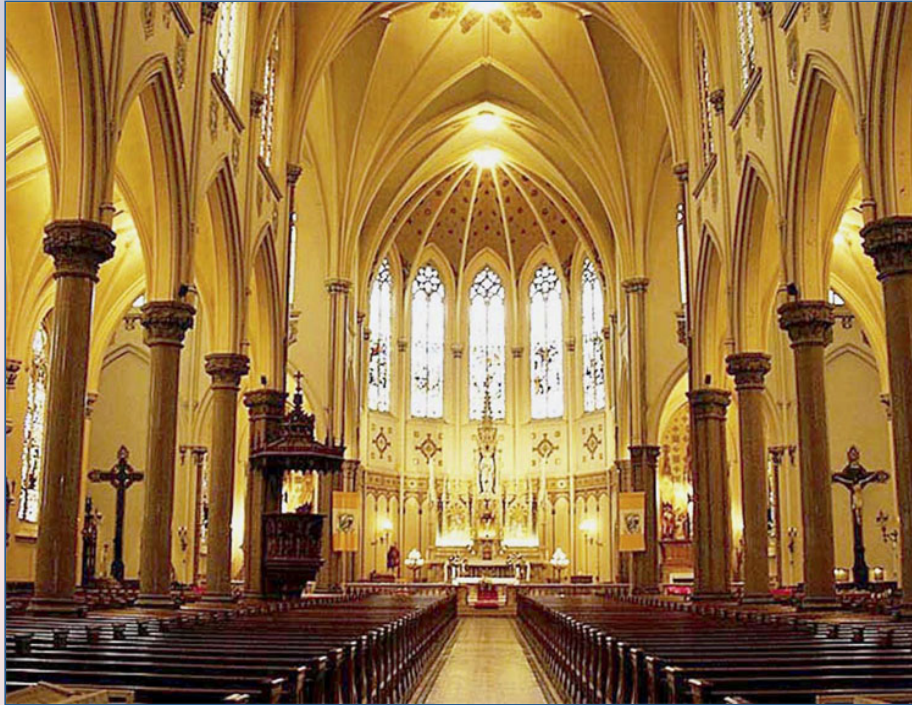


# ROMAN CATHOLICISM SACRAMENTS

**And Their Affects on Family Life**



**Blog Author: Jessica Wilbor  
Fall 2015 Semester  
December 4, 2015**



**REL 1300**

PROFESSOR JOHN L. CROW  
FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY

# INTRODUCTION & WELCOME!

Hello. My name is Jessica Wilbor and I am a college student at Florida State University. I am currently enrolled in a World Religions course. In this course, we are taught an introduction into the religions of the world with attention to the history of these religions, their roles throughout world history, and their relevance in this current day and age. A large assignment in this course is to create a project of some sort, and as you can see, I have created a blog! This blog will focus on Roman Catholicism and how it affects one's family life. Why did I decide this topic? Well it's quite interesting. While my family isn't the most religious, we still do value religion and the core functions that it entails. My mother is Puerto Rican and comes from a very Roman Catholic family. My father is Welch and comes from a Protestant family. However, when it comes to religious "milestones" if you will, it seems as if the Roman Catholic religion is highly ritualized and highly organized. This blog will explore those religious milestones, called sacraments, in the Roman Catholic religion, and how those milestones affect family life. Welcome and Enjoy!

For those readers who aren't as familiar with this religion, don't fret! A little background is provided for you. Roman Catholicism is the largest Christian denomination group in the world, with more than one billion adherents. Catholicism is the majority religion of Italy, Spain, and most Latin American countries. Distinct Roman Catholic beliefs include the special authority of the pope. (For those who don't know, our current Pope is Pope Francis and he just visited the United States for the first time this past fall, which was a big deal!)

Additionally, beliefs include the ability of saints to intercede on behalf of believers, and the concept of purgatory as a place of afterlife before entering heaven. These are just a few broad beliefs, and of course there are many more.

