

THE BIBLICAL FOUNDATION AND EFFICACY OF THE SEVEN SACRAMENTS

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Abstract

The seven sacraments are essential aspects of the Roman Catholic Church. Theology defines the sacraments as 'efficacious signs', this being the sense of the scholastic saying – significando causari.² Much attention is given to the study of the efficacious casuality of the sacraments, while less attention is given to their nature as signs. To this aspect of the sacraments, this paper shall focus on the seven sacraments, the efficacy and significance of the sacramental rites as signs. The rites of the sacraments most often seem to be banal and artificial. Hence, it is of immense importance to bring back to consciousness the high relevance of the sacraments by providing in-depth explications of the seven sacraments as efficacious signs. Through typology, biblical theology has a role in the interpretation of the meaning and origin of the sacraments by revisiting the common tradition of the apostolic age and defining the principles which inspired them. Biblical symbolism accounts and constitutes the primitive foundation for a comprehensive approach to the true significance of the sacraments in their original institution

Keywords: Seven Sacraments, Biblical Foundation, Efficacy, Christianity

1. Introduction

The sacraments, in the strict sense, understood here, and defined in the theology of the Church, are the seven vital actions of the Church in its liturgy which are efficacious for salvation: Holy Eucharist, baptism, confirmation, holy orders, matrimony and the anointing of the sick. The

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² cf. Danielou, J, S.J. *The Bible and the Liturgy*. Michigan: University of Notre Dame Press, Servant Books, 1956, 3.

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theology of the sacraments, which began in Scripture, was constantly developed in the course of history. This entails that, within the course of history there was a development in the understanding of the theology of the sacraments. The concept and theology of the sacraments were strongly stamped by the doctrine of Tertullian, St. Jerome and St. Cyprian. St. Augustine was also a prominent figure although he was far from giving a doctrine *de sacramentis in genere*. In the Greek world, the main figures were St. Gregory of Nyssa and St. John Chrysostom, who used the term *mysterion*, in a sense closely allied to that of *sacramentum*.³

The above development in the theology of the sacraments was spurred by the questions of soteriology.⁴ The theology of the sacraments is also concerned with the common element which characterizes all of them intrinsically. It is worthy to note that the Fathers as a whole worked out their theology of sacraments by depicting the realities of each of these sacraments, especially Eucharist and baptism. From a biblical approach to the sacraments, through complex and progressive historical evolution, this paper examines the efficacious nature of the sacraments from a typological perspective.

2. Sacrament: Towards Explication

Etymologically, ‘sacramentum’ originates from the Latin verb ‘sacrare’ plus the suffix ‘mentum’ and means to make something sacred, to make it of divine rite. This could only be done by a public person, never a private one. The word sacramentum was used by the Latin Church above all in the Vulgat, until the second century to translate the Greek word *mysterion*.⁵ In the New Testament Greek, the word *mysterion* is used precisely thirty times both by the synoptic and Paul but with great prevalence in the Pauline letters. The synoptic speak of mystery (Mk 4:11, Lk 8, 10). The mystery in the synoptic context is that of the advent of the messianic kingdom in Christ. The Apostle often uses the term *mysterium-sacramentum* in his epistles. Regarding the biblical sense of *mysterium-sacramentum*, these

³ cf. *Sacramentum Mundi. An Encyclopedia of Theology*. Edited by Karl Rahner with Cornelius Ernst and Kelvin Smyth. Chicago: Search Press, 379.

⁴ cf. *Sacramentum Mundi. An Encyclopedia of Theology*, 378.

⁵ cf. Cajetan Ehiem. ‘*Unpublished Lecture Note on Sacramental Theology*’. Theology II class, Seat of Wisdom, Owerri.

words have a great range of meanings both in the O.T and N.T. Paul used the word *mysterion* to designate the divine plan of salvation (1 Cor 2:7-10, Rom 16: 25-26, Col 1:26-27, Eph 1:9-10, Eph 3:3).⁶ The word *sacrament* prevailed among the Romans. The oath sworn by soldiers, with which they obliged themselves to obey the emperor was referred as *sacramentum militare*. The money also deposited by two litigans in the sacred place before the start of a trial was referred as *sacramentum civile*.⁷ Tertullain (160-223) was the first to use the Latin term *sacramentum*, taken from juridical and military language in a specific sense, to designate the religious rite celebrated by the Church.⁸

The Church is herself a sacrament, as Karl Rahner opines; The fundamental act of the Church in an individual's regard, in situation that are decisive for him, an act which truly involves the nature of the Church as the historical, eschatological presence of the redemptive grace is ipso facto, a sacrament, even if it were later that reflection was directed to its sacramental character that follows from its connection with the nature of the Church.⁹

The Catholic Church acts sacramentally in its entire saving mission. The sacraments affect and sanctify the most important phases of the human life, from the birth to the death of a person.

