

LITURGY & SACRAMENTS 101

PART 2

PENANCE, ANOINTING OF THE SICK, HOLY ORDERS & MATRIMONY



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THE SACRAMENTS OF HEALING: PENANCE

Sacraments of Healing: Penance and Anointing of the Sick

CCCC 295. Why did Christ institute the sacraments of Penance and the Anointing of the Sick?

Christ, the physician of our soul and body, instituted these sacraments because the new life that he gives us in the sacraments of Christian initiation can be weakened and even lost because of sin. Therefore, Christ willed that his Church should continue his work of healing and salvation by means of these two sacraments.

CCCC 296. What is the name of this sacrament?

It is called the sacrament of Penance, the sacrament of Reconciliation, the sacrament of Forgiveness, the sacrament of Confession, and the sacrament of Conversion.

- **Penance:** since it consecrates the Christian sinner's personal and ecclesial steps of conversion, penance, and satisfaction (CCC 1423).
- **Reconciliation:** Because it imparts to the sinner the love of God who reconciles: "Be reconciled to God." He who lives by God's merciful love is ready to respond to the Lord's call: "Go; first be reconciled to your brother" (CCC 1424).
- **Forgiveness:** Since by the priest's sacramental absolution God grants the penitent "pardon and peace" (1424).
- **Confession:** Since the disclosure or confession of sins to a priest is an essential element of this sacrament. In a profound sense it is also a "confession"—acknowledgment and praise—of the holiness of God and of his mercy toward sinful man (CCC 1424).
- **Conversion:** because it makes sacramentally present Jesus' call to conversion, the first step in returning to the Father⁵ from whom one has strayed by sin (CCC 1423).

Sacrament of Penance after Baptism

CCCC 297. Why is there a sacrament of Reconciliation after Baptism?

Since the new life of grace received in Baptism does not abolish the weakness of human nature nor the inclination to sin (that is, *concupiscence*), Christ instituted this sacrament for the conversion of the baptized who have been separated from him by sin.

Institution of the Sacrament of Penance

CCCC 298. When did Christ institute this sacrament?

The risen Lord instituted this sacrament on the evening of Easter when he showed himself to his apostles and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained." (*John* 20:22-23).

Baptism and Conversion

CCCC 299. Do the baptized have need of conversion?

The call of Christ to conversion continues to resound in the lives of the baptized. Conversion is a continuing obligation for the whole Church. She is holy but includes sinners in her midst.

CCCC 300. What is interior penance?

It is the movement of a "contrite heart" (*Psalms* 51:19) drawn by divine grace to respond to the merciful love of God. This entails sorrow for and abhorrence of sins committed, a firm purpose not to sin again in the future and trust in the help of God. It is nourished by hope in divine mercy.

CCCC 301. What forms does penance take in the Christian life?

Penance can be expressed in many and various ways but above all in fasting, prayer, and almsgiving. These and many other forms of penance can be practiced in the daily life of a Christian, particularly during the time of Lent and on the penitential day of Friday.

Essential Elements of the Sacrament of Penance

CCCC 302. What are the essential elements of the sacrament of Reconciliation?

The essential elements are two: the acts of the penitent who comes to repentance through the action of the Holy Spirit, and the absolution of the priest who in the name of Christ grants forgiveness and determines the ways of making satisfaction.

Essential Acts of the Penitent

CCCC 303. What are the acts of the penitent?

They are:

1. a careful *examination of conscience*;
2. *contrition* (or repentance), which is perfect when it is motivated by love of God and imperfect if it rests on other motives and which includes the determination not to sin again;
3. *confession*, which consists in the telling of one's sins to the priest;
4. and *satisfaction* or the carrying out of certain acts of penance which the confessor imposes upon the penitent to repair the damage caused by sin.

Sins to Confess?

CCCC 304. Which sins must be confessed?

All grave sins not yet confessed, which a careful examination of conscience brings to mind, must be brought to the sacrament of Penance. The confession of serious sins is the only ordinary way to obtain forgiveness.

CCCC 305. When is a person obliged to confess mortal sins?

Each of the faithful who has reached the age of discretion is bound to confess his or her mortal sins at least once a year and always before receiving Holy Communion.