In general, Catholic worships tend to be more formal and ritual than its Protestant counterparts, which is a major reason why I wanted to explore this topic.



# INTRODUCTION (CONTUINED)

What are Roman Catholicism Sacraments? Roman Catholic teaching holds that there are seven sacraments, which Christ instituted and entrusted to the Church. Sacraments are rituals that Catholic followers see as signs of God's presence and channels of His grace. The seven sacraments include Baptism, the Eucharist (Communion), Penance (Reconciliation), Confirmation, Holy Matrimony (Marriage), Ordination (Holy Orders), and the Anointing of the Sick. This blog will go into a deep dive of how these sacraments are utilized in Roman Catholic lives and especially how they affect family life.

Please feel free to comment with any questions or concerns.  
Thanks for reading!

Jessica



# BAPTISM

Welcome! Today we will discuss the Roman Catholic sacrament, Baptism. To begin, I will provide a description of the sacrament, what it entails, and how it affects family life. Some examples will be research conducted on the Internet, as well as information from my mother, and aunt, two devout Roman Catholics.

For Catholics, the Sacrament of Baptism is the first step in a lifelong journey of commitment to this religion. It is often called "the Door of the Church" as it is the beginning of these sacraments. The majority of Catholics receive it as infants, shown in the photo below.



Once baptized, a person becomes a member of the Church. While the Church has an extended rite of Baptism, parents and godparents are highly involved in this sacrament. Many of us have "godparents". These are special people chosen by our parents, involved in the baptism, that make profession of faith for the person being baptized (the god child) and assume an obligation to serves as proxies for the parents if the parents are unable to provide for the child, or conditions occur. There are two essentials of this sacrament: the pouring of the water over the head of person to be baptized, and the words "I baptize you in the same of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit."



# BAPTISM (CONTUINED)

Lets talk about the role of Baptism and family life. Coming from someone who was personally baptized at a young age in a Catholic Church, I was just an infant and quite frankly do not remember it. So, I decided to ask my mother how it affected the family life. She said it really depends on if both parents are Catholic. In my situation, my father is not Catholic. Therefore, she had to have a discussion on how they wanted to raise their children, what religion, etc. This included asking permission if it was okay to baptize in a Catholic Church. After that discussion, they agreed on Catholicism. *It is important to note in some families, this is a major deal. Quite often, parents do get in arguments regarding what religion their children should be raised and many times, the only solution is agreeing on half. For example, in a Jewish Catholic household, the family celebrates both Christmas and Hanukkah.* After the made arrangements for the Baptism, she said the whole family, both sides of it, were very excited for it to occur and wanted to be involved and help with the celebration. In most families, there is a celebration party following the ceremony.

I found in my primary and secondary research that Baptisms brings the Catholic family together. Roman Catholic families love Baptisms because it allows involvement. Many family members stand at the front of the Church with the minister (that is a bishop, priest, or sometimes deacon). Family members involved in most baptisms included mothers, fathers, grandparents, and godparents. Many of my family members attended the Church and observed the sacrament. I have found that sacramental celebrations, like Baptism help mark our journey in faith, especially with our families. Baptism allows the family to celebrate and mark a new beginning in the baptized child's life as well as experience grace together.

*P.S. Roman Catholic baptisms usually occur as an infant, but this isn't always the case, especially in today's day and age. There are some adult baptisms in which the individual is emerged into a body of water. If you have gotten baptized as an adult, I would love to hear about your experience. Please feel free to comment below or email me privately, your post shall stay anonymous if you choose so.*

# RECONCILIATION (PENANCE)

The second Roman Catholicism sacrament is Reconciliation (also known as Penance, and or Confession). It is important to note that in the Roman Catholic religion, order of these sacraments **is** important. First, one undergoes Baptism. Secondly, once the person has reached the age of reason (usually around seven years old), the first Sacrament of Penance must occur.

