

Theory 1b

INTRODUCTION TO THE SACRAMENTAL WORLDVIEW

Summary of Points:

- The Covenant is how God shares His life with humans
- Jesus came to heal and restore the effects of sin, through grace
- Incarnation is the pattern for all sacraments
- The sacraments are necessary for Him to Give grace
- Sacraments defined, and how they work

Introduction

God's Creative Design

CCC 288 “...[T]he revelation of creation is inseparable from the revelation and forging of the covenant of the one God with his People. Creation is revealed as the first step towards this covenant, the first and universal witness to God's all-powerful love.”

- Thus, Revelation, that is, the Sacred Scriptures and Sacred Tradition, teach us about Creation, the Fall, and promise of Salvation.
- The world was made for the glory of God (cf. CCC 293).
- “Not to increase his glory, but to show it forth and communicate it” (Ibid).
- God creates out of nothing, ex nihilo.

Covenant

- God creates with the covenant in mind.
- The covenant, constantly renewed after the Fall, expresses God's desire to share Himself with His people.
 - “You will be my People; I will be your God” (Jer 30:22; cf. Ex 6:7).
 - Thus, we will know Him, love Him, and become more like Him.

- Adam and Eve disobeyed, and “all subsequent sin would be disobedience toward God and lack of trust in His goodness” (CCC 397).
- To overcome this sin, God sends His Son.
- Jesus then redeems and sanctifies creation as a response of a loving Father to a fallen child.
 - Christ is the Supreme Sacrament of the Father: revealing in human form, the fullness of the love of the Father for His creation.
 - He enters creation not to condemn but to save it. (cf. Jn 3:17)

Christ as the Sacrament of God

- “Christ...who though he was in the form of God did not count equality with God something to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men” (Phil 2: 6-7).
- By taking on our transgressions, He dies to them, removes them, and replaces our broken spirit, “so that we might receive adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts crying, “Abba! Father!” So through God you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son then an heir” (Gal 4:5-7).
- **Incarnation sets the pattern of sacraments:** The visible is of a created nature; the substance is of heavenly nature, called grace.

“The Word became flesh to make us partakers of the Divine nature...the Son of God became man that we might become God...” (CCC 460).

Sacraments in the Church

- The Church affirms that for believers the sacraments of the New Covenant are *necessary for salvation*...The Holy Spirit heals and transforms those who receive him by conforming them to the Son of God.
 - The Sacraments unite the faithful in a living union with the only Son, the Savior, adopting us into Divine life where we can share in God’s own life and become more like Him! (cf. CCC 1129)

Definition of a Sacrament (CCC 1131)

The Sacraments are:

1. efficacious signs of grace
2. instituted by Christ and entrusted to the Church
3. by which we encounter Jesus and his saving work here and now (*explained above*)
4. and through which His divine life is poured into our soul. (1108)

What do we mean when we say a sacrament is an efficacious sign of grace?

A sacrament is *efficacious* because it makes happen what it signifies, an *ordinary* sign does not.

A stop sign symbolizes that we **should** stop.

- But it does not have the power to **effect** our stopping
- It does not have the power to make it happen

For the stop sign to be efficacious it would not only *tell* me to stop but it would have the power to *make* me stop.

Sacraments, on the other hand, are signs with the added God-given power to effect what they signify. They make happen in us what they symbolize.

In Baptism - water is a sign that symbolizes what?

- Cleansing and purification and New Life
- If you were on the Titanic, water signifies Death.

In Baptism, the Holy Spirit makes the water efficacious.

It brings about in us what it signifies:

- we die to the old life of sin
- and we are cleansed from original sin and personal sins
- we rise to the new life of Christ
- and we actually become children of God

Baptism is not a ritual that symbolizes we are children of God. Through Baptism we actually die to the old life and rise to a new life in Christ in which we really are children of God.

Romans 6:3-4 “Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death. We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.”

Sacraments always work but we receive the grace according to our openness.

CCC 1257 “God has bound salvation to the sacraments...but he himself is not bound by his sacraments.”

Matter and Form

1. God is present in the world, in His creation.
 - a. “God saw how good it was...”(Gen 1:22). The act of creation is an act of love.
 - b. All created goods point toward God. This changes our concept of sacred and profane. “Finding God in all things.” (St. Ignatius)
2. God dwells in man
 - a. The importance and attention to the interior life
 - b. The person we have before us is sacred ground. God is already there; He is already at work and has always been at work.
3. The sacraments are a vehicle for the Divine when we use the same material Jesus used, with the same *form* of words. This is what is known as *matter and form*.
 - a. Compare Exodus 17 with Numbers 20.
 - b. Using the same words of command/prayer along with the same material instrument (in this case, the rock) brings about the saving deed from the past into the present.

Effects of Grace: Ex Opere Operato, Ex opere Operantis

Ex Opere Operato: Objective Nature of the Sacraments

1128 Ex opera operato (literally: by the very fact of the actions being performed, i.e. by virtue of the saving work of Christ.) It follows that the sacrament is not wrought by the righteousness of either the celebrant or the recipient but by the power of God.

From the moment that a sacrament is celebrated in accordance with the intention of the Church, the power of Christ and his Spirit acts in and through it, independently of the personal holiness of the minister.

Nevertheless, the fruits of the sacraments also depend on the disposition of the one who receives them.

Ex Opere Operantis: Subjective Nature of the Recipient.

This determines the amount of grace obtained by the person receiving the sacrament.

Prayer unleashes the action of the Holy Spirit. Consider the Baptism of Jesus. He was praying and the Holy Spirit fell upon Him.

Daily meditative prayer and a resolution can aid in the soul's receptivity of the transforming effects of the sacraments.