What is Sin?

CCC 1849. Sin is an offense against reason, truth, and right conscience; it is failure in genuine love for God and neighbour caused by a perverse attachment to certain goods. It wounds the nature of man and injures human solidarity. It has been defined as "an utterance, a deed, or a desire contrary to the eternal law."

CCC 1850. Sin is an offense against God: "Against you, you alone, have I sinned, and done that which is evil in your sight." Sin sets itself against God's love for us and turns our hearts away from it. Like the first sin, it is disobedience, a revolt against God through the will to become "like gods," knowing and determining good and evil. Sin is thus "love of oneself even to contempt of God." In this proud self-exaltation, sin is diametrically opposed to the obedience of Jesus, which achieves our salvation.

What is the difference between Mortal and Venial Sin?

CCC 1855. *Mortal sin* destroys charity in the heart of man by a grave violation of God's law; it turns man away from God, who is his ultimate end and his beatitude, by preferring an inferior good to him.

Venial sin allows charity to subsist, even though it offends and wounds it.

CCC 1857. For a *sin* to be *mortal*, three conditions must together be met:

1. "Mortal sin is sin whose object is grave matter...
2. and which is also committed with full knowledge
3. and deliberate consent."

The Minister of the Sacrament of Penance

CCCC 307. Who is the minister of this sacrament?

Christ has entrusted the ministry of Reconciliation to his apostles, to the bishops who are their successors and to the priests who are the collaborators of the bishops, all of whom become thereby instruments of the mercy and

justice of God. They exercise their power of forgiving sins *in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit*.

CCCC 308. To whom is the absolution of some sins reserved?

The absolution of certain particularly grave sins (like those punished by excommunication) is reserved to the Apostolic See or to the local bishop or to priests who are authorized by them. Any priest, however, can absolve a person who is in danger of death from any sin and excommunication.

Seal of Confession

CCCC 309. Is a confessor bound to secrecy?

Given the delicacy and greatness of this ministry and the respect due to people every confessor, without any exception and under very severe penalties, is bound to maintain “the sacramental seal” which means absolute secrecy about the sins revealed to him in confession.

Effects of the Sacrament of Penance

CCCC 310. What are the effects of this sacrament?

The effects of the sacrament of Penance are:

1. reconciliation with God and therefore the forgiveness of sins;
2. reconciliation with the Church;
3. recovery, if it has been lost, of the state of grace;
4. remission of the eternal punishment merited by mortal sins, and remission, at least in part, of the temporal punishment which is the consequence of sin;
5. peace, serenity of conscience and spiritual consolation;
6. and an increase of spiritual strength for the struggle of Christian living.

Celebration of the Sacrament of Penance

CCCC 311. Can this sacrament be celebrated in some cases with a general confession and general absolution?

In cases of serious necessity (as in imminent danger of death) recourse may be had to a communal celebration of Reconciliation with general confession and general absolution, as long as the norms of the Church are observed and there is the intention of individually confessing one’s grave sins in due time.

How this Sacrament is Celebrated

CCC 1491 The sacrament of Penance is a whole consisting in three actions of the penitent and the priest’s absolution. The penitent’s acts are repentance, confession or disclosure of sins to the priest, and the intention to make reparation and do works of reparation.

CCC 1495 Only priests who have received the faculty of absolving from the authority of the Church can forgive sins in the name of Christ.

THE SACRAMENTS OF HEALING: ANOINTING OF THE SICK

The View of Sickness in the Old Testament

CCCC 313. How was sickness viewed in the Old Testament?

In the Old Testament sickness was experienced as a sign of weakness and at the same time perceived as mysteriously bound up with sin. The prophets intuited that sickness could also have a redemptive value for one's own sins and those of others. Thus sickness was lived out in the presence of God from whom people implored healing.

Jesus' Compassion toward the Sick

CCCC 314. What is the significance of Jesus' compassion for the sick?

The compassion of Jesus toward the sick and his many healings of the infirm were a clear sign that with him had come the Kingdom of God and therefore victory over sin, over suffering, and over death. By his own passion and death he gave new meaning to our suffering which, when united with his own, can become a means of purification and of salvation for us and for others.