The Sacrament of Penance & Reconciliation occurs when the individual obtains divine mercy for the sins committed against God, and these sins are reconciled with the community of the Church. This sacrament frees Catholics from sins committed after Baptism. This sacrament is considered the way to be released for mortal sins which would otherwise condemn a person to Hell in the afterlife. In most situations of the Catholic Church, one confesses to a priest in private.

Reconciliation has three elements: conversion, confession and celebration. Catholics view this sacrament as upmost important because it mold's the individual into becoming stronger and more peaceful. Every time a Catholic confesses, God strengthens their will and as a result, they become more resolute to follow God's will.



So lets talk about Confession and family life. How does this affect it? Well, many parents feel pressure on themselves before sending their children to confession with their priests for the first time. Many times, Catholic parents have gone to this certain church for a very long time. Parents must make sure their child is ready. However, the majority of the time, the child is ready. This sacrament is heavily focused not the individual. So I would also like to look at it from the child's point of view. Being raised a Catholic; there is also some pressure from the child's side to perform well. However, it is apart of our lives and I hope to not just depict a sour image in your heads. Reconciliation, confessing your sins feels great. It really does make you feel better. I have found in my research that after a confession, 98% of the Catholic population feels a sense of strength and overcomes much more than prior to doing so. It is important to note that confession can occur at any time in a Catholics life, not just required as the second sacrament. Adults, of all ages confess every day inside of a Catholic Church. Putting that into perspective, think about if your Catholic parents are ever feeling down or regretful. Maybe encourage them to confess. It could overall enhance not only their life, but the family's life too!



# EUCCHARIST (HOLY COMMUNION)

Greetings! Lets talk about the Roman Catholic sacrament, the Eucharist or as many of us better know it, the Holy Communion (also known as the Lord's Supper.) The Eucharist is known as both a sacrament and a sacrifice because according to the New Testament, it was instituted by Jesus Christ during his Last Supper. This sacrament is third, following Baptism and Reconciliation.



The appearances of bread and wine are contained, offered, and received in the Catholic Church during this sacrament. The bread symbolizes Jesus Christ's body and the wine symbolizes his blood. This ceremony is sometimes noted as the most important of the seven sacraments because one receives "the blood and body of Jesus Christ." The Eucharist, or Communion, is an intimate encounter with Jesus Christ, in which one sacramentally receives Christ into his/her body. The Church does

not define the age of reason for the Communion, however a child is deemed capable of reason and therefore able to appreciate and understand the miracle of this ceremony starting age of seven years old. This age is also mentioned in the sacrament of Confession.

Traditions of celebration surrounding the First Communion usually include large family gatherings and parties to celebrate this event. The first communicant wears special clothes, often all white, to symbolize purity. The clothing does vary in many cultures. Gifts given by family members after this sacrament include rosaries, prayer books, religious statues, icons, and holy cards as well as monetary gifts. In my research I found that many families have formal, professional photographs taken in addition to candid pictures. Some churches even arrange for a professional photographer after the ceremony. Many family members travel long distances in order to make sure they are present for this ceremony.

While all seven sacraments are important, I found that in many Catholic families, this is deemed the most important. Therefore, many families spend the most money celebrating this event, even more than on Baptism. Overall, I have found that this event is seen as delightful in bringing the family, and even the extended family, close together.



# CONFIRMATION

Today I will be discussing the Roman Catholic sacrament, Confirmation. According to Catholic doctrine, in this sacrament, they are sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit and strengthened overall in their Christian life.

In this sacrament, very religious Catholics, only view this significant if the person was baptized and performed their holy communion. So what does this sacrament represent? It represents the Holy Ghost (the doctrine of the Catholic Church, third person of the Blessed Trinity) is given to those in order to make them strong and successful Christians in their lives.

In the Western Church, the bishop usually administers this sacrament. At the beginning of the ceremony, he prays and welcomes everyone; a very common saying in this sacrament from the bishop is “send forth upon them thy sevenfold Spirit the Holy Paraclete.” He then anoints the head of the people or person receiving their confirmation. Anointing the forehead of the recipient with sacred chrism is considered the essential rite of Confirmation.



