. Confirmation

1. Baptismal grace perfected
2. Strengthening of Gifts of the Holy Spirit

H. Eucharist

1. Receive Body and Blood of Christ
2. Nourishes us in our mission

- I. So I have received the Sacraments of Initiation, I'm Catholic, where do I go from here with this? It's great that the Sacraments of Initiation truly make me a child of God and give me a mission as a Disciple but how do I practically apply that?

This Session is all about exploring what the Sacraments of Initiation call us to and how that calling unfolds in Baptism.

I. The Sacraments of Initiation bring us into the life and mission of the Church

- A. The Sacraments of Initiation make us all Children of God and Disciples. So if we are all Disciples by virtue of these Sacraments then what are Disciples of Christ all called to?

1. To be Saints
2. To Evangelize

- That seems like a tall order doesn't it? How on earth am I supposed to do those things? One of those seems impossible (I mean you know who Mother Teresa is and who I am right?) and the other one I'm not quite sure what it means.

- B. We are Called to be Saints

1. In the Gospel of Matthew Jesus tells, "So be perfect, just as your heavenly Father is perfect." (5:48) That's a tall order! Where do we start with that?
2. Well we get a clue later on in Matthew. In Matthew 22, Jesus says, "You shall love the Lord, your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment. The second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself."
3. The answer to becoming perfect, becoming a saint, is LOVE! We must love God above all else and then also love our neighbors. Think of any saint, what do they all have in common? They LOVED passionately and radically!
4. Yes this is a tough and difficult calling but if we look at becoming a Saint from this perspective it becomes much easier. We are all works

in progress. We are all at different levels in our journey and we are all called to different paths.

5. God is not calling you to be St. Mother Teresa, He is calling you to be St. You! That means look at your life and ask God to show you how you can simply love those in your own world a little more each day.
6. It starts with your spouse and your children, then it goes to your coworkers, and then the stranger, and if you take it a little bit at a time and one person at a time, before you know it you are learning to love like the Saints.

C. We are called to evangelize

1. What does Evangelization mean? Evangelization is simply the sharing of the Gospel by word and example.
2. The word Gospel means good news!
3. We live out this call to evangelize simply by sharing the good news of how Christ has worked in our lives.
 - a. We are so willing to try and convert people to become fans of our favorite sports teams or our favorite bands. How often do we see a movie or hear a song that we like so much we can't stop recommending it to others?
 - b. How much more life changing and important is our relationship with Christ? If we can tell our friends about a sports team or a great movie could we not share with them about our relationship with Christ and the great things He is doing in our lives?
4. Pope Paul VI tells us that the Church exists in order to evangelize, therefore if we are members of the Church then we have an obligation to evangelize. Since the Sacraments of initiation make us members of the church they therefore give us the mandate to evangelize.

Now that we understand what the Sacraments of Initiation call us to, let's begin exploring each of these Sacraments individually. We will begin with the first of them, Baptism.

II. The Sacrament of Baptism

- A. How many of you remember the day you were baptized? Most of you probably don't as you were infants most likely. Pope Francis has said that the most important day of our lives is the day we were baptized. So how many of you know what day you were baptized?
 1. If you don't know, you should find out.

2. We should celebrate our baptismal day and mark it as a very important occasion in our lives.
3. That is the day we were born into new life in Christ.

B. Baptism is the Basis for Christian Life

1. The Catechism of the Catholic Church states, “Holy Baptism is the basis of the whole Christian life, the gateway to life in the Spirit, and the door which gives access to the other sacraments. Through Baptism we are freed from sin and reborn as sons of God; we become members of Christ, are incorporated into the Church and are made sharers in her mission: Baptism is the sacrament of regeneration through water in the word” CCC 1213
2. There is a lot to think about there. Who would have thought that getting water poured over our heads three times would do all that? Let’s explore this Sacrament a little more deeply.