Anointing of the Sick in the Early Church

CCC 1510. The apostolic Church has its own rite for the sick, attested to by St. James: "Is any among you sick? Let him call for the elders [*presbyters*] of the Church and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; and the prayer of faith will save the sick man, and the Lord will raise him up; and if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven" (Jas 5:14-15). Tradition has recognized in this rite one of the seven sacraments.

Attitude of the Church toward the Sick

CCCC 315. What is the attitude of the Church toward the sick?

Having received from the Lord the charge to heal the sick, the Church strives to carry it out by taking care of the sick and accompanying them with her prayer of intercession. Above all, the Church possesses a sacrament specifically intended for the benefit of the sick. This sacrament was instituted by Christ and is attested by Saint James: "Is anyone among you sick? Let him call in the presbyters of the Church and let them pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord" (*James 5:14-15*).

Who can Receive the Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick?

CCCC 316. Who can receive the sacrament of the anointing of the sick?

Any member of the faithful can receive this sacrament as soon as he or she begins to be in danger of death because of sickness or old age. The faithful who receive this sacrament can receive it several times if their illness becomes worse or another serious sickness afflicts them. The celebration of this sacrament should, if possible, be preceded by individual confession on the part of the sick person.

Why can only those in Dangerous Proximity to Death receive this Sacrament?

Since Anointing of the Sick is a sacrament, like all seven sacraments it is a sensible sign of something which is unable to be sensibly known, and it causes what it signifies.

Just as baptism is a sensible sign which causes what it signifies to be present, namely the washing of the soul from sin (which is not detectable by the senses), so too the Anointing of the Sick is a sensible sign which causes what it signifies to be present, namely the healing of the soul of its spiritual illnesses caused by sin.

Now, just as the appropriate and fit sensible sign of baptism is water (i.e., its matter), so too the appropriate and fit sensible sign for Anointing of the Sick is someone gravely ill. This is because someone proximate to death through bodily infirmity fitly signifies the remnants of sin that lead to the death of sin.

Minister and Celebration of Anointing of the Sick

CCC 1516. Only priests (bishops and presbyters) are ministers of the Anointing of the Sick.

CCCC 318. How is this sacrament celebrated?

The celebration of this sacrament consists essentially in an *anointing* with oil which may be blessed by the bishop. The anointing is on the forehead and on the hands of the sick person (in the Roman rite) or also on other parts of the body (in the other rites) accompanied by the *prayer* of the priest who asks for the special grace of this sacrament.

CCC 1519. The celebration of the sacrament includes the following principal elements: the “priests of the Church”—in silence—lay hands on the sick; they pray over them in the faith of the Church—this is the *epiclesis* proper to this sacrament; they then anoint them with oil blessed, if possible, by the bishop.

Effects of the Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick

CCCC 319. What are the effects of this sacrament?

This sacrament confers a special grace which unites the sick person more intimately to the Passion of Christ for his good and for the good of all the Church. It gives comfort, peace, courage, and even the forgiveness of sins if the sick person is not able to make a confession. Sometimes, if it is the will of God, this sacrament even brings about the restoration of physical health. In any case this Anointing prepares the sick person for the journey to the Father’s House.

Viaticum: “Food for the Journey”

CCCC 320. What is Viaticum?

Viaticum is the Holy Eucharist received by those who are about to leave this earthly life and are preparing for the journey to eternal life. Communion in the body and blood of Christ who died and rose from the dead, received at the moment of passing from this world to the Father, is the seed of eternal life and the power of the resurrection.

What is meant by “The Last Rites?”

The Last Rites are three sacraments received before departing this life:

CCC 1525. Thus, just as the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and the Eucharist form a unity called “the sacraments of Christian initiation,” so too it can be said that Penance, the Anointing of the Sick and the Eucharist as viaticum constitute at the end of Christian life “the sacraments that prepare for our heavenly homeland” or the sacraments that complete the earthly pilgrimage.

THE SACRAMENTS AT THE SERVICE OF COMMUNION AND MISSION: HOLY ORDERS

The Sacraments at the Service of Communion and Mission

CCC 1533. Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist are sacraments of Christian initiation. They ground the common vocation of all Christ's disciples, a vocation to holiness and to the mission of evangelizing the world. They confer the graces needed for the life according to the Spirit during this life as pilgrims on the march towards the homeland.