I personally have attended these ceremonies, as well as Holy Communion, and have seen first hand how these ceremonies affect family life. Catholic families take these ceremonies very seriously, and invite close family and friends to watch the ceremony take place inside the Church. Usually, there are about 10-15 children at about the ages of 14-15 receiving their confirmation. The families are usually close together and know each other inside their church communities.

I found a very interesting case study through Florida State's bibliographical library database titled, “Confirmation strengthens family and community of believers” by Thomas Gumbleton. The case study goes into depth how families come together personally and spiritually after a family member has undergone confirmation. Families were interviewed about this topic and 78% of the parents agreed with the idea that “The teenager is perceived as more responsible and kind” after the confirmation event. I believe that alone is very powerful because it shows how families are brought together at the end of this holy sacrament.



# HOLY MATRIMONY (MARRIAGE)



Next is Holy Matrimony. Although all of the holy sacraments are significantly interesting and important, this is probably my personal favorite.

This event is so special in someone's life and really brings together not just one family, but two! I have been fortunate enough to be able to attend these ceremonies and have seen first hand how families are lifted from the church ceremony and the wedding celebration afterwards.

First, let's understand, religiously what this sacrament means. Holy matrimony is a phrase used by Christians to describe marriage.

Christian authorities and bodies view marriage

as a state instituted and ordained by God for the lifelong relationship between one man as a husband and one woman as a wife. This is considered the most intimate of human relationships and a sacred and loving institution between two people. Catholics consider this idea of marriage to be a Sacrament because it is referred to in the Holy Bible. Jesus actually taught about the importance and sacredness of lifelong marriage in his own teachings and quoted from both Genesis 1 and 2, stating in Matthew 19:3-6 that God created humanity as male and female and understood the image of marriage.

It must be stated that Roman Catholics take this sacrament very seriously and expect the husband and wife to stay together "until death do us part". Something I would like to bring up is the idea of mixed marriages. Oftentimes, Catholic parents (who married into Catholic families) expect their children to marry into Catholic families as well. From an early stage, Church councils forbade Catholic Christians to marry non-Christians because it was considered "invalid". However, times have changed and the world has evolved into a very free, liberal lifestyle. But many parents and families still uphold those traditional values and expect this. According to my extensive research, there have been some instances where some family members do not even attend their own family's wedding due to their disapproval of the soon-to-be spouse. This becomes a divide in the family and has led to issues down the road. However, I would like to say that the majority of the time, marriage is a beautiful thing for families to attend and be apart of. It is a special gift from God and brings life to both families who are expected to love and grow with one another. The preparation for this event is obviously the toughest part as far as financial obligations and much planning as it is more than just a legal contract but in the end, it is an amazing thing as this is spiritually and morally binding for two individuals to experience!

# HOLY ORDERS

The sixth Roman Catholic sacrament is Holy Orders, which are three specific ordained ministries: bishop, priest and deacon. The sacrament is the rite by which candidates are ordained to those orders and the ordination of the chosen candidates. It is important to note that obviously this sacrament is very exclusive and not required by every Roman Catholic.

The word “holy” means “set apart for some purpose” and the term “order” allows an established body with a hierarchy. Deacons, the lowest of the three, are allowed to perform baptisms, witness marriages, preside at funerals, and serve the community through works of charity. Deacons may assist at the Eucharist (Holy communion), but are not ministers of it. After six months or more, a man can be ordained to priesthood.



Priests are able to preach, perform baptisms, witness marriages, minister confessions, anoint the sick, and celebrate the Eucharist. Some priests are later chosen to be bishops. Bishops are the highest in the clergy hierarchy, entrusted with a position of authority and oversight. It is very common for bishops to ordain priests and deacons. Bishops **must** be widowers or unmarried, or agree to abstain from sexual contact with their wives. Obviously, this sacrament is very serious and requires lifelong commitment so the affect on the family life is quite significant. If married, it is very important that the wife of the bishop agrees to his commitment. According to my research, a married man doesn't wake up one day and wishes to become a bishop. They are usually very religious their whole lives and the woman understand this commitment before marrying. Additionally, even at a younger stage when a man is a deacon, him and his personal family are very much involved in the church and church community.