C. Let’s begin by simply reviewing the basics of what takes place in Baptism.

1. All Sacraments have form and matter. The Matter is the physical material used and the form refers to the words that are spoken.
2. Matter: Water
3. Form: The minister (usually a priest) immerses the person being baptized (or pours the water) three times and says, “I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.”
4. Why water? Well water is cleansing. Remember in the Sacraments, God uses physical elements to serve as signs that point to the higher realities taking place. In Baptism the person is cleansed through the removal of all sins from their soul, including the stain of original sin, hence water.
5. The physical cleansing is a sign pointing to the spiritual cleansing taking place!
6. Baptism also formally brings you into the Church.

D. Baptism Instituted and Prefigured

1. Where did this whole idea of Baptism come from? Let’s turn to the story in Scripture to take a closer look. All throughout the Old Testament Baptism is prefigured.
 - a. The Spirit of God hovers over the primordial waters
 - b. Noah protects the animals and his family from a flood that will “cleanse the earth from sinful humanity, and begin anew through him.”

- c. The Israelites cross the red sea and are “cleansed of slavery and from the Egyptians.”
- d. God’s people continually pass from chaos, death, slavery, and sin through powerful life-giving waters to new life.

2. The New Testament

- a. The beginning of Christ’s public ministry starts with His baptism. Christ did not need to be baptized but he wanted to serve as a model for all we are called to.
- b. Then at the end of his ministry on earth, in His parting words to His disciples, He commands them to: “Make Disciples of all nations, **baptizing** them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.”

E. The Fruits of Baptism

- 1. Baptism is a beautiful gift we have been given. Let’s revisit and think about what Baptism gives each of us:
 - a. Our Sins are forgiven and freed of the stain of original sin.
 - b. We are given the gifts of the Holy Spirit.
 - c. We are made new creatures in the sight of God and partakers of the divine nature. God actually wants us to share in His nature. The Church fathers wrote, “**God became man so that man might become God.**” This is a powerful concept.
 - d. We are made members of the Church and given access to all the other sacraments.
 - e. We are tasked to share in the mission of the Church.
 - f. An indelible mark is placed on our souls. In other words we are marked for Christ. We belong to Him! No sin we ever commit can remove this mark.
- 2. There is much to ponder and reflect on here. This is the reality of what we are given in Baptism. We may not feel like all these things have come to fruition in our lives. However, this is the beautiful gift freely offered to us. All we have to do is accept this Grace and cooperate with it.

Next time we will continue to look at the other Sacraments of Initiation.

IV. Sacred Art Discussion: *The Baptism of Christ* by Andrea del Verrocchio and Leonardo da Vinci

- A. What is happening in this picture?
 - 1. Jesus is being baptized by John the Baptist in the Jordan River at the beginning of His ministry.

- B. Whom does the dove represent? Whose hands are those above it?
1. The dove is a symbol of the Holy Spirit. The hands are representative of God the Father, who opened Heaven, and sent down His voice and the Holy Spirit to confirm that Jesus is His Son. "And a voice came from the heavens, saying, 'This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased'" (Matt 3:17).
- C. Who are the figures on the left? Why are they kneeling?
1. The two figures kneeling on the left are angels. Point out that the posture of kneeling could further emphasize the divine character of Jesus at this moment.
- D. The entire Blessed Trinity is present in this painting, reminding us that Jesus is God as well as man. Did Jesus need to be baptized? Why didn't He baptize Himself?
1. Jesus did not need to be baptized; as God, He was already perfectly united with the Father and the Spirit, and He had no stain of sin on His soul. He humbled Himself to be baptized by John because He wanted to set an example for us. Jesus did not baptize Himself because Baptism is a task for His ministers who continue His ministry in the Church, the Body of Christ. That we cannot baptize ourselves is one sign of the fact that there is no salvation without the Savior and His Church.
- E. What example was Jesus setting for us by being baptized? What does His baptism tell us about what happens when we are baptized?
1. By being baptized even when He didn't need it, Jesus showed us the importance of baptism, and taught us by example that, if He received it, so must we. Also emphasize that what we see in this painting happened at our Baptisms and those of our children as well, even though it is not visible to our eyes. Sacraments are visible signs that point to invisible realities: The Holy Spirit pours out on us and the Father is well-pleased with us, His beloved children.

