

The Sacraments at the Service of Communion and Mission

321. What are the sacraments at the service of communion and mission?

1533-1535

Two sacraments, Holy Orders and Matrimony, confer a special grace for a particular mission in the Church to serve and build up the People of God. These sacraments contribute in a special way to ecclesial communion and to the salvation of others.

THE SACRAMENT OF HOLY ORDERS

322. What is the sacrament of Holy Orders?

1536

It is the sacrament through which the mission entrusted by Christ to his apostles continues to be exercised in the Church until the end of time.

323. Why is this sacrament called Holy Orders?

1537-1538

Orders designates an ecclesial body into which one enters by means of a special consecration (ordination). Through a special gift of the Holy Spirit, this sacrament enables the ordained to exercise a *sacred power* in the name and with the authority of Christ for the service of the People of God.

324. What place does the sacrament of Holy Orders have in the divine plan of salvation?

1539-1546

1590-1591

This sacrament was prefigured in the Old Covenant in the service of the Levites, in the priesthood of Aaron, and in the institution of the seventy "Elders" (*Numbers* 11:25). These prefigurations find their fulfillment in Christ Jesus who by the sacrifice of the cross is the "one mediator between God and man" (*1 Timothy* 2:5), the "High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek" (*Hebrews* 5:10). The one priesthood of Christ is made present in the ministerial priesthood.

"Only Christ is the true priest, the others being only his ministers." (Saint Thomas Aquinas)

325. What are the degrees that make up the sacrament of Holy Orders?

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The sacrament of Holy Orders is composed of three degrees which are irreplaceable for the organic structure of the Church: the episcopate, the presbyterate and the diaconate.

326. What is the effect of episcopal ordination?

1557-1558

Episcopal ordination confers the fullness of the sacrament of Holy Orders. It makes the bishop a legitimate successor of the apostles and integrates him into the episcopal college to share with the Pope and the other bishops care for all the churches. It confers on him the offices of teaching, sanctifying, and ruling.

327. What is the office confided to a Bishop in a particular Church?

1560-1561

The bishop to whom the care of a particular Church is entrusted is the visible head and foundation of unity for that Church. For the sake of that Church, as vicar of Christ, he fulfills the office of shepherd and is assisted by his own priests and deacons.

328. What is the effect of ordination to the priesthood?

1562-1567

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The anointing of the Spirit seals the priest with an indelible, spiritual character that configures him to Christ the priest and enables him to act in the name of Christ the Head. As a co-worker of the order of bishops he is consecrated to preach the Gospel, to celebrate divine worship, especially the Eucharist from which his ministry draws its strength, and to be a shepherd of the faithful.

329. How does a priest carry out his proper ministry?

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A priest, although ordained for a universal mission, exercises his ministry in a particular Church. This ministry is pursued in sacramental brotherhood with other priests who form the "presbyterate". In communion with the bishop, and depending upon him, they bear responsibility for the particular Church.

330. What is the effect of the ordination to the diaconate?

1569-1571

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The deacon, configured to Christ the servant of all, is ordained for service to the Church. He carries out this service under the authority of his proper bishop by the ministry of the Word, of divine worship, of pastoral care and of charity.

331. How is the sacrament of Holy Orders celebrated?

1572-1574

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The sacrament of Holy Orders is conferred, in each of its three degrees, by means of the *imposition of hands* on the head of the ordinand by the Bishop who pronounces the solemn *prayer* of consecration. With this prayer he asks God on behalf of the ordinand for the special outpouring of the Holy Spirit and for the gifts of the Spirit proper to the ministry to which he is being ordained.

332. Who can confer this sacrament?

1575-1576
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Only validly ordained bishops, as successors of the apostles, can confer the sacrament of Holy Orders.

333. Who can receive this sacrament?

1577-1578
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This sacrament can only be validly received by a baptized man. The Church recognizes herself as bound by this choice made by the Lord Himself. No one can demand to receive the sacrament of Holy Orders, but must be judged suitable for the ministry by the authorities of the Church.

334. Is it necessary to be celibate to receive the sacrament of Holy Orders?

1579-1580
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It is always necessary to be celibate for the episcopacy. For the priesthood in the Latin Church men who are practicing Catholics and celibate are chosen, men who intend to continue to live a celibate life “for the kingdom of heaven” (*Matthew 19:12*). In the Eastern Churches marriage is not permitted after one has been ordained. Married men can be ordained to the permanent diaconate.

335. What are the effects of the sacrament of Holy Orders?

1581-1589

This sacrament yields a special outpouring of the Holy Spirit which configures the recipient to Christ in his triple office as Priest, Prophet, and King, according to the respective degrees of the sacrament. Ordination confers an indelible spiritual character and therefore cannot be repeated or conferred for a limited time.

336. With what authority is the priestly ministry exercised?

1547-1553
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Ordained priests in the exercise of their sacred ministry speak and act not on their own authority, nor even by mandate or delegation of the community, but rather in the Person of Christ the Head and in the name of the Church. Therefore, the ministerial priesthood differs essentially and not just in degree from the priesthood common to all the faithful for whose service Christ instituted it.

