

Sacraments and Sacramentals

We recognize that the Sacraments have a visible and invisible reality, a reality open to all the human senses but grasped in its God-given depths with the eyes of faith. When parents hug their children, for example, the visible reality we see is the hug. The invisible reality the hug conveys is love. We cannot "see" the love the hug expresses, though sometimes we can see its nurturing effect in the child.

The visible reality we see in the Sacraments is their outward expression, the form they take, and the way in which they are administered and received. The invisible reality we cannot "see" is God's grace, his gracious initiative in redeeming us through the death and Resurrection of his Son. His initiative is called *grace* because it is the free and loving gift by which he offers people a share in his life, and shows us his favor and will for our salvation. Our response to the grace of God's initiative is itself a grace or gift from God by which we can imitate Christ in our daily lives.

The saving words and deeds of Jesus Christ are the foundation of what he would communicate in the Sacraments through the ministers of the Church. Guided by the Holy Spirit, the Church recognizes the existence of Seven Sacraments instituted by the Lord. They are the Sacraments of Initiation ([Baptism](#), [Confirmation](#), the [Eucharist](#)), the Sacraments of Healing ([Penance](#) and the [Anointing of the Sick](#)), and the Sacraments at the Service of Communion ([Marriage](#) and [Holy Orders](#)). Through the Sacraments, God shares his holiness with us so that we, in turn, can make the world holier.

NOTE: The links above are available if you go to the USCCB Prayer and Worship Section.