

Sacraments of Initiation: Rituals & their Meanings

Baptism, Confirmation and the Eucharist are the sacraments of initiation. Baptism and Confirmation lay the foundation of Christian life. Both of these sacraments have a permanent effect and can never be repeated. In these sacraments God is present at the beginning of Christian life and when it reaches maturity. The central sacrament, and the one to which all other sacraments lead, is the Eucharist. The Eucharist is the heart of Catholic life. It recalls and celebrates the death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ and the new covenant between God and his people.

Baptism

The word Baptism comes from the Greek verb baptizein, which means to plunge or immerse in water. In its earliest form, Baptism was performed by people being fully plunged into water. Emerging from the water was symbolic of the new life that Baptism brought about. In most Baptisms today, a small amount of water is poured by the priest over the head as a sign of washing.

Ritual	What does it symbolize?

Confirmation

Confirmation is the second Sacrament of Initiation. Baptism marks the transformation of a person into a child of God and Confirmation signifies the strengthening of faith through the same Spirit received at Baptism. Confirmation is sometimes described as a call to become more like Christ by responding to the call to serve others as full members of the Christian community.

Ritual	What does it symbolize?

Eucharist

The greatest of the seven sacraments of the Catholic Church. The word “Eucharist” means “giving thanks”. The Church teaches that it is the “true Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, who is really and substantially present under the appearance of bread and wine”. The expression “taking Communion” or “going to Communion” means participating in the sacrament of the Eucharist. The Eucharist may be received daily.

Ritual	What does it symbolize?