St. Thomas Aquinas sums up the meaning of sacrament as a sign that commemorates what precedes it- Christ's passion; demonstrates what is accomplished in us through Christ's passion- grace; and prefigures what that Passion pledges to us- future glory.¹⁰ *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* designates the sacraments as efficacious signs of grace, instituted by Christ and entrusted to the Church, by which divine life is dispensed to us. The visible rites by which the sacraments are celebrated signify and

⁶ cf. Cajetan Ehiem. 'Unpublished Lecture Note on Sacramental Theology' Theology II class, Seat of Wisdom, Owerri.

⁷ cf. Cajetan Ehiem. 'Unpublished Lecture Note on Sacramental Theology' Theology II class, Seat of Wisdom, Owerri.

⁸ cf. Cajetan Ehiem. 'Unpublished Lecture Note on Sacramental Theology' Theology II class, Seat of Wisdom, Owerri.

⁹ cf. Karl Rahner. *The Church and the Sacraments*, California: Herder press, 1963, 41.

¹⁰ cf. St. Thomas Aquinas, *STh* III,60,3.

make present the grace proper to each sacrament. They bear fruit in those who receive them with the required dispositions.¹¹ This paper examines the efficacious signs of the sacraments from a biblical approach.

3. The Classifications of the Sacraments

The sacraments are classified into three divisions.¹² These classifications include; the sacraments of Christian Initiation, the sacraments of healing and the sacraments at the service of communion and the mission of the faithful.

3.1 Sacraments of Initiation

Baptism

Etymologically, baptism originates from the Greek verb *baptizo* which designates to plunge or immerse (Jn 13:26). Baptism designates the plunging of a catechumen into Christ's death from which he rises up by resurrection with Christ as a new creature (2 Cor 5:17). Baptism inaugurates the Christian life. It is the basis of the whole Christian life, the gateway to life in the Spirit, and that door which gives access to other sacraments.¹³ Christ's gesture towards baptism marks an emphasis on the importance and efficacy of the sacrament of baptism. It is the new birth of which Christ spoke to Nicodemus (Jn 3:3). Thus, baptism is necessary for salvation (Jn 3:5). The Holy Baptism holds the first place among all the sacraments because it is the *Ianua vitae spiritualis* – door of the spiritual life. It designates a sacrament of regeneration through the washing of water with the invocation of the Most Holy Trinity (Mt 28:18-20, Rom 6:3-6, 1 Cor 12:12-13). Paul attests to the importance of baptism for salvation (1 Cor 1:14, Rom 6:1-11).

a) Typologies

There are typologies of the sacrament of baptism which are evident in the Old Testament. These typologies/events prefigure this sacrament:

¹¹ cf. *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*, second edition. Ibadan: St. Pauls Publications, 2018, 1131.

¹² cf. *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1211.

¹³ cf. *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*.1212.

- The primordial waters over which the spirit of God hovered (Gen 1:2). The ‘waters of the flood’ signifies a type of baptism that saves us now (1 Peter 3:20-21).
- Paul proposes circumcision as a type of baptism (Col 2:11-12).
- The Pauline theology on the crossing of the Red Sea by the Israelites suggests a form of baptism into Moses in the cloud and in the sea (1 Cor 10:2).
- The desert event of the striking of the rock by Moses (Num 20:1-11), is proposed by Tertullian as a form of baptism whereby Christ communicates life to the Christian people.¹⁴
- Of typological significance is the episode of Naaman the Syrian army commander, who was healed from leprosy by a seven-fold bath (2 Kg 5:8-14).

b) Prophecies

In the Old Testament contains explicit prophecies of baptism. For instance, Ezekiel regards the ritual ablution as connected to the future restoration of Israel (Ez 36:25-26). Isaiah’s reference to the washing away of the field of the daughter of Zion (Is 4:4). Zechariah’s prophecy: on the opening of fountain for the house of David for sin and impurity (Zech 13:1).

c) Biblical Symbolism of Baptism

i) The *Sphragis*

Sphragis is one of the rites in the ceremonies of Baptism. This rite is a very ancient tradition. It is the imposition of the sign of the cross on the forehead of the candidate at Baptism. St. Basil cites this rite with the prayer *ad orientem* as an oral tradition that dates back to the Apostles who instructed to mark with the sign of the cross those who put their hope in the name of the Lord.¹⁵ In ancient times, the word *sphragis* designated the mark stamped on an object. It was often used as a term in the description of a seal. St. Paul adopts this symbol at Corinth when he tells them; ‘they are the seal of his apostolate in the Lord’ (1 Cor 9:2). That is to say, that the

¹⁴ cf. Tertullian. *De Baptismo*. Chp 9, 3 in CCL Corpus Christorum Series Latina 1, 284.

