
Church and Theological Concepts

The theological virtue of hope which is a supernatural gift bestowed by God through which one trusts God will grant eternal life and the means of obtaining it providing one cooperates. Hope is composed of desire and expectation together with a recognition of the difficulty to be overcome in achieving eternal life. While hope is no longer necessary for those who have achieved salvation, and no longer possible for those who have rejected the means of salvation, it remains necessary for those of us who are still working out our salvation in fear and trembling (Philippians 2:12). God does not arbitrarily remove the gift of hope from our souls, but we, through our own actions, may destroy that gift. If we lose faith, then we no longer have the grounds for hope (a belief in "the omnipotence of God, his goodness, and his fidelity to what he promised").

Likewise, if we continue to believe in God, but come to doubt His goodness and/or fidelity, then we have fallen into the sin of despair, which is the opposite of hope. If we do not repent of despair, then we reject hope, and through our own action destroy the possibility of salvation. Grace is offering forgiveness when it is not necessarily earned: Often times, we see forgiveness as something someone else has to do. They MUST apologize to us, repent, and own up their own actions. They MUST show us five ways in which they are going to change and never do it again. They MUST buy us a Starbucks gift card and shower us with affection for a week. However, we can't expect people to act in certain ways, admitting that you were at fault is a very detrimental blow to one's ego, and sometimes, an apology may never come. Grace is learning to find forgiveness within ourselves. As an enlightened individual, it is sometimes very frustrating to watch people make disastrous decisions, mainly because you learned those same lessons the hard way as well, you know the pain and suffering involved, and you don't want to see those you care about go through the same feelings of pain and suffering. But, as we all know, sometimes we do need to learn the hard way, and no matter how much we try to point those lessons out to other people, our efforts will feel failed.

The most important thing about living with grace means that we can live with ourselves. When we lay our head down at the end of our day, the night is silent, the world is still, it is between ourselves and God (or whatever being you believe in) We must answer to this being, "Did I do what you instructed me to do today? Did I uphold a moral character? Did I fulfill my purpose?" Grace and Hope are gifts from God that help us hold our virtues. The seven sacraments are: Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist, Reconciliation, Anointing of the Sick, Holy Orders and Matrimony. The seven sacraments touch all stages and all the important moments of Christian life. They give birth and increase, healing and mission to the Christian's life of Faith. There is thus a certain resemblance between the stages of natural life and the stages of spiritual life. The Sacraments of Christian Initiation-Baptism, Confirmation and the Eucharist lay the foundations of every Christian 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 perfection of charity. Holy Baptism is the basis of the whole Christian life, the gateway to life in the Spirit, and the door which gives access to the other sacraments.

Baptism is the Sacrament by which we are initiated into the life of Christ and become a member of God's household. Baptism may take place at any age after proper catechetical instruction. The Catholic Church requires 2 Sponsors for Baptism, commonly referred to as "Godparents." The Church asks that there be one male sponsor and one female sponsor. At least one of these must be a Catholic who has received the sacraments of baptism, confirmation, Eucharist and be at least 16 years of age. If the individual is married they must have been married in a Catholic Ceremony recognized by the Catholic Church. If you choose one of the sponsors who is not a Catholic that person must be a Christian who has received the Sacrament of Baptism. They are not properly speaking, a sponsor or godparent but referred to as a "Christian Witness." Baptism, the Eucharist, and the sacrament of Confirmation together constitute the "sacraments of Christian Initiation", whose unity must be safeguarded. It must be explained to the faithful that the reception of the sacrament of Confirmation is necessary for the completion of baptismal grace. For "by the sacrament of Confirmation, [the baptized] 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." Confirmation is a two year catechetical program. It begins in 7th grade and usually ends by freshman year.

In preparation for the Sacrament the students receive Catechetical instruction, perform community service, attend a retreat and receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation. In the organic whole, the Eucharist occupies a unique place as the "Sacrament of Sacraments": all other sacraments are ordered to it as to their end. The Eucharist is "the source and summit of the Christian life". Eucharist is contained the whole spiritual good of the Church, namely Christ Himself. The reception of First Eucharist follows adequate Catechetical instruction, usually in the second grade level. Children first receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation, generally during the Penitential Season of Lent. First Eucharist is celebrated on the Sunday's following Easter at a Mass held in the afternoon. Every Catholic is encouraged to receive communion weekly at Sunday Mass and they are urged to make a frequent good confession, especially if in a state of Mortal Sin. Through the sacraments of Christian initiation, man receives the new life of Christ. This new life as a child of God can be weakened and even lost by sin.

The Lord Jesus Christ, physician of our souls and bodies, who forgave the sins of the paralytic and restored him to bodily health, has willed that his Church continue, in the power of the Holy Spirit, his work of healing and salvation, even among her own members. This is the purpose of the two sacraments of healing: the sacrament of Penance and the sacrament of Anointing of the Sick. Penance is the confession and repentance of sins. By the sacred anointing of the sick and the prayer of the priests the whole Church commends those who are ill to the suffering and glorified Lord, that he may raise them up and save them. The reception of this sacrament is available to any Catholic who finds themselves in grave physical, spiritual or mental state of illness. Two other sacraments, Holy Orders and Matrimony, are directed towards the salvation of others; if they contribute as well to personal salvation, it is through service to others that they do so. They confer a particular mission in the Church and serve to build up the People of God.

Through these sacraments those already consecrated by Baptism and Confirmation for the common priesthood of all the faithful can receive particular consecrations. Those who receive the sacrament of Holy Orders are Consecrated in Christ's name "to feed the church by the Word and grace of God." On their part, "Christian spouses are fortified and, as it were, consecrated for their duties and dignity of their state by a special sacrament." Holy Orders 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: thus it is the sacrament of apostolic ministry. It includes three degrees: episcopate, presbyterate, and diaconate. This Sacrament has three degrees within it: Diaconate (Permanent and Transitional), Priests and Bishops.

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