

Did You Know?

March 21, 2021

Some review. During this Lenten season, the “Did You Know?” columns have been exploring the journey those in RCIA/RCIAC are on as they prepare to enter the Catholic Church at the Easter Vigil. They are now called the Elect and are in the last stage of the RCIA/RCIAC process, the Purification and Enlightenment Stage. Today, we will look at the three sacraments the Elect will receive at the Easter Vigil; Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist.

First, a little background on sacraments. The Catholic Church celebrates seven sacraments; Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist, Holy Orders, Marriage, Reconciliation, and Anointing of the Sick. Celebrating the sacraments draws us closer to and helps us experience Jesus. Saint Leo the Great said, *“Since the Lord is no longer visible among us, everything of him that was visible has passed into the sacraments.”*

All the sacraments were given to us by Christ and it is he who is at work in each one. Meaning, it is Jesus who baptizes, it is Jesus who forgives our sins through the priest who stands in “persona Christi” – in the person of Christ.

Out of the seven sacraments, there are three sacrament of Christian initiation; Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist. Our Elect will receive all three sacraments at the Easter Vigil.



Baptism is the gateway to the other sacraments, which means we have to be baptized before we can receive any other sacrament. When we are baptized, we are claimed for Christ and become sharers in the mission left to us by Christ – to love others as he did. Blessing ourselves with holy water when we come into church (when not in the middle of a pandemic!) is to remind us of our baptism and our baptismal call, and to remind us of who we are and to whom we belong.



Confirmation will be the second sacrament the Elect will receive at the Easter Vigil. The Laying on of Hands calls upon the Holy Spirit to, “...give them the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and fortitude, the spirit of knowledge and piety; fill them with the spirit of the fear of the Lord.”

(*Order of Confirmation, no. 25*) (The words underlined or the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit.) Sacred Chrism is put on the forehead with the words, “Be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit.” All the graces received in Baptism are strengthened in us and the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit are increased so we can spread and defend the faith.



The third sacrament our Elect will receive at the Easter Vigil will be Eucharist. “Eucharist is the source and summit of our Catholic faith.” (CCC 1324) It is the ritual Jesus performed with his disciples the night before he died and told us to “do”. At Mass, Jesus offers us his body and blood in the forms of bread and wine, and in doing so we are mystically united to him and to the entire body of Christ, the Church, the people of God. During the Eucharistic Prayer, by the power of the Holy Spirit, the ordinary gifts of bread and wine are changed into the body and blood of Jesus. And then we do what He said to do – take and eat, take and drink. We become living tabernacles as we receive the true presence of Jesus.

Once our Elect have received Jesus in the Eucharist, they will be fully initiated members of the Catholic Church. The three sacraments of initiation will help them, as they do all of us, to accomplish the mission to which we are all called: Through **Baptism** we are claimed for Christ and become sharers in the mission left to us by Christ – to love others as he did. The sacrament of **Confirmation** fills us with the strength needed to carry out the mission of the Church. The sacrament of **Eucharist** fuels us with the very presence of Jesus so we can accomplish the work of the Church, and it fills us with joyful hope of a heavenly eternity.