¹⁵ cf. Danielou, J, S.J. *The Bible and the Liturgy*. 54.

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term *sphragis* designates the mark with which an owner marked his possessions.

Of immense importance are the various understanding and application of the term which is related to our context; firstly, *sphragis* was used by shepherds to brand the beasts of their flock in order to distinguish them; again it was the custom in the Roman army to mark recruits as a sign of their enlistment which was referred as *signaculum* and consisted of a tattooing of the name of the general.¹⁶ In baptism, the sign of the cross which is marked on the candidate becomes a seal that shows henceforth a candidate belongs to Christ. This reflects appropriately on the theme of the Good Shepherd; 'I am the good shepherd... I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father, and I lay down my life for the sheep' (Jn 10:11,14,15). The *sphragis* as a pledge of salvation allows the Lord to recognize His sheep.

In the Old Testament, baptismal *sphragis* is related to the Jewish circumcision. The Jewish circumcision was the seal of the alliance with God and of incorporation into the old Israel, just as baptism is the seal of the new alliance, and of incorporation into the new Israel.¹⁷ Paul establishes in his writings the parallel nature of baptism and circumcision which are the *sphragis* of the old covenant. In the Epistle to the Romans, Paul relates the *sphragis* to the circumcision of Abraham (Rom 4:11). Likewise in the Epistle to the Ephesians the relation between the *sphragis* and the Holy Spirit, whose seal is embedded on the forehead is evident; 'It is in Him that you have believed and have been marked with the seal of the Holy Spirit' (Eph 1:13). The Pauline approach to the parallelism between circumcision and *sphragis* is evident in the epistle to the Colossians where Paul talks about a circumcision not made by the hand of man, but been buried with Christ as in the circumcision of Christ (Col 2:11-12).

ii) Creation and the Deluge

The crossing of the Red Sea and the Deluge are mentioned in the first epistle to the Corinthians (1 Cor 10:1-5); first epistle of St. Peter (3:19-21), as forms of baptism. The first type of baptism to be found in the most

¹⁶ cf. Danielou, J, S.J. *The Bible and the Liturgy*. 55.

¹⁷ cf. Danielou, J, S.J. *The Bible and the Liturgy*. 66.

ancient catecheses is that of the primitive waters of Genesis.¹⁸ Jean Danielou, S.J highlights thus;

But the New Testament shows us that this new creation is already accomplished in Christ. The incarnation is the creation of the new universe; and it is this creation which is continued in present history and takes place in baptism. It is truly a new creation, 'regeneration' according to the word used in the Gospel of St. John (Jn 3:5). And St. Paul calls the newly baptized a 'new creature' (2 Cor 5:17), and this re-creation is accomplished in the baptismal waters (Jn 3:5). The analogy of the primordial waters with the waters of baptism is, then, an aspect, which is fundamentally biblical, of the parallelism between the first and the second creation'.¹⁹

Water in this context is a principle of destruction, the instrument of judgment destroying the sinful world; and, on the other hand, it is the principle of creation, the life-giving element in which a new creature is brought into life.

The Deluge is one of the types of Baptism frequently cited. It is concerned with the waters of destruction, which are instrument of the punishment of God, from which the people of God are preserved. Just as in the event of the waters of flood used in the destruction of the world in the time of Noah (Gen 6:13-22). A traditional typology appears in St. John Chrysostom: 'The narrative of the Deluge'; the ark is the Church; Noah, Christ; the dove, the Holy Spirit; the olive branch, the divine goodness.²⁰ As in the midst of the sea, the ark protected those who were inside it, so the Church saves those who are spared. The Pauline theology on the theological significance of Deluge as a form of baptism is evident in the Epistle to the Romans; on death to sin and self (Rom 6:3-4), New life in Christ (Rom 6:4-5) and in the letter of Peter; cleansing from sin (1 Peter 3:21).

¹⁸ cf. Danielou, J, S.J. *The Bible and the Liturgy*. 71.

¹⁹ cf. Danielou, J, S.J. *The Bible and the Liturgy*. 72.

²⁰ cf. Danielou, J, S.J. *The Bible and the Liturgy*. 85.