CCC 1534. 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.

What is Holy Orders?

CCCC 322. What is the sacrament of Holy Orders?

It 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.

CCCC 323. Why is this sacrament called Holy Orders?

Orders designates an ecclesial body into which one enters by means of a special consecration (ordination). Through a special gift of the Holy Spirit, this sacrament enables the ordained to exercise a *sacred power* in the name and with the authority of Christ for the service of the People of God.

Holy Orders in the Plan of Salvation

CCC 1539. The chosen people was constituted by God as “a kingdom of priests and a holy nation” (Ex 19:6; cf. Is 61:6). But within the people of Israel, God chose one of the twelve tribes, that of Levi, and set it apart for liturgical service; God himself is its inheritance (cf. Num 1:48-53; Josh 13:33). A special rite consecrated the beginnings of the priesthood of the Old Covenant. The priests are “appointed to act on behalf of men in relation to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins (Heb 5:1; cf. Ex 29:1-30; Lev 8).

CCC 1540. Instituted to proclaim the Word of God and to restore communion with God by sacrifices and prayer (cf. Mal 2:7-9), this priesthood nevertheless remains powerless to bring about salvation, needing to repeat its sacrifices ceaselessly and being unable to achieve a definitive sanctification, which only the sacrifice of Christ would accomplish (cf. Heb 5:3; 7:27; 10:1-4).

The One Priesthood of Christ

CCC 1544. Everything that the priesthood of the Old Covenant prefigured finds its fulfillment in Christ Jesus, the “one mediator between God and men (1 Tim 2:5). The Christian tradition considers Melchizedek, “priest of God Most High,” as a prefiguration of the priesthood of Christ, the unique “high priest after the order of Melchizedek” (Heb 5:10; cf. 6:20; Gen 14:18); “holy, blameless, unstained (Heb 7:26), ”by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are sanctified (Heb 10:4), that is, by the unique sacrifice of the cross.

CCC 1545. The redemptive sacrifice of Christ is unique, accomplished once for all; yet it is made present in the Eucharistic sacrifice of the Church. The same is true of the one priesthood of Christ; it is made present through the ministerial priesthood without diminishing the uniqueness of Christ's priesthood: “Only Christ is the true priest, the others being only his ministers” (St Thomas Aquinas, *Hebr* 8, 4).

Two Participations in the One Priesthood of Christ

CCC 1546. Christ, high priest and unique mediator, has made of the Church “a kingdom, priests for his God and Father” (Rev 1:6; cf. Rev 5:9-10; 1 Pet 2:5, 9). The whole community of believers is, as such, priestly. The faithful exercise their baptismal priesthood through their participation, each according to his own vocation, in Christ's mission as priest, prophet, and king. Through the sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation the faithful are “consecrated to be... a holy priesthood” (LG 10 § 1).

CCC 1547. The ministerial or hierarchical priesthood of bishops and priests, and the common priesthood of all the faithful participate, “each in its own proper way, in the one priesthood of Christ.” While being “ordered one to another,” they differ essentially (LG 10 § 2). In what sense? While the common priesthood of the faithful is exercised by the unfolding of baptismal grace—a life of faith, hope, and charity, a life according to the Spirit—the ministerial priesthood is at the service of the common priesthood. It is directed at the unfolding of the baptismal grace of all Christians. The ministerial priesthood is a means by which Christ unceasingly builds up and leads his Church. For this reason it is transmitted by its own sacrament, the sacrament of Holy Orders.

In Persona Christi

CCC 1548. In the ecclesial service of the ordained minister, it is Christ himself who is present to his Church as Head of his Body, Shepherd of his flock, high priest of the redemptive sacrifice, Teacher of Truth. This is what the Church means by saying that the priest, by virtue of the sacrament of Holy Orders, acts *in persona Christi Capitis* (cf. LG 10; 28; SC 33; CD 11; PO 2; 6):

It is the same priest, Christ Jesus, whose sacred person his minister truly represents. Now the minister, by reason of the sacerdotal consecration which he has received, is truly made like to the high priest and possesses the authority to act in the power and place of the person of Christ himself (*virtute ac persona ipsius Christi*).¹

Christ is the source of all priesthood: the priest of the old law was a figure of Christ, and the priest of the new law acts in the person of Christ.²

¹ Pius XII, *Mediator Dei*: ASS, 39 (1947), 548.

