

PASTOR'S COLUMN

Sacraments, Easter and Ordination

The old “Baltimore Catechism” of the Catholic Church defined a sacrament as “an outward sign instituted by Christ to give grace.” The definition of a sacrament in the New Catechism includes the same elements. A sacrament consists of two things: (1) an external symbol or sign that is perceivable by the senses; (2) an inner spiritual change that isn’t perceivable by the senses (which is why we need the signs) and which is caused by the action of Christ acting in the sacrament.

So, for example, the sacrament of baptism entails pouring water (which we can see) and reciting a prayer (which we can hear); these outward signs point to an interior change that we can’t sense but which is guaranteed by Jesus – the cleansing of original sin, the coming of the Holy Spirit, and membership in the Body of Christ, the Church.

We believe that the sacraments of our Church were gifts given by Christ and flow directly from his death and resurrection. There are three types of sacraments: (a) Sacraments of Initiation (Baptism, Eucharist and Confirmation); (b) Sacraments of Healing (Reconciliation and Anointing of the Sick); and (c) Sacraments of Vocation (Marriage and Holy Orders).

The Easter Season is prime-time to celebrate the Sacraments of Initiation. That is why we baptize and welcome new members into the Church at Easter, and that is why First Holy Communion and the Sacrament of Confirmation are celebrated during the Easter Season, if at all possible. Another sacrament which is celebrated frequently although not exclusively in the Easter Season is Holy Orders, wherein a man commits to God and the Church and becomes a priest or deacon.

As you know, I have been working at Notre Dame Seminary for many years as a Spiritual Director. I continue to work there part-time two days a week. I am happy to report that over 40 men who have been studying at Notre Dame Seminary will be ordained priests or deacons in the months of May and June.

Three of my spiritual directees will be ordained deacons – for Baton Rouge, Dallas and Houma-Thibodaux; four of my spiritual directees will be ordained priests – for Baton Rouge, Carthage, MO, Jackson, MS and New Orleans. I will be participating in five ordinations on several Saturdays in May and June

Please keep in prayer all those receiving sacraments this Easter Season. May God grant them the grace of the Holy Spirit to live lives of faithfulness to Jesus. And may God grant us all a deeper appreciation of the treasury of sacraments in our Church.

God bless,
Fr. Joe