

## Sacraments of Initiation

Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist lay the foundations of every Christian life



### TARGET AUDIENCE

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#### Overview

This Object provides Church teaching on the three Sacraments of Initiation of our faith: Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist. These three sacraments together accomplish Christian initiation.

The multimedia element is a graphical representation of three sacramental 'moments'.

#### Teacher Background

**Teachers should note that there is a divergence of practice in Australia in the order in which the Sacraments of Initiation are received. You will need to take this into account when you using this Object. Check what is the practice in your diocese.**

Teachers are encouraged to review the 'Exploring the Mass' section of the DVD Rom *Become One Body One Spirit in Christ* to deepen their understanding of the scriptural, historical and theological foundations of the Eucharist.

In particular, the following aspects of *Become One Body One Spirit in Christ* provide entry points and context for this Learning Object:

- Within the pathway 'Theological Reflections' watch the videos 'Sacred Signs' and 'Human Work and God's Work'. The content of the video is developed further in the excerpts taken from either the essay *Theological Reflections on the Mass and on The Roman Missal* or *Living a Eucharistic Life*, both written by Msgr Kevin Irwin. The excerpts can be accessed by clicking on the 'Read More' arrow, or else you can download the essay by clicking on the 'View Essay' button.

*Where appropriate, use this material with the students.*

#### Supporting Content

*This text supports the focus of the multimedia element.*

#### **Theological Perspectives: Church Teaching**

*The Sacraments of the New Testament were instituted by Christ the Lord and entrusted to the Church. As actions of Christ and of the Church, they are signs and*

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*means by which faith is expressed and strengthened, worship is offered to God and our sanctification is brought about. Thus they contribute in the most effective manner to establishing, strengthening and manifesting ecclesiastical communion (The Code of Canon Law (CIC), 1983. canon 840).*

*From the time of the apostles, becoming a Christian has been accomplished by a journey and initiation in several stages. This journey can be covered rapidly or slowly, but certain essential elements will always have to be present: proclamation of the Word, acceptance of the Gospel entailing conversion, profession of faith, Baptism itself, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and admission to Eucharistic communion (Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC), 1229).*

The sacraments of Christian initiation – Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist – lay the foundations of every Christian life. *The sharing in the divine nature given to men through the grace of Christ bears a certain likeness to the origin, development, and nourishing of natural life. The faithful are born anew by Baptism, strengthened by the Sacrament of Confirmation, and receive in the Eucharist the food of eternal life. By means of these sacraments of Christian initiation, they thus receive in increasing measure the treasures of the divine life and advance toward the perfection of charity (CCC 1212).*

Baptism incorporates us into Christ and forms us into God's people. This first sacrament pardons all our sins, rescues us from the power of darkness, and brings us to the dignity of adopted children, a new creation through water and the Holy Spirit. Hence we are called and are indeed the children of God.

*At the table of the Eucharist, we eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Son of Man so that we may have eternal life and show forth the unity of God's people. By offering ourselves with Christ, we share in the universal sacrifice, that is, the entire community of the redeemed offered to God by their High Priest, and we pray for a greater outpouring of the Holy Spirit, so that the whole human race may be brought into the unity of God's family (Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA), General Introduction 2).*

Confirmation fills us with the Holy Spirit and makes us more completely the image of the Lord, so that we bear witness to him before the world and work to bring the Body of Christ to its fullness (CIC 840).

Through the sacraments of Christian initiation, *we receive in increasing*

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*measure, the treasures of divine life and advance towards the perfection of charity (Apostolic Constitution on the Sacrament of Confirmation).*

*Thus, the three sacraments of Christian initiation closely combine to bring us, the faithful of Christ, to his full stature and to enable us to carry out the mission of the entire people of God in the Church and in the world (RCIA General Introduction 2).*

### Theological Reflection

Initiation into the life of the Church is a gradual process that takes place within the community of the faithful (RCIA 4). The whole community is responsible for passing on its faith, its story, values and traditions to the next generation; and for introducing its children into the Sacramental life of the Church. The participation of the whole faith community is required prior to, during and after the celebration of the Sacraments of Initiation (cf. RCIA 9).

### Initiation

- In the process of initiation there are three sacramental 'moments': Baptism, Confirmation, and the Eucharist. These three sacraments together accomplish Christian Initiation: *Holy Baptism is the basis of the whole Christian life, the gateway to life in the Spirit (vitae spiritualis ianua), and the door which gives access to the other sacraments. Through Baptism we are freed from sin and reborn as sons of God; we become members of Christ, are incorporated into the Church and made sharers in her mission: 'Baptism is the sacrament of regeneration through water and in the word' (CCC 1213).*
- Baptism is the principal place for the first and fundamental conversion. It is by faith in the Gospel and by Baptism that one renounces evil and gains salvation, that is, the forgiveness of all sins and the gift of new life (CCC 1427). Christ's call to conversion continues to resound in the lives of Christians. *It is the movement of a 'contrite heart', drawn and moved by grace to respond to the merciful love of God who loved us first (CCC 1428).*
- *By the sacrament of Confirmation, (the baptised) are more perfectly bound to the Church and are enriched with a special strength of the Holy Spirit. Hence they are, as true witnesses of Christ, more strictly obliged to spread and defend the faith by word and deed (CCC 1285).*
- *The Eucharist is the source and summit of the Christian life. The other sacraments, and indeed all ecclesiastical ministries and works of the apostolate, are bound up with the Eucharist and are oriented toward it.*

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*For in the blessed Eucharist is contained the whole spiritual good of the Church, namely Christ himself, our Pasch (CCC 1324).*

### For Reflection and Discussion: Ideas for Use

Select one or more of the following activities for students to complete.

1 **Ask the students to answer the following individually, then share with the class:**

- What is a sacrament?
- Explain what is meant by the phrase 'sacrament of initiation'.
- Explain the relationship between Baptism and Confirmation.
- Explain why each of these sacraments is important.
- If you have received these sacraments, describe what you remember about receiving them. Do you remember how you felt? What was the attitude of your family on these occasions; did they support you? How?
- Describe a time when you have been present when others have received a sacrament and you could feel that it was a very special experience. Why do you think this was so?

2 **Direct students to undertake research on the symbolic elements of the Sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation using the internet.**

There are symbols and symbolic actions in the ceremony of Baptism.

(i) State two of them. (ii) What is the meaning of each?

There are symbols and symbolic actions in the ceremony of Confirmation. (i) State two of them. (ii) What is the meaning of each?

### Teacher Professional Development Resources

['The Sacrament of the Eucharist'](#), *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1322-1323

Fr Richstatter, Thomas, OFM, ['Immersed in God's Love: Our Sacraments of Initiation'](#), *Catholic Update*, 2009