Discussion Questions

1. What command did Jesus give the Apostles at the end of His earthly dwelling?
 - a. To make disciples of all nations and baptize people in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.
2. What does it mean to be initiated?
 - a. To be made a member of a group.
3. How are we initiated into the Christian life?
 - a. Through the Sacraments of Initiation: Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist. The first Sacrament is Baptism.
4. All Sacraments have matter and form. What do these terms mean?
 - a. The matter is the physical material used. The form refers to the

words that are spoken.

5. What are the fruits of Baptism?
 - a. The sins of the baptized are forgiven and the gifts of the Holy Spirit are infused into their souls. The baptized are made new creatures in the sight of God, partakers of the divine nature and members of Christ Himself, co-heirs with Him to all God's promises. The baptized are made members of the Church and allowed access to all the other Sacraments by right and are tasked with a share in the mission of the Church, to share the Good News and make disciples of Jesus Christ. An indelible spiritual mark is also placed on the baptized person's soul. It marks him forever as belonging to God, set apart for the day of redemption and eternal life with Him.
6. What mission do we receive at Baptism?
 - a. To share the Good News and make disciples of Jesus Christ.
7. What is the vocation of every Christian?
 - a. Holiness, or to become a saint.
8. What does the word *gospel* mean?
 - a. Gospel comes from the Greek word euangelion which means "good message" or "good news."
9. What is the gospel of Jesus Christ?
 - a. That He came down from Heaven, died for us on the Cross, and rose from the dead to offer us salvation.
10. Jesus Himself was baptized. Why?
 - a. Jesus Himself was baptized at the beginning of His public ministry, not because He needed to be, but because it was fitting that He be baptized, in order to serve as our model of holiness and to show us the way to salvation.
11. The Church teaches that the Sacraments "confer the graces needed for the life according to the Spirit during this life as pilgrims on the march towards the homeland" (1533). What does this mean? Why are we "pilgrims" in this life?
 - a. Pilgrims are those on a journey toward something holy. Our life on this earth is a journey toward holiness, or toward Heaven.
12. What is our true homeland?
 - a. Heaven.
13. Why do we still tend to sin even after we are baptized?
 - a. Because our fallen nature still remains.

Reminders and Announcements

- A. The next Community Meeting picnic will take place at **[location]** on **[date]**.

Provide information for your parish

Living the Faith At Home

- A. Put up the **November Fridge Page** and the **Car Conversations hang tag**.
- B. Choose the activities that will work best for your family. For example, some children may prefer reading and discussion, while others might prefer crafts.
- *You are not required to do all the activities in the book.*
- C. Your children will learn the Faith from your witness as parents better than through any structured activity.
1. Fridge page and car conversations can be found in their Parent's Guide at the beginning of this month's lesson.
 2. This program is first and foremost about their own formation, and secondarily about helping them teach their children. "Put your own mask on first," as they say!

Key Points in Our Reading This Month

- A. To be initiated means to be made a member of a group.
- B. The Sacraments of Initiation are Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist.
- C. These Sacraments make us members of the Church, strengthen us for our life's journey, and give us our vocation as Christians.
- D. As disciples of Christ we are called to be holy and to evangelize.
- E. To evangelize means to share the good news of Christ by word and example.
- F. Baptism is the gateway to the Christian life, and is necessary for salvation.
- G. The Sacrament of Baptism is prefigured in the Old Testament and instituted by Christ in the New Testament.
- H. In Baptism, our sins are forgiven, we are reborn in Christ and made children of God, made members of the Church, and receive an indelible mark on our souls.

Closing Prayer

Dear Lord, thank you for our time together this evening. Bless all our families, including those who could not be here tonight. We thank you for offering us the Sacrament of Baptism. We are so very blessed to be made your sons and daughters, and sharers in the mission of the Church. Help us to remember the dignity of our baptismal promises and mission.