Confirmation

Chrisma

The first characteristic of the sacrament of Confirmation is that it is an anointing (*chrisma*).²¹ Of immense importance is the place of anointing in the Old Testament during the consecration of priests and kings. It is one of the sacraments of initiation. It constituted a sacrament by which the Holy Spirit communicated to them in view of the functions which they were to carry out.²² In the Prophets, we find a messianic typology of this sacrament with the announcement that at the end of time, an Anointed One will come, A Messiah, a *Christos* (Dan 9:26). In Leviticus, the sacramental anointing of priestly consecration and anointing is evident and emphasized (Lev 21). It is also related to the royal anointing which is fulfilled in Christ received through the Holy Spirit. This constitutes a new aspect of Confirmation: the oil is the chrism by which the baptized becomes a new *Christos, a christianos*.²³ Noteworthy, the figure of this chrism is to be found in the Old Testament; Moses' consecration of his brother by anointing (Lev 8:12) and the anointing of Solomon (1 Kg 1:32-39). Christian anointing is, moreover, a participation in the anointing of Christ.

Christ promised the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, a promise which he fulfilled on Easter Sunday and more effectively at the event of the Pentecost (Acts 2:1-14). And from thence, in fulfilment of Christ's will, the laying of hands on newly baptized to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit that completes the grace of baptism (Acts 8:14-17). It involves a special mark, or character on the soul that can never be erased.

The effects of the sacrament of confirmation is an increased portion of the gifts of the Holy Spirit; wisdom, knowledge, right judgment, understanding, courage, piety, and fear of God (1 Cor 12:8-10). Confirmation deepens and strengthens the grace received at baptism, which is considered the presence of God in the soul. There are initiation rites of this kind in all cultures, most of which locate them at the start of adult life. In some tribes and nations, initiation into puberty comprises a series of

²¹ cf. Danielou, J, S.J. *The Bible and the Liturgy*. 114.

²² cf. Danielou, J, S.J. *The Bible and the Liturgy*. 115.

²³ cf. Danielou, J, S.J. *The Bible and the Liturgy*. 116.

dramatic trials which young people have to undergo.²⁴ The tap on the cheek by the bishop during the sacrament of confirmation is a reminiscent of the rite of this sacrament. The practice has been said to originate in an ancient legal custom. The tap on the cheek by the bishop was intended to help those who had been confirmed to remember that they had received the Holy Spirit, and to grasp the significance of that reception. The medieval theologian Durandus of Mende, for example justifies the tap on the cheek because by it the candidate will remember all the more forcefully that the sacrament has been received.²⁵

In the New Testament, biblical perspectives of the sacrament of Confirmation are evident: the laying on of hands on Samaritan believers by the Apostles (Acts 8:14-17); Laying on of hands on Ephesian disciples by Paul (Acts 19:1-6); Sealed with the promised Holy Spirit (Eph 4:30); Laying on of hands (Heb 6:2).

Holy Eucharist

The name Eucharist is derived from the Greek *Eucharistein*- to give thanks. It was used by Luke and Paul in the narration of the institution of this sacrament by our Lord on the night he was betrayed (Lk 22:19; 1 Cor 11:24). In the scriptures, other terms like *fractio panis* (Acts 2:42; Lk 24:35) and the Lord's supper (1 Cor 11:20) are used. The Holy Eucharist completes the Christian initiation.²⁶ It is the sum and summary of our faith as Christians.²⁷ The whole ecclesial life finds its basis and foundation in the Holy Eucharist. For, in the Holy Eucharist is contained the whole spiritual good of the Church, namely Christ. Through this sacrament, we unite ourselves to Christ, who makes us sharers in his body and blood to form a single body. In the Christian initiation which took place during the Easter vigil, baptism, confirmation and the Eucharist formed one whole, constituting the introduction of the new Christian into the Church.²⁸ The Holy Eucharist is undoubtedly considered the first sacrament in order of dignity either in itself or in relationship with other sacraments. It is

²⁴ cf. Anselm, Grün. *The Seven Sacraments*, 92.

²⁵ cf. Anselm, Grün. *The Seven Sacraments*, 93.

²⁶ cf. *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*. 2nd ed., 1322.

²⁷ cf. *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*. 2nd ed., 1327.

²⁸ cf. Danielou, J, S.J. *The Bible and the Liturgy*. 127.