² St Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, III, q.22, a.4.

CCC 1549. Through the ordained ministry, especially that of bishops and priests, the presence of Christ as head of the Church is made visible in the midst of the community of believers (cf. LG 21). In the beautiful expression of St. Ignatius of Antioch, the bishop is *typos tou Patros*: he is like the living image of God the Father.

CCC 1548. This presence of Christ in the minister is not to be understood as if the latter were preserved from all human weaknesses, the spirit of domination, error, even sin. The power of the Holy Spirit does not guarantee all acts of ministers in the same way. While this guarantee extends to the sacraments, so that even the minister's sin cannot impede the fruit of grace, in many other acts the minister leaves human traces that are not always signs of fidelity to the Gospel and consequently can harm the apostolic fruitfulness of the Church.

CCC 1551 This priesthood is ministerial. "That office . . . which the Lord committed to the pastors of his people, is in the strict sense of the term a *service*" (LG 24). It is entirely related to Christ and to men. It depends entirely on Christ and on his unique priesthood; it has been instituted for the good of men and the communion of the Church. The sacrament of Holy Orders communicates a "sacred power" which is none other than that of Christ. The exercise of this authority must therefore be measured against the model of Christ, who by love made himself the least and the servant of all (cf. Mk 10:43-45). "The Lord said clearly that concern for his flock was proof of love for him" (St John Chrysostom, *De sac.* 2, 4 (PG 48:636)).

In the Name of the Whole Church

CCC 1552. The ministerial priesthood has the task not only of representing Christ - Head of the Church - before the assembly of the faithful, but also of acting in the name of the whole Church when presenting to God the prayer of the Church, and above all when offering the Eucharistic sacrifice (cf SC 33N; LG 10).

CCC 1553. "In the name of the whole Church" does not mean that priests are the delegates of the community. The prayer and offering of the Church are inseparable from the prayer and offering of Christ, her head; it is always the case that Christ worships in and through his Church. The whole Church, the Body of Christ, prays and offers herself "through him, with him, in him," in the unity of the Holy Spirit, to God the Father. The whole Body, *caput et membra*, prays and offers itself, and therefore those who in the Body are especially his ministers are called ministers not only of Christ, but also of the Church. It is because the ministerial priesthood represents Christ that it can represent the Church.

Episcopal Ordination: Bishop

CCCC 326. What is the effect of episcopal ordination?

Episcopal ordination confers the fullness of the sacrament of Holy Orders. It makes the bishop a legitimate successor of the apostles and integrates him into the episcopal college to share with the Pope and the other bishops care for all the churches. It confers on him the offices of teaching, sanctifying, and ruling.

CCCC 327. What is the office confided to a Bishop in a particular Church?

The bishop to whom the care of a particular Church is entrusted is the visible head and foundation of unity for that Church. For the sake of that Church, as vicar of Christ, he fulfills the office of shepherd and is assisted by his own priests and deacons

Presbyteral Ordination: Priest

CCCC 328. What is the effect of ordination to the priesthood?

The anointing of the Spirit seals the priest with an indelible, spiritual character that configures him to Christ the priest and enables him to act in the name of Christ the Head. As a co-worker of the order of bishops he is consecrated to preach the Gospel, to celebrate divine worship, especially the Eucharist from which his ministry draws its strength, and to be a shepherd of the faithful.

CCCC 329. How does a priest carry out his proper ministry?

A priest, although ordained for a universal mission, exercises his ministry in a particular Church. This ministry is pursued in sacramental brotherhood with other priests who form the "presbyterate." In communion with the bishop, and depending upon him, they bear responsibility for the particular Church.

Diaconal Ordination: Deacon

CCCC 330. What is the effect of the ordination to the diaconate?

The deacon, configured to Christ the servant of all, is ordained for service to the Church. He carries out this service under the authority of his proper bishop by the ministry of the Word, of divine worship, of pastoral care and of charity.

