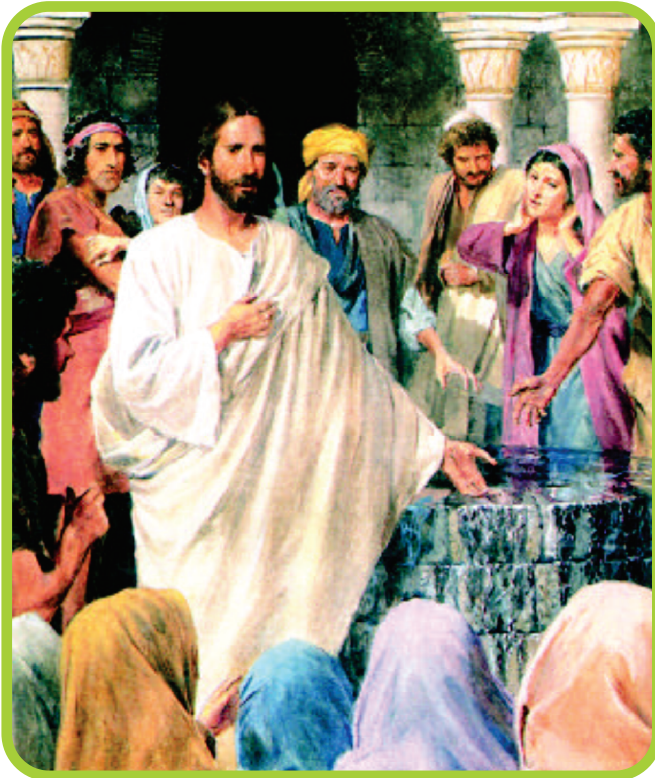


THE SACRAMENTS AND CHRISTIAN LIFE



The feast of the Tabernacle was being celebrated in Jerusalem. So, many from far and wide came to attend the feast. "On the last day of the festival, the great day, while Jesus was standing there, he cried out, 'Let any one who is thirsty come to me, and let the one who believes in me drink'. As the Scripture has said, 'Out of the believers' heart shall flow rivers of living water.' Now he said this about the Spirit, which believers in him were to receive" (Jn. 7:37-39).

The sacraments are the saving signs that give us the Holy Spirit.

The Christian life enables us to experience and share the Trinitarian God introduced to us by Jesus. This is made possible through the power of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is ever active in the Church, the spirit transfers the divine life to us and channels out the fountain of divine grace through the different ministries, especially the sacraments.

Jesus, the Basic Sacrament

Since the incarnated Jesus reveals the invisible Father to us, he is the sacrament of the Father. Jesus,



ACTIVITY - 1

Remember and write down the important ideas about the signs and symbols based on the second chapter of this book. Find out also the importance of these signs and symbols in the sacraments. Prepare a report on this and present it in the class.



through his human personality, sacred verses and activities grants us invisible graces, and sanctifies us. Thus, he remains the basic sacrament..

The Church, the Sacrament of Jesus

Just as Jesus is the basic sacrament, the Church is his sacrament. Jesus is, now, working through the Church. It is the Church who grants us the fruits of salvation served by Jesus. We meet and experience Jesus through the Church. **Thus, the Church remains as the sacrament of Jesus by giving us Jesus, the sanctifier.**

Sacraments, the Signs that Give Divine Life

The sacraments are the visible signs instituted by Jesus to sanctify and empower us with the invisible divine life, viz, grace. They make us participate in the salvation, granted by Christ. They are actually unlimited power emanating , from the body of Christ, eternal source of life (Catechism of the Catholic Church-1116). **The whole liturgical life of the Church orbits around the Holy Eucharist and the sacraments** (1113). The seven sacraments touch all the phases, especially the supremely important moments of the Christian life. They impart birth, growth and freedom from sickness to the Christian's life of faith (Jas. 1:21)

Sacraments, the Redemptive Signs

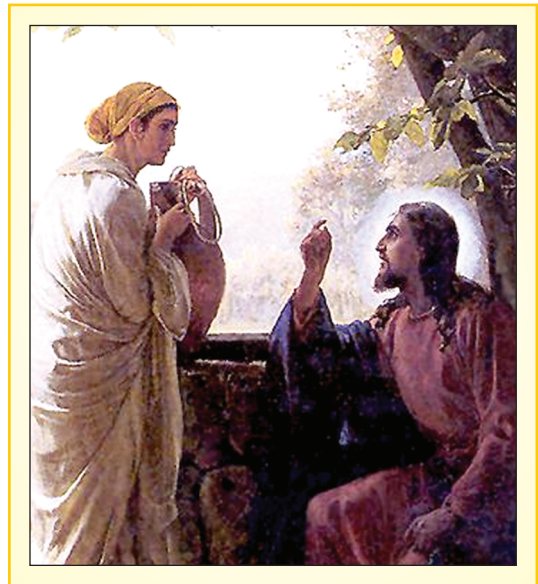
Jesus, the son of God, redeemed mankind from the bondage of sin and granted salvation through his incarnation, passion, death on the cross and resurrection. **The resurrected Jesus invites all of us for this salvation by being present in the Church.** He grants this salvation, by importing divine life to all his faithful. **His life-giving redemptive presence is, experienced by us today through the sacraments.**