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therefore the centre, heart, fundament, pivot and summit of the Christian community (Lumen Gentium 26).

a) *Prefigurations in the Old Testament*

Several episodes and events in Old Testament prefigure the sacrament and sacrifice of the Holy Eucharist. The sacrifice of Melchizedek; Priest and king involves an offering of bread and wine (Gen 14:18). The manna which God fed the Israelites in the wilderness (Deut 8:3), designates the Eucharist in which Christ feeds his church with his body and blood as she makes her journey towards the heavenly banquet. The Passover celebration which involved the feast of unleavened bread was in commemoration of God's redemption of the Israelites (Ex 12:14).

b) *Prefigurations in the New Testament*

Of immense importance were the two miracles of Jesus which foreshadowed the institution of the Holy Eucharist: the wedding feast at Cana (Jn 2:11), and the multiplication of the loaves (Mt 14:13-21).

i) *The Institution of the Holy Eucharist*

The Holy Eucharist was instituted by Christ in a paschal context within the setting of the Jewish Passover feast. As seen in Jewish rites, the four actions of Christ at the last supper; he took the bread, blessed it, broke it and gave it to his disciples (Mk 14:22-23), express the technical name for the Jewish grace before meal.²⁹ On the night that Christ was betrayed, at the last supper, Christ instituted the Eucharistic sacrifice of his Body and Blood. He mandated his Apostles to celebrate the Eucharist thereby constituting them priests of the New Testament. As *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* illustrates, Christ did this in order to perpetuate the sacrifice of the cross throughout the ages until he comes again, and so to entrust to his beloved spouse, the church, a memorial of his death and resurrection: a sacrament of love, a sign of unity, a bond of charity, a paschal banquet in which Christ is consumed, the mind is filled with grace, a pledge of future glory is given to us.³⁰ The connection between the Jewish Passover, death

²⁹ cf. Akpan, Emmanuel A. *A Companion for Pastoral Administration in Dogmatic Moral and Legal Materials*. Akwa Ibom State: Edi-Max Printers, 2017, 167

³⁰ cf. *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*, second edition, 1323.

of Jesus and the Eucharist is clearly expressed by Jesus himself (Mt 26:2; Mk 14:1; Lk 22:1).

The Eucharist rites represented the mystery of the incarnation of Jesus Christ, God's vision of us human beings becoming one with him. The various actions of mixing (for instance, the commingling of water and wine and the immersion of bread in wine) express our becoming one with God like Jesus. *Lumen Gentium* teaches that through the celebration of the Holy Eucharist, the unity of believers, who form one body in Christ, is both expressed and brought about.³¹ Everyone is called to partake in this union with Christ. Through the celebration of the Holy Eucharist by means of the flesh and blood of the Lord, that love of God and man which is the soul of the postulate is communicated and nourished.

ii) A Biblical Approach to the Effects

- **Spiritual Nourishment:** The Holy Eucharist nourishes the soul. Jesus says unless 'you eat of the flesh of the son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in you' (Jn 6:53-58).
- **Union with Christ:** Paul explains the significance of the Eucharist, emphasizing unity and remembrance (1 Cor 10-11). Participating in the Eucharist unites us with Christ and with each other (1 Cor 10:16-17).
- **Forgiveness of sins:** Jesus institutes the Eucharist as a new covenant which was shed for the forgiveness of sins (Mt 26:28).
- **Communion with the Holy Trinity:** The Holy Eucharist brings us into communion with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit (1 Cor 10:21).
- **Worship and Thanksgiving:** The Holy Eucharist is an act of worship, thanksgiving and remembrance (Lk 22:19-20).

³¹cf. *Vatican Council II. The conciliar and post conciliar documents*, Vol I. Ed., Austin Flannery, O.P. Mumbai: St. Paul's Press, 1975, 321.

3.2 Sacraments of Healing

Penance

The reconciliation of man through forgiveness of sin stands at the heart of the mission and ministry of Christ.³² Jewish tradition perceived this mission of reconciliation of Christ as scandalous. This tradition understood forgiveness as a divine prerogative dispensed and granted only by God (Lev 19:20-22), thus, the outcry; ‘Who can forgive sins but God alone’ (Lk 5:21). This sacrament is referred to as the sacrament of conversion because it brings to light Christ’s call to conversion. As *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* puts it, it is the first step in returning to the Father from whom one has strayed.³³ The Catholic Church fosters Christ’s call to conversion, which is essentially the proclamation of the kingdom of God; a call to repentance (Mk 1:15). This marks the reconciliatory nature of the Church.

a) *Reconciliation in the Old Testament*

The unswerving willingness of God to forgive sin is manifested in time and in history of the chosen people and, extensively manifested in Christ, who is God’s greatest act of forgiveness. Forgiveness often begins with God’s initiative, demonstrating His mercy. Forgiveness is woven throughout the Old Testament, revealing God’s merciful character. This can be seen in the Noahic Covenant (Gen 9:8-17). The sacrificial system in the Old Testament emphasizes sacrifices for atonement and forgiveness which are conducted and mediated by the Priests (Lev 1-7, 16-17, 19:20-22; Num 15:22-31; Deut 21:1-19). The prophetic calls to repentance emphasize God’s desire for repentance and forgiveness (Is 1:18; Jer 31:34; Ez 18:21-32; Hos 14:1-2).