Ordination in the Early Church

CCC 1590. St. Paul said to his disciple Timothy: “I remind you to rekindle the gift of God that is within you through the laying on of my hands” (2 *Tim* 1:6), and “If any one aspires to the office of bishop, he desires a noble task.” (1 *Tim* 3:1) To Titus he said: “This is why I left you in Crete, that you amend what was defective, and appoint presbyters in every town, as I directed you” (*Titus* 1:5).

Essential Distinction: Priesthood of the Faithful and Ministerial Priesthood

CCC 1590. The whole Church is a priestly people. Through Baptism all the faithful share in the priesthood of Christ. This participation is called the “common priesthood of the faithful.” Based on this common priesthood and ordered to its service, there exists another participation in the mission of Christ: the ministry conferred by the sacrament of Holy Orders, where the task is to serve in the name and in the person of Christ the Head in the midst of the community.

CCC 1592. The ministerial priesthood differs in essence from the common priesthood of the faithful because it confers a sacred power for the service of the faithful. The ordained ministers exercise their service for the People of God by teaching (*munus docendi*), divine worship (*munus liturgicum*) and pastoral governance (*munus regendi*).

The Celebration of Holy Orders

CCCC 331. How is the sacrament of Holy Orders celebrated?

The sacrament of Holy Orders is conferred, in each of its three degrees, by means of the *imposition of hands* on the head of the ordinand by the Bishop who pronounces the solemn *prayer* of consecration. With this prayer he asks God on behalf of the ordinand for the special outpouring of the Holy Spirit and for the gifts of the Spirit proper to the ministry to which he is being ordained.

Who Can Confer Holy Orders?

CCC 1575. Christ himself chose the apostles and gave them a share in his mission and authority. Raised to the Father’s right hand, he has not forsaken his flock but he keeps it under his constant protection through the apostles, and guides it still through these same pastors who continue his work today. Thus, it is Christ whose gift it is that some be apostles, others pastors. He continues to act through the bishops (cf. *LG* 21; *Eph* 4:11).

CCC 1576. Since the sacrament of Holy Orders is the sacrament of the apostolic ministry, it is for the bishops as the successors of the apostles to hand on the “gift of the Spirit” (*LG* 21 § 2), the “apostolic line” (*LG* 20). Validly ordained bishops, i.e., those who are in the line of apostolic succession, validly confer the three degrees of the sacrament of Holy Orders.

Who can Receive this sacrament?

CCC 1577. “Only a baptized man (*vir*) validly receives sacred ordination” (Code of Canon Law, n.1024). The Lord Jesus chose men (*vir*) to form the college of the twelve apostles, and the apostles did the same when they chose collaborators to succeed them in their ministry (cf. *Mk* 3:14-19). The college of bishops, with whom the priests are united in the priesthood, makes the college of the twelve an ever-present and ever-active reality until Christ’s return. The Church recognizes herself to be bound by this choice made by the Lord himself. For this reason the ordination of women is not possible.

CCC 1578. No one has a *right* to receive the sacrament of Holy Orders. Indeed no one claims this office for himself; he is called to it by God (*Heb* 5:4). Anyone who thinks he recognizes the signs of God’s call to the ordained ministry must humbly submit his desire to the authority of the Church, who has the responsibility and right to call someone to receive orders. Like every grace this sacrament can be *received* only as an unmerited gift.

Celibate and Married Clergy

CCC 1579. All the ordained ministers of the Latin Church, with the exception of permanent deacons, are normally chosen from among men of faith who live a celibate life and who intend to remain *celibate* "for the sake of the kingdom of heaven" (Mt 19:12) Called to consecrate themselves with undivided heart to the Lord and to "the affairs of the Lord" (1 Cor 7:32), they give themselves entirely to God and to men. Celibacy is a sign of this new life to the service of which the Church's minister is consecrated; accepted with a joyous heart celibacy radiantly proclaims the Reign of God (cf. PO 16).

CCC 1580. In the Eastern Churches a different discipline has been in force for many centuries: while bishops are chosen solely from among celibates, married men can be ordained as deacons and priests. This practice has long been considered legitimate; these priests exercise a fruitful ministry within their communities (cf. PO 16). Moreover, priestly celibacy is held in great honour in the Eastern Churches and many priests have freely chosen it for the sake of the Kingdom of God. In the East as in the West a man who has already received the sacrament of Holy Orders can no longer marry.