THE SACRAMENT OF MATRIMONY

337. What is the plan of God regarding man and woman?

1601-1605

God who is love and who created man and woman for love has called them to love. By creating man and woman he called them to an intimate communion of life and of love in marriage: "So that they are no longer two, but one flesh" (*Matthew* 19:6). God said to them in blessing "Be fruitful and multiply" (*Genesis* 1:28).

338. For what ends has God instituted Matrimony?

1659-1660

The marital union of man and woman, which is founded and endowed with its own proper laws by the Creator, is by its very nature ordered to the communion and good of the couple and to the generation and education of children. According to the original divine plan this conjugal union is indissoluble, as Jesus Christ affirmed: "What God has joined together, let no man put asunder" (*Mark* 10:9).

339. How does sin threaten marriage?

1606-1608

Because of original sin, which caused a rupture in the God-given communion between man and woman, the union of marriage is very often threatened by discord and infidelity. However, God in his infinite mercy gives to man and woman the grace to bring the union of their lives into accord with the original divine plan.

340. What does the Old Testament teach about marriage?

1609-1611

God helped his people above all through the teaching of the Law and the Prophets to deepen progressively their understanding of the unity and indissolubility of marriage. The nuptial covenant of God with Israel prepared for and prefigured the new covenant established by Jesus Christ the Son of God, with his spouse, the Church.

341. What new element did Christ give to Matrimony?

1612-1617

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Christ not only restored the original order of matrimony but raised it to the dignity of a sacrament, giving spouses a special grace to live out their marriage as a symbol of Christ's love for his bride the Church: "Husbands, love your wives as Christ loves the Church" (*Ephesians 5:25*).

342. Are all obliged to get married?

1618-1620

Matrimony is not an obligation for everyone, especially since God calls some men and women to follow the Lord Jesus in a life of virginity or of celibacy for the sake of the Kingdom of Heaven. These renounce the great good of Matrimony to concentrate on the things of the Lord and seek to please him. They become a sign of the absolute supremacy of Christ's love and of the ardent expectation of his glorious return.

343. How is the sacrament of Matrimony celebrated?

1621-1624

Since Matrimony establishes spouses in a public state of life in the Church, its liturgical celebration is public, taking place in the presence of a priest (or of a witness authorized by the Church) and other witnesses.

344. What is matrimonial consent?

1625-1632

1662-1663

Matrimonial consent is given when a man and a woman manifest the will to give themselves to each other irrevocably in order to live a covenant of faithful and fruitful love. Since consent constitutes Matrimony, it is indispensable and irreplaceable. For a valid marriage the consent must have as its object true Matrimony, and be a human act which is conscious and free and not determined by duress or coercion.

345. What is required when one of the spouses is not a Catholic?

1633-1637

A *mixed* marriage (between a Catholic and a baptized non-Catholic) needs for liceity the permission of ecclesiastical authority. In a case of *disparity of cult* (between a Catholic and a non-baptized person) a dispensation is required for validity. In both cases, it is essential that the spouses do not exclude the acceptance of the essential ends and properties of marriage. It is also necessary for the Catholic party to accept the obligation, of which the non-Catholic party has been advised, to persevere in the faith and to assure the baptism and Catholic education of their children.

346. What are the effects of the sacrament of Matrimony?

1638-1642

The sacrament of Matrimony establishes a perpetual and exclusive *bond* between the spouses. God himself seals the consent of the spouses. Therefore, a marriage which is ratified and consummated between baptized persons can never be dissolved. Furthermore, this sacrament bestows upon the spouses the grace necessary to attain holiness in their married life and to accept responsibly the gift of children and provide for their education.

347. What sins are gravely opposed to the sacrament of Matrimony?

1645-1648

Adultery and polygamy are opposed to the sacrament of matrimony because they contradict the equal dignity of man and woman and the unity and exclusivity of married love. Other sins include the deliberate refusal of one's procreative potential which deprives conjugal love of the gift of children and divorce which goes against the indissolubility of marriage.

348. When does the Church allow the physical separation of spouses?

1629

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The Church permits the physical separation of spouses when for serious reasons their living together becomes practically impossible, even though there may be hope for their reconciliation. As long as one's spouse lives, however, one is not free to contract a new union, except if the marriage be null and be declared so by ecclesiastical authority.

349. What is the attitude of the Church toward those people who are divorced and then remarried?

1650-1651

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The Church, since she is faithful to her Lord, cannot recognize the union of people who are civilly divorced and remarried. "Whoever divorces his wife and marries another, commits adultery against her; and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery" (*Mark* 10:11-12). The Church manifests an attentive solicitude toward such people and encourages them to a life of faith, prayer, works of charity and the Christian education of their children. However, they cannot receive sacramental absolution, take Holy Communion, or exercise certain ecclesial responsibilities as long as their situation, which objectively contravenes God's law, persists.

350. Why is the Christian family called a *domestic church*?

1655-1658

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The Christian family is called the domestic church because the family manifests and lives out the communal and familial nature of the Church as the family of God. Each family member, in accord with their own role, exercises the baptismal priesthood and contributes toward making the family a community of grace and of prayer, a school of human and Christian virtue and the place where the faith is first proclaimed to children.