b) *Reconciliation in the New Testament*

The Gospel writings contain of situations where Christ granted this sacrament of forgiveness. The synoptic tradition comprises of Jesus’ emphasis on forgiveness. Jesus depicted forgiveness as a fundamental aspect of faith; ‘For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your

³² cf. Cajetan Ehiem. ‘*Unpublished Lecture Note on Sacramental Theology*’ Theology II class, Seat of Wisdom, Owerri.

³³ cf. *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*, second edition, 1423.

heavenly father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive them their sins, your father will not forgive your sins (Mt 6:14-15). Other instances are seen in Mt 6:12; Mt 18:21-22; Lk 6:27-28.

The Markan tradition portrays Jesus' divine authority of forgiving sins thereby challenging traditional Jewish understanding (Mk 2:1-12). Other instances of such portrayal of the divine authority to forgive can be seen in; Lk 5:17-26; Lk 19:1-10; Lk 19:1-10; Lk 23:33-34. In the Johanne tradition, Jesus grants apostles authority to forgive sins (Jn 20:21-23).

c) *Biblical Perspectives*

- The sacrament of reconciliation as the heart of Christ's mission and ministry is directed towards forgiveness of sins (Jn 20:23; Mt 9:8; Mk 2:7-10; Lk 5:20-24; Lk 7:48-50). To foster the reconciliation between God and man, Jesus granted the apostles authority to forgive sins. Through confession, sins are forgiven, and the individual is reconciled with God.
- The individual is restored through God's purifying mercies. The soul is cleansed from sin's stain through confession (1 Jn 1:9; Ps 51:2-3; Is 1:18).
- The restoration of the relationship and fellowship with God (Rom 5:10-11; 2 Cor 5:18-20).
- The soul is revived through God's mercy and forgiveness (Ps 41:4, Ps 103:2-3; Mt 9:2-3).
- The sacrament of reconciliation grants inner peace, consolation and strength against sin (Mt 11:28-30; Jn 14:27; Rom 5:1; 1 Cor 10:13; Eph 6:10-18).
- Through reconciliation, spiritual growth and transformation are inevitable. There is renewal of the soul (2 Cor 4:16; Titus 3:5).

Anointing of the Sick

The sacrament of anointing the sick is an essential aspect of the church's concern for the sick and classified under the Sacrament of Healing. The church sees her service to sick people as pastoral care and attendance. Whoever suffers from an illness is in a state of physical but also mental and psychological or psychic crisis. The sick need the help of someone who listens to them and supports them. This highlights the aspect of Christ's

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mission of setting the infirmed free. The sacramental anointing of the sick is the most profound expression of the church's service to humanity. Since the second Vatican Council, the anointing of the sick has been restored to its former position of importance. It is no longer thought of as the last anointing, or extreme unction, but as giving strength to sick people in the physically and spiritually endangered state they have entered through illness.³⁴

Biblical Foundations

The scripture from the Old Testament highlights and emphasizes God's desire for healing and restoration. At Marah, God makes it known to His elected people, the Israelites, His role as a healer; '... I am the Lord, the one who heals you' (Ex 15:26). The sacrament in the Old Testament is hinged on healing and restoration. Of immense importance is the theme of anointing with oil in the Old Testament. Anointing with oil signifies healing, protection and consecration. Those infirmed were anointed to depict ritual cleansing (Lev 14:15-18). This ritual was performed only by the Priests. The role of the priest as minister of the sacrament of the anointing of the sick, and as a significant authority to the cleansing of the infirmed can be inferred from the Old Testament and the New Testament (Lev 14:1-32; Mt 8:4; Lk 5:14; Mk 1:44).

Jesus' mission and ministry emphasize empathy, compassion and healing. The Gospel writings demonstrate Jesus' authority to heal (Mt 4:23-24; Mk 6:13). The disciples of Christ were not left out from having the authority to confer this sacrament. Jesus empowers his disciples to continue his healing ministry. On several occasions, the disciples were seen anointing and healing (Mk 6:13; Lk 10:8-9). The concluding chapter of the Epistle of James emphasizes God's desire for physical and spiritual healing and restoration; 'Is anyone among you sick? They should summon the Presbyters of the church, and they should over pray over them and anoint them with oil in the name of the Lord' (Ja 5:14-15). Early church Fathers like Tertullian (160-220 AD, 'On Baptism' chapter 7), Origen (185-254 AD) '*Contra Celsum*', Bk VII, Chapter 37), St. Hippolytus (170-235 AD, 'Apostolic Tradition, section 45), and St Cyprian (200-258 AD 'Epistles' Letter 16) designate this part as that which establishes the sacrament of the

³⁴ cf. Anselm, Grün. *The Seven Sacraments*, 253.

anointing of the sick. This sacrament continues the healing ministry of Jesus, providing spiritual and physical comfort to those in need.

