

NOVEMBER 5, 2023: 31ST SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME



Two weeks ago we began looking at how God builds us a home through the sacraments. We laid the foundation—that all the sacraments come from God and they open us to experience the Paschal Mystery (Jesus' death, resurrection, ascension, and its consummation in Pentecost). We then framed our house which led us to recognize that God uses the very elements of creation to speak to us through the sacraments.

Last week we saw the exterior walls go up and the roof put on. We learned that God bestows on us his great gift of grace through using the sacraments as his instrument.

But we must be properly disposed to receive that grace for it to impact our lives. Also, in some of the sacraments we receive a change to our soul, called a character; we are marked for all eternity through this gift. We ended by looking at our role both as minister and participants of the sacraments. The role of the minister is simply to be an instrument of Christ who is the true minister of all the sacraments. Christ works through the minister in order for his ministry to be seen.

Now that we have put the roof on, we can look at the plumbing and electrical work. What does that entail? We know what the gifts of the sacraments are and our role in the sacraments, but that raises the question, what exactly do we experience in the sacraments? The heart of the sacraments is, of course, to help us live out the salvation Christ won for us in the Paschal Mystery. The sacraments help us to do that because through them we encounter the divine. God uses the sacraments to really engage with his people; in its own way, each sacrament reveals God and makes Him present to us. God makes this possible by allowing us to actually experience the Paschal Mystery. As we celebrate the sacraments, we do not *simply* remember Jesus' death, resurrection, and ascension: God makes it possible for us to encounter these events, and we come to experience God's compassion, mercy, and unconditional love. In this moment, then, the very presence of Christ is made real to us. As Christ and the Paschal Mystery are our salvation, we come to better understand what our life is truly about.

As we seek to live out a life as a people saved in Christ, we might wonder—how do the sacraments help us do that? In a way, the sacraments act as windows and doors to the Paschal Mystery. Each sacrament helps us to experience something about the Paschal Mystery that is unique and purposeful, to help us grow in our lives with Christ. For example, when we sin (post-baptism) we need a remedy that will help us back to living our relationship with God. Confession is not about making us look bad—we are *all* sinners. We are all in need of God's healing grace. The sacrament of Penance is about helping us encounter God's mercy, compassion, and unconditional love. We come to Him contrite for what we have done. As Jesus acts through the ministry of the priest and we confess our sins, He heals us. He, and not the priest, forgives our sins and pours out on us his fruits of the Paschal Mystery which is God's forgiveness. We are washed clean by his blood and now we can start our lives anew. Penance is a doorway to experiencing God's mercy and unconditional love, reminding us that no matter what we do our God will never forsake or abandon us. The Eucharist feeds and nourishes us to help us stay on the road to salvation. In the Eucharist, it is *not* something, but *someone* we encounter—JESUS CHRIST! The Eucharist is a doorway to Christ's continuing presence in our lives. He feeds and nourishes us in order to strengthen us to stay faithful to Him.

The sacraments, then, open a window to teach us about the life we are called to live, and also to give us the strength to live that life. As we encounter God's grace in multiple ways through the sacraments, they become the true source of helping us see what life is truly about. The world lies to us about the reality of life. Christ shows us through the sacraments how life is intended to be ordered and lived. It is about a life that is truly centered in Christ and in Christ alone. Only when we focus on Christ can we truly understand how to be in relationship with others. Only when we get this right can we grow as human beings. The sacraments are, again, not about what we are doing but about what God is doing for us. We are called through the sacraments to cooperate with and participate in Christ's saving works. A heart truly open to God will discover—in the only way possible—what it means to be truly human.

Our ultimate understanding of the sacraments, then, comes down to this: they are God's gracious gift to us. This gift is intended for one purpose: to encourage and strengthen us through God's grace to live as a people saved in Jesus Christ. Our God loves us so much that He will communicate his grace and mercy through whatever means available so that we can recognize fully his presence in our lives. God has truly built us an amazing home!

If you have any questions about anything, please do not hesitate to call/text me at (978) 254-0560.

If you prefer to email, please visit <https://theholyrood.org/email-fr-brian>.

Please keep me in your prayers.

In Christ,
Fr. Brian