Something important to note is that this sacrament confirms and indelible or permanent character on the recipient, meaning that this Sacrament cannot be received again. The indelible character is a reminder to the bishop, priest, or deacon that this is a lifelong commitment. Two other Sacraments with permanent character, like Holy Orders, are Baptism and Confirmation.

*Please feel free to comment below if you personally know a bishop, priest, or deacon and what might you think this commitment has on their family life or what the family says about it! I would love to hear! Thanks!*



# ANOINTING OF THE SICK

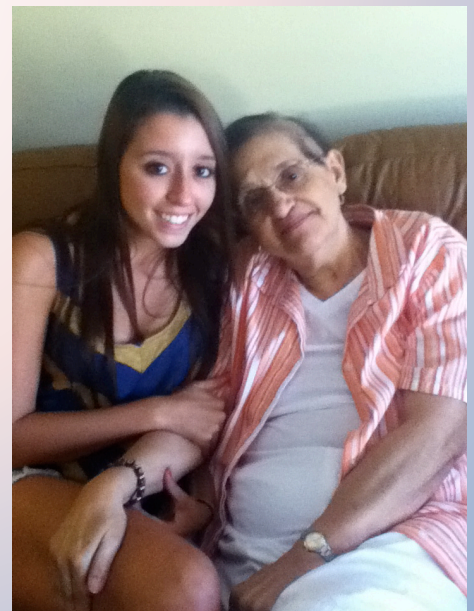


The seventh and last holy sacrament in the Catholic religion is Anointing of the Sick. Anointing of the sick is administered to a Catholic “who, having reached the age of reason, begins to be in danger due to sickness or old age”. This sacrament is also referred to as Unction and in the past Extreme Unction and it is one of the three

sacraments that constitute the last rites. The last rites are last prayers and ministrations given to many Catholics when possible shortly before death and may be administered to those awaiting execution, mortally injured, or terminally ill. A priest, who uses olive oil or another pure plant oil, to anoint the patient’s forehead and perhaps other parts of the body while reciting certain prayers, administers the sacrament. It is believed that these oils give comfort, peace, and courage and if the sick person is unable to make a confession, even forgiveness of sins. The Bible refers to anointing of the sick in James 5:14-15, “Are any among you sick? They should call for elders of the Church and have them pray over them, anointing them with oil in the name of the Lord. And their prayer offered in faith will heal the sick, and the Lord will make them well. And if they have committed sins, these will be forgiven.”

I have to say, this isn’t an easy blog to write for me because I firsthand witnessed this occurring in my Catholic grandmother’s household before she passed away due to sickness. It really affects the family in such an indescribable way because it is verbally stated prayers that the family embarks on, knowing that they could be the last prayers or last time they get to see this person. As a family, it really is not an easy thing to do. However, I believe it made my family stronger in the end. One thing to note is that sometimes this sacrament is positive for families, because it depends upon the circumstance of the sick or old person. Sometimes, a priest comes to a hospital or family home and the prayers

upon their sickness elevate the person, which is the power of prayer and family. Overall, family is very important in this sacrament because family is the heart of the Catholic religion and sickness and old age is apart of life.



I'm sharing with you all a photo of me and my grandmother who unfortunately passed away due to sickness, because she was Roman Catholic and this sacrament personally affected my family. We all prayed for her so much and she was such a fighter. We miss her so much! Rest in Peace my beautiful angel!

# GOODBYE & THANK YOU!

To all my readers, my family and friends and my professor of this World Religions course, Professor Crow, Thank you so much for reading! This project really has taught me so much about the Roman Catholic sacraments and has allowed me to learn so much how they affect family life. Hopefully, it has taught you as well some things about the religion and the sacraments! As always, feel free to reach out with any questions or concerns!

Happy Holidays!

Best,

Jessica Wilbor