3.3 Sacraments of Service

Holy Orders

Holy Orders is one of the sacraments of service through which the mission entrusted by Christ to his apostles continues to be exercised in the Church until the end of time, thus it is the sacrament of apostolic ministry.³⁵ The Sacrament of Holy Orders involves the placing of qualified men into the order through which they receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, permitting them to exercise sacred power, which flows only from Christ through his Church. Christ, the head of the Church, established the Sacrament of Holy Orders with the episcopacy of the Apostles. Christ passed on his ministerial priesthood through his Church by Apostolic succession which is today conferred in three degrees; Episcopate, Presbyterate and Diaconate.³⁶ This sacrament is rooted in biblical and apostolic tradition, ensuring the continuity of Christ's mission and ministry.

At the last supper, Christ entrusted his Apostles the mission and authority; '*Hoc facite in meam commemorationem*' – 'Do this in memory of me' (Lk 22:19), thereby constituting them priests of the New Covenant. It is Christ's ministry to make his own body, the Church, grow into the people of God, and a holy temple. Just like the Apostles, priests are called to the ministry of Christ in the name of Christ who is the Chief Teacher.³⁷

Holy Orders in the Plan of Salvation

In the first phase of Jewish history, there was no special group called Priests.³⁸ The great Patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob built altars by themselves and offered sacrifices.³⁹ The sacrament of Holy Orders was prefigured in the Old Covenant in the service of the Levites, in the

³⁵ cf. *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*. 1536.

³⁶ cf. *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1554.

³⁷cf. Richard P. McBrien. *Catholicism*. Minneapolis: Winston Press, 1980, 557.

³⁸ cf. Darshan Jeevan. *Sacrament of Holy Orders*. Department of Catechesis, Exarchate of St Ephrem, Khadhi-Pune, 2018, 8.

³⁹ cf. Darshan Jeevan. *Sacrament of Holy Orders*. 8.

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priesthood of Aaron, and in the institution of the seventy Elders (Number 11:13). In the Old Testament, the concept of ordained ministry is prevalent, with priests (Ex 19:6, 29:1-46; Is 61:6) and prophets (Deut 18:15-22), functioning as intermediaries between God and His elected people. *Kohan* the Hebrew word was used to designate priests in the Old Testament.⁴⁰ *Komer* designated priests of Yahweh who had the duty to stand before God (2 Kg 23:5).⁴¹

The prefigurations find their fullest expression and fulfilment in Christ. Through his sacrifice on the cross, Christ becomes the ‘one mediator between God and man’ (Tim 2:5), and the ‘high priest according to the order of Melchizedek’ (Heb 5:10). The one priesthood of Christ is made present in the ministerial priesthood (CCC 1539, 1546, 1590, 1591). *Hiereus* is the term used for priesthood in the New Testament (Mt 8:4).⁴² The priesthood of Christ was not a continuation of the priesthood of the Jews; it was a new beginning. The old dispensation offered animals and things for sacrifice (Jewish priesthood); Christ himself became the victim by offering himself as the atoning sacrifice in the new dispensation. Here Christ became the priest and victim.

Continuity in the Priesthood of Jesus Christ

Jesus Christ instituted the Eucharist and priesthood according to the New Covenant. By offering himself on the cross for the remission of sins of humanity, he became the one and only mediator between God, the Father and humanity. Christ specially chose the twelve disciples and prepared them to entrust the responsibilities of the Church by giving them His authority (Mt 10:4-40). The twelve were given the privilege of the priesthood of Christ (Jn 20:21-23; Mk 16:13-16; Lk 22:19; Mt 28:19-20). The Apostolic succession was yet prevalent; bishops and presbyters were anointed as successors of the apostles (1 Pet 5:1; 1 Tim 4:14). The seal of the anointing of the priests is indelible. The institution of the Eucharist cannot be separated from the priesthood. The *impositio manus* is the

⁴⁰ cf. Darshan Jeevan. *Sacrament of Holy Orders*. 12.

⁴¹ cf. Darshan Jeevan. *Sacrament of Holy Orders*. 12.

