

GRACE IN THE SACRAMENTS

1. What does each of the Sacraments mean to you:
 - Baptism
 - Confirmation
 - The Eucharist
 - Marriage
 - Ordination
 - Penance (Confession and Absolution)
 - Anointing with oil?

Which have you not experienced?

Have you consciously encountered God in the sacraments? How?
2. Are there other ways in which you have received God's grace?
3. What do you believe happens to the bread and wine in Holy Communion – are they changed into the actual Body and Blood of Christ, or do they simply represent His Body and Blood? Do you think that what we believe happens to the bread and wine makes a difference, or should make a difference, to the way we approach the Eucharist?
4. A small child or baby cannot consciously know God, let alone have faith in Him, and cannot repent of his/her sin: is it right, then, to baptize the child? Why?
5. If you have access to an Anglican Prayer Book, look through each of the sacramental services, as well as the Preface to each, to understand more fully what we ask God for, and what we believe happens (Baptism and Confirmation: page 361; Holy Eucharist: page 101; Confession and Absolution: page 445; Marriage: page 457; Anointing of the sick: Preface on page 489 and Service on page 502; Ordination: page 571).
6. Read what the Catechism says about the Sacraments, on pages 438 to 442.
7. Do you think that mystery has a role to play in the administration, reception and precise effects of the Sacraments, so that we cannot know, definitely, what God does, how He does it and when?
8. Do you think we have an advantage, being a 'sacramental church', over other churches in which the Sacraments are not so central? Why?

9. Was your Confirmation meaningful? Why do you think so many people fall away, after being confirmed? What could we do to change this?
10. Have you ever struggled to feel free of sin, even after sincere repentance? Have you ever been to a priest to make your confession? Would you see that as a possibility, if you were struggling to know God's forgiveness?

PRAYER

Lord, I thank You for the Sacraments of the Church.

Even though I do not know exactly what You are doing in each of them

I believe that You impart grace in and through them.

Thank You for my baptism, when You welcomed me into Your family and began a new work in me.

Thank You that I have been united with Christ in His death and resurrection so I can be a new creation.

Thank You for confirmation, and the strengthening gift of Your Holy Spirit for worship, witness and service.

Thank You for the Holy Eucharist and the wonderful way in which You nourish me spiritually with the life of Christ.

Thank You for the gift of marriage; for the grace You impart that enables couples to love each other unselfishly, experience deep intimacy and remain faithful.

Thank You for calling certain people to ordination and the ways in which You use them and reveal Yourself through them.

Thank You for providing us with the opportunity to make our confession
before a priest

who can absolve us, in Your name, and assure us of Your love and forgiveness.

Thank You that we can receive the anointing with oil for healing
and to give us peace in preparation for dying.

Thank You for all the spiritual riches You make available to us
in and through the sacraments of the Church.

Help me, always, to see Your presence in them
to value them

and to participate in those that are appropriate for me
at different times in my life

so that I receive the grace You offer me, with faith and joy and gratitude.

Amen