Women and the Ordained Priesthood

See the following documents:

- Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Declaration: Inter Insigniores: On The Question of Admission of Women To The Ministerial Priesthood* (15 October 1976).
- John Paul II, *Apostolic Letter: Mulieris Dignitatem* (15 August, 1988), nn.26-27.
- John Paul II, *Apostolic Letter: Ordinatio Sacerdotalis* (22 May, 1994).

Effects of Holy Orders

CCC 1581. This sacrament configures the recipient to Christ by a special grace of the Holy Spirit, so that he may serve as Christ's instrument for his Church. By ordination one is enabled to act as a representative of Christ, Head of the Church, in his triple office of priest, prophet, and king.

CCC 1582. As in the case of Baptism and Confirmation this share in Christ's office is granted once for all. The sacrament of Holy Orders, like the other two, confers an *indelible spiritual character* and cannot be repeated or conferred temporarily.

CCC 1583. It is true that someone validly ordained can, for grave reasons, be discharged from the obligations and functions linked to ordination, or can be forbidden to exercise them; but he cannot become a layman again in the strict sense (Code of Canon Law, nn.290-293), because the character imprinted by ordination is for ever. The vocation and mission received on the day of his ordination mark him permanently.

Unworthy Ministers

CCC 1584. Since it is ultimately Christ who acts and effects salvation through the ordained minister, the unworthiness of the latter does not prevent Christ from acting. St. Augustine states this forcefully:

As for the proud minister, he is to be ranked with the devil. Christ's gift is not thereby profaned: what flows through him keeps its purity, and what passes through him remains dear and reaches the fertile earth. . . . The spiritual power of the sacrament is indeed comparable to light: those to be enlightened receive it in its purity, and if it should pass through defiled beings, it is not itself defiled. (St Augustine, *In Jo*, ev. 5, 15: PL 35:1422).

The Grace Given by this Sacrament

CCC 1585. The grace of the Holy Spirit proper to this sacrament is configuration to Christ as Priest, Teacher, and Pastor, of whom the ordained is made a minister.

CCC 1586. For the bishop, this is first of all a grace of strength ("the governing spirit": Prayer of Episcopal Consecration in the Latin rite): the grace to guide and defend his Church with strength and prudence as a father and pastor, with gratuitous love for all and a preferential love for the poor, the sick, and the needy. This grace impels him to proclaim the Gospel to all, to be the model for his flock, to go before it on the way of sanctification by identifying himself in the Eucharist with Christ the priest and victim, not fearing to give his life for his sheep.

THE SACRAMENTS AT THE SERVICE OF COMMUNION AND MISSION: MATRIMONY

The Divine Plan for Man and Woman

CCCC 337. What is the plan of God regarding man and woman?

God who is love and who created man and woman for love has called them to love. By creating man and woman he called them to an intimate communion of life and of love in marriage: “So that they are no longer two, but one flesh” (*Matthew 19:6*). God said to them in blessing “Be fruitful and multiply” (*Genesis 1:28*).

The Ends or Purposes of Marriage

CCCC 338. For what ends has God instituted Matrimony?

The marital union of man and woman, which is founded and endowed with its own proper laws by the Creator, is by its very nature ordered to the communion and good of the couple and to the generation and education of children. According to the original divine plan this conjugal union is indissoluble, as Jesus Christ affirmed: “What God has joined together, let no man put asunder” (*Mark 10:9*).

Threats to Marriage

CCCC 339. How does sin threaten marriage?

Because of original sin, which caused a rupture in the God-given communion between man and woman, the union of marriage is very often threatened by discord and infidelity. However, God in his infinite mercy gives to man and woman the grace to bring the union of their lives into accord with the original divine plan.

Old Testament Teaching on Marriage

CCCC 340. What does the Old Testament teach about marriage?

God helped his people above all through the teaching of the Law and the Prophets to deepen progressively their understanding of the unity and indissolubility of marriage. The nuptial covenant of God with Israel prepared for and prefigured the new covenant established by Jesus Christ the Son of God, with his spouse, the Church.