⁴² cf. Darshan Jeevan. *Sacrament of Holy Orders*. 14.

external symbol of the sacrament of the Holy Orders (Acts 14:23; 1 Tim 5:22; 2 Tim 1:6).⁴³

The history of the religions that preceded Christianity shows us that priests perform important functions in all religions one commentator in a major work of reference defines priests as religious leaders who are primarily distinguish from the general mass of followers of a religion both by a special power and by their function of presiding over the worship of the cult as mediators between the divinity and human beings.⁴⁴

Matrimony

The sacrament of matrimony is a sacred institution in the Catholic Church, uniting a baptized man and woman in a union of love. The Church classifies matrimony as one of the sacraments of service. The Church sees marriage as a sacrament because it wants to show that this occasion when two people say yes to each other has something to do with God.⁴⁵ When the Church blesses this marriage, it declares it to be holy and whole, for it has placed it under God's blessings. Christ himself elevated the natural institution of marriage to the dignity of a sacrament during his public ministry.⁴⁶ He did his first miracle at a wedding in Cana (Jn 3:1-11). Also, he taught that marriage in the New Covenant is permanent and holy (Mt 19:3-9).

Matrimony from Creation to the New Covenant

The Old Testament highlights the foundational nature and sacredness of marriage. In the beginning, God creates humanity in His image, male and female (Gen 1:27). The creation of male and female already indicated God's plan and intention for humanity. The creation account also highlights the complementarity between man and woman (Gen 2:18-24). These individuals cease to be two separate individuals but one; 'And the two shall become one flesh' (Gen 2:24). Gen 2:24 sets forth the principle of the unity and indissolubility of marriage. On the sacredness of marriage, God's law to the Israelites underscores adultery as marital infidelity (Ex

⁴³ cf. Darshan Jeevan. *Sacrament of Holy Orders*. 18.

⁴⁴ cf. Anselm, Grün. *The Seven Sacraments*, 204.

⁴⁵ cf. Anselm, Grün. *The Seven Sacraments*, 286.

⁴⁶ cf. *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1601.

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20:27). The Old Testament highlights also extol virtues of marital love (Provbs 5:15-19, 31:10-31).

The New Testament highlights the efficacy and sacramentality of marriage through Christ's and Pauline teachings. In the Gospel writings, the reader of the texts finds where Christ teaches on indissolubility and unity in marriage which forms the basic elements of the sacrament of matrimony (Mt 19:3-12; Mk 10:2-12). Paul in his teachings illustrate marital love with the analogy of Christ and Church (Eph 5:25-33). What makes the sacramentality of matrimony is consent. And consent is built on the foundations stipulated by St Paul in his teaching on marital love; mutual submission (1 Cor 7:1-16) and unconditional and selfless love (1 Cor 13:1-13).

Marriage as a sacrament signifies that it sacrifices and makes whole and completes the love between two people. It is a covenant of loyalty (Mal 2:14-16). The mutual love of husband and wife enables them sense what Christ's love actually means for them. Through married love they constantly grow into the mystery of Christ's love, which he completed in utter devotion on the cross. Hence, marriage signifies and represents Christ-centered relationships.

4. Conclusion

From the study, the sacraments are categorized into three; the sacraments of initiation, the sacraments of healing and the sacraments of service. The sacraments of initiation are baptism, confirmation and Eucharist. Each of these sacraments is meant to strengthen the faith of every Christ faithful and forge a deeper relationship with God. The sacraments of healing are penance and the sacrament of anointing of the sick. The sacraments of service are matrimony and Holy Orders. These sacraments were all instituted by Christ. They find their full expressions and foundations from events in the scripture which have Christ at the centre and as the institutor. They advance the Christian's mission to fulfill the Great Commission of Christ to his Apostles (Mt 28:19-20).

The seven sacraments reflect God's plan for humanity through Christ. From a biblical perspective, each of these sacraments is deeply rooted with efficacies and significances; Baptism signifies firstly an initiation into

Christ's body and a spiritual rebirth (Mt 28:19; Rom 6:3-4), Confirmation strengthens the faith and seals with the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:14-17; 2 Cor 1:21-22), Holy Eucharist symbolizes spiritual nourishment (Mt 26:26-30; 1 Cor 10:16-17), Penance grants reconciliation with God and forgiveness of sins (Mt 9:1-8; 1 Jn 1:9), Anointing of the sick brings forth spiritual comfort and healing (Ja 5:14-15; Mk 6:13), Holy Orders which is deeply connected to the Holy Eucharist reflects the Christ servitude (1 Cor 12:28; Eph 4:11-12); and Matrimony reflects Christ's love for His Church and sacred union (Eph 5:25-33; Gen 2:24).