



## Why are the sacraments important to Catholics?

GOSPEL



ANSWERS

jesus said, " my Father gives you the true bread from heaven." So they said to him, "Sir, give us this bread always." Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me will never hunger, and whoever believes in me will never thirst.

– John 6: 30-35

## Saints & inspirational stories

### The Girelli sisters

The Girelli sisters focused on teaching the catechism, love for the sacraments and the Eucharist. They worked establishing boarding schools, orphanages, helping sick people, and student housing, where the sacraments were encouraged and available.



### Jozef Cyrek

As a priest Fr Jozef understood the importance of the sacraments and made them readily available for anyone who needed them. He dedicated much of his ministry to publishing a magazine of the devotion to the Eucharist. He died a martyr in the hands of the Nazis because of his love for the Eucharist.



## Team discussion

After reading over the YOUCAT numbers on the following pages, how do you think the Youth Catechism answers the question of the week? Were there any words or ideas that you did not fully understand that you would like to understand better?

## Answer in your own words:



## YouCat numbers for this week



**SACRAMENT** (Latin *sacramentum* = military oath of allegiance; the usual translation for the Greek *mysterion* = mystery): Sacraments are holy, visible signs instituted by Christ of an invisible reality, in which Christians can experience the healing, forgiving, nourishing, strengthening presence of God that enables them to love in turn; this is possible because God's grace works in the sacraments.

### **#172: How many sacraments are there, and what are their names?**

The Church has seven Sacraments: Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist, Penance, Anointing of the Sick, Holy Orders, and Matrimony.

**#173: Why do we need sacraments in the first place?** We need Sacraments in order to outgrow our petty human life and to become like Jesus through Jesus: children of God in freedom and glory. In Baptism the fallen children of men become cherished children of God; through Confirmation the weak become strong, committed Christians; through Penance the guilty are reconciled; through the Eucharist the hungry become bread for others; through Matrimony and Holy Orders individualists become servants of love; through the Anointing of the Sick the despairing become people of confidence. The sacrament in all the sacraments is Christ himself. In him we men, lost in selfishness, grow and mature into the true Life that has no end.

**#177 Why is faith a prerequisite for the sacraments?** Sacraments are not magic. A sacrament can be effective only if one understands and accepts it in faith. Sacraments not only presuppose faith, they also strengthen it and give expression to it. Jesus commissioned the Apostles first to make people disciples through their preaching, in other words, to awaken their faith and only then to baptize them. There are two things, therefore, that we receive from the Church: faith and the sacraments. Even today someone becomes a Christian, not through a mere ritual or by being listed in a register, but rather through acceptance of the true faith. We receive the true faith from the Church. She vouches for it. Because the Church's faith is expressed in the Liturgy, no sacramental ritual can be changed or manipulated at the discretion of an individual minister or a congregation.

**#175 Why do the sacraments belong to the Church? Why cannot anyone use them however he wants?** Sacraments are Christ's gift to his Church. It is her duty to administer them and to protect them from misuse. Jesus entrusted his words and signs to specific men, namely, the apostles, who were to hand them on; he did not hand them over to an anonymous crowd. Today we would say: He did not post his inheritance on the Internet for free access but rather registered it under a domain name. Sacraments exist for the Church and through the Church. They are for her, because the Body of Christ, which is the Church, is established, nourished, and perfected through the sacraments. They exist through her, because the sacraments are the power of Christ's Body, for example in confession, where Christ forgives our sins through the Priest.

**#174 Why is faith in Jesus Christ not enough? Why does God give us the sacraments, too?** We can and should come to God with all our senses, not just with the intellect. That is why God gives himself to us in earthly signs—especially in bread and wine, the Body and Blood of Christ. People saw Jesus, heard him, could touch him and thereby experience salvation and healing in body and soul. The sensible signs of the Sacraments show this same signature of God, who desires to address the whole man—not just his head.





**#279 Why do we need faith and the sacraments in order to live a good, upright life?**

If we were to rely only on ourselves and our own strength, we would not get far in our attempts to be good. Through faith we discover that we are God's children and that God makes us strong. When God gives us his strength, we call this "grace". Especially in the sacred signs that we call the Sacraments, God gives us the ability actually to do the good that we want to do. Since God saw our misery, he "delivered us from the dominion of darkness" (Col 1:13) through his Son, Jesus Christ. He granted us the opportunity to make a new start in fellowship with him and to walk the path of love.

**#218 What is the right way to honor the Lord present in the bread and wine?**

Because God is truly present in the consecrated species of bread and wine, we must preserve the sacred gifts with the greatest reverence and worship our Lord and Redeemer in the Most Blessed Sacrament. If there are consecrated hosts left over after the celebration of Holy Eucharist, they are kept in sacred vessels in the tabernacle. Since the Most Blessed Sacrament is present in them, the tabernacle is one of the most venerable places in every church. We genuflect before any tabernacle. Certainly, anyone who is really following Christ will recognize him in the poorest of the poor and serve him in them. But he will also find time to spend in adoration before the tabernacle and offer his love to our Eucharistic Lord.

**#220 What sort of preparation do I need in order to be able to receive Holy Eucharist?**

Someone who would like to receive Holy Eucharist must be Catholic. If he has a serious sin on his conscience, he must first make a confession. Before approaching the altar, one should be reconciled with his neighbors. Until a few years ago, the practice was to eat nothing for at least three hours before Mass; that was how people prepared to encounter Christ in Holy Communion. Today the Church recommends at least one hour of fasting. Another sign of reverence is to wear one's finest clothing—after all, we have a rendezvous with the Lord of the world.

**#176: Which sacraments can be received only once in a lifetime?**

Baptism, Confirmation and Holy Orders. These Sacraments imprint an indelible mark on the soul of the Christian. Baptism and Confirmation make him once and for all a child of God and Christlike. Holy Orders similarly leaves an imprint on a Christian man. Just as someone always is and remains a child of his parents (and not just "sometimes" or "a little bit"), so also through Baptism and Confirmation one becomes forever a child of God, Christlike, and a member of his Church. Similarly, Holy Orders is not a "job" that a man does until retirement; rather, it is an irrevocable charism (gift of grace). Because God is faithful, the effect of these sacraments is maintained forever for the Christian—as receptivity to God's call, as a vocation, and as protection. Consequently these sacraments cannot be repeated.

**#219 How often must a Catholic Christian participate in the celebration of the Eucharist?**

A Catholic Christian is obliged to attend Holy Mass on all Sundays and holy days of obligation. Anyone who is really seeking Jesus' friendship responds as often as possible to Jesus' personal invitation to the feast. Actually, for a genuine Christian, "Sunday duty" is just as inappropriate an expression as "kiss duty" would be for someone who was truly in love. No one can have a living relationship with Christ without going to the place where he is waiting for us. Therefore, from ancient times the celebration of Mass has been the "heart of Sunday" and the most important appointment in the week.

**#221 How does Holy Communion change me?**

Every Holy Communion unites me more deeply with Christ, makes me a living member of the Body of Christ, renews the graces that I received in Baptism and Confirmation, and fortifies me for the battle against sin.