Sacraments, the Sanctifying Rituals

As the word meaning, in Syriac, signifies, every sacrament sanctifies us; **because Jesus who sanctifies us by forgiving our sins is celebrating them. Besides, every one sacrament leads to salvation obtained by Jesus through his death and resurrection..** This experience of the remission of sins and salvation is our participation in the sanctity of God. He showers on us, through the sacraments, the Holy Spirit and fills us with grace granting forgiveness of our sins. Thus the sacraments sanctify the different phases of our life and nurture us with divine grace.

Sacraments, the Channels of Divine Grace

Jesus said to the Samaritan woman: **“The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life”** (Jn. 4:14). Jesus said in another context: **“Out of the believers' heart shall flow rivers of living water”** (Jn 7:38). The springs of the sacraments flow into us from Jesus, the source.



Grace is an experience of divine love revealed through Jesus. Grace is the salvation secured by Jesus through his own self-negation. We are saved through his grace. **Grace is a favour, the free and undeserved help that God gives us to respond, to his call to become children of God** (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1996; Jn. 1:12, Rom. 8:14). Grace, a free gift of God is given through the sacraments.

The Sacraments and Faith

Faith is a must to receive the grace coming through Jesus. The sacraments are mere customs for the unbelievers. To unfold the divine mysteries of salvation to mankind, God

uses the signs of the sacraments in the Church. Man proclaims his faith, through signs, in the Church. For example, the spring of grace flows into a person, and the person proclaims his faith and dedication through the holy baptism. Thus, the sacraments serve as the common platforms where God's free gift and man's faith merge and unite.

The Place of the Sacraments in Christian life

The sacraments extend the experience of salvation in the most important phases of man's life. We are born as children of God and become members / organs of his body the Church through baptism. Through the anointing, we are filled with the power of the Holy Spirit and rooted in faith. We grow being nourished spiritually by the Holy Eucharist. We become reconciled with God and man, once the sacrament of reconciliation liberates us from debts and sins. Spiritual and bodily health and comfort are received through the sacrament of the anointing of the sick. The sacrament of the holy orders identifies a person in a special way .The sacrament of matrimony invites us to dedicate ourselves in love and incorporate with God in creation. The sacraments nourish a person with grace right from his birth down to death.

The Presence of Jesus in the Sacraments

The real presence of Jesus is in every sacrament. Jesus, who is present in sacraments, sanctifies us through the sacraments and leads us to the experience of salvation. The Second Vatican Council teaches that, "To execute such majestic mission, Jesus is constantly present in his Church, especially in the liturgy... He who offered himself on the Cross, through the priestly ministry, renders the same service now. In a special way, he is present in the form of the Holy Eucharist. In the sacraments, he is present with his own power. So, Jesus himself is administering baptism through the celebrant." (Liturgy 7). The Church teaches that it is ultimately Christ who acts and effects salvation through the ordained minister (Catechism of the Catholic Church 1584).

ACTIVITY - 2

Which are the important stages of development in the faith life of a person?

Which are the means that gives us the grace necessary for this development. Present your findings in a chart.

The multitude of prayers, used in the sacraments of the East Syrian Church clarifies that Jesus himself acts through them. For example, note the prayer of absolution of sins in the sacrament of reconciliation: “With the grace of Christ, the sanctifier of repentant sinners, you are absolved of your sins,” “Christ who told his disciples that their prayer laying hands on the sick would heal them, may grant you healing”- thus goes the prayer in the sacrament of anointing the sick.



Let us try to understand the divine love of Jesus who pours forth invisible grace upon us by being present in the sacraments; and let us receive the sacraments worthily and grow in the mercy of Jesus.

**LET US
READ AND
MEDITATE THE
WORD OF GOD**

(Jn. 15 : 1 - 10)

A Verse to Remember

"I am the vine, you are the branches"

(Jn. 15:5)

Let us Pray

O' Jesus, who showers upon us graces abundantly through the sacraments, please help us receive the sacraments worthily and flourish in holiness.

My Resolution

I will receive the sacraments and maintain personal relationship with Jesus present in them.

Teachings of the Fathers of the Church

It is proved that the sacraments of the Church are very ancient. We should Understand that they are very powerful. Since they shower grace profusely, the Church persuades her children and neighbours to receive them.

QUESTIONS

1. How does Jesus act as a basic sacrament?
2. Why do we say that the Church is a sacrament of Jesus?
3. The sacraments are sanctifying rituals. Explain.
4. Write a note: The sacraments are channels of grace.
5. What is the importance of sacraments in the Christian life?