Christ’s Teaching on Marriage

CCCC 341. What new element did Christ give to Matrimony?

Christ not only restored the original order of matrimony but raised it to the dignity of a sacrament, giving spouses a special grace to live out their marriage as a symbol of Christ’s love for his bride the Church: “Husbands, love your wives as Christ loves the Church” (*Ephesians 5:25*).

Obligation for Marriage

CCCC 342. Are all obliged to get married?

Matrimony is not an obligation for everyone, especially since God calls some men and women to follow the Lord Jesus in a life of virginity or of celibacy for the sake of the Kingdom of Heaven. These renounce the great good of Matrimony to concentrate on the things of the Lord and seek to please him. They become a sign of the absolute supremacy of Christ’s love and of the ardent expectation of his glorious return.

How Marriage is Celebrated

CCCC 343. How is the sacrament of Matrimony celebrated?

Since Matrimony establishes spouses in a public state of life in the Church, its liturgical celebration is public, taking place in the presence of a priest (or of a witness authorized by the Church) and other witnesses.

CCCC 344. What is matrimonial consent?

Matrimonial consent is given when a man and a woman manifest the will to give themselves to each other irrevocably in order to live a covenant of faithful and fruitful love. Since consent constitutes Matrimony, it is indispensable and irreplaceable. For a valid marriage the consent must have as its object true Matrimony, and be a human act which is conscious and free and not determined by duress or coercion.

Mixed Marriage

CCCC 345. What is required when one of the spouses is not a Catholic?

A mixed marriage (between a Catholic and a baptized non-Catholic) needs for liceity the permission of ecclesiastical authority. In a case of *disparity of cult* (between a Catholic and a non-baptized person) a dispensation is required for validity. In both cases, it is essential that the spouses do not exclude the acceptance of the essential ends and properties of marriage. It is also necessary for the Catholic party to accept the obligation, of which the non-Catholic party has been advised, to persevere in the faith and to assure the baptism and Catholic education of their children.

Effects of Marriage

CCCC 346. What are the effects of the sacrament of Matrimony?

The sacrament of Matrimony establishes a perpetual and exclusive *bond* between the spouses. God himself seals the consent of the spouses. Therefore, a marriage which is ratified and consummated between baptized persons can never be dissolved. Furthermore, this sacrament bestows upon the spouses the grace necessary to attain holiness in their married life and to accept responsibly the gift of children and provide for their education.

Opposition to Marriage

CCCC 347. What sins are gravely opposed to the sacrament of Matrimony?

Adultery and polygamy are opposed to the sacrament of matrimony because they contradict the equal dignity of man and woman and the unity and exclusivity of married love. Other sins include the deliberate refusal of one's procreative potential which deprives conjugal love of the gift of children and divorce which goes against the indissolubility of marriage.

Separation of Spouses

CCCC 348. When does the Church allow the physical separation of spouses?

The Church permits the physical separation of spouses when for serious reasons their living together becomes practically impossible, even though there may be hope for their reconciliation. As long as one's spouse lives, however, one is not free to contract a new union, except if the marriage be null and be declared so by ecclesiastical authority.

The Church's attitude toward those Divorced and Remarried

CCCC 349. What is the attitude of the Church toward those people who are divorced and then remarried?

The Church, since she is faithful to her Lord, cannot recognize the union of people who are civilly divorced and remarried. "Whoever divorces his wife and marries another, commits adultery against her; and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery" (*Mark 10:11-12*). The Church manifests an attentive solicitude toward such people and encourages them to a life of faith, prayer, works of charity and the Christian education of their children. However, they cannot receive sacramental absolution, take Holy Communion, or exercise certain ecclesial responsibilities as long as their situation, which objectively contravenes God's law, persists.

Family as Domestic Church

CCCC 350. Why is the Christian family called a domestic church?

The Christian family is called the domestic church because the family manifests and lives out the communal and familial nature of the Church as the family of God. Each family member, in accord with their own role, exercises the baptismal priesthood and contributes toward making the family a community of grace and of prayer, a school of human and Christian virtue and the place where the faith is first proclaimed to children.