

PRAYER CELEBRATION

Preparation: Gather symbols of the Seven Sacraments: a small, clear bowl of water, a chalice and/or paten, two cruets of oil, a crucifix, a priest's stole, and a small figure or photo of a bridal couple. Place these on a table covered with a cloth. Assign each of the symbols to a different child. During the service, instruct the children to come forward and hold up the symbol as the prayer for their sacrament is offered.

Gather in a circle around the prayer table. Invite the children to quiet themselves as everyone prepares to enter into prayer.

Leader: The sacraments are the most important celebrations in the Church. The sacraments join Catholics all over the world with Jesus and with one another. Let us thank God for the gift of the sacraments.

Children come forward to hold up the symbols for the Sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist.

Leader: God of light and life, thank you for the Sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist. Through them, we welcome new members into the Church and deepen our faith as followers of Jesus.

All: God of light and life, we give you thanks and praise.

Children place the symbols back on the table. Children come forward to hold up the symbols for the Sacraments of Penance and Anointing of the Sick.

Leader: God of peace and healing, thank you for the Sacraments of Penance and Anointing of the Sick. Through them, we are made whole in mind, body, heart, and spirit through the forgiveness and gentle touch of Jesus.

All: God of peace and healing, we give you thanks and praise.

Children place the symbols back on the table. Children come forward to hold up the symbols for the Sacraments of Matrimony and Holy Orders.

Leader: God of compassion and generosity, thank you for the Sacraments of Matrimony and Holy Orders. Through them, we give ourselves in love and service to those in our family, our church, and our world.

All: God of compassion and generosity, we give you thanks and praise.

Children place the symbols back on the table. The children join hands for the closing prayer.

Leader: We thank you, gracious God, for the gifts of the sacraments. In the sacraments, we see signs of your love and presence, share in the life of Jesus, and are filled with the grace of the Holy Spirit.

All: Gracious God, we give you thanks and praise.

SACRAMENTS: GOD'S PRESENCE WITH US

As Catholics, we believe in the *sacramentality* of life—that creation is full of signs that point us to God's presence. Consider the abundance of color in the produce section of your local grocery store, and how it signifies the abundant harvest that comes from God's earth. Imagine the sound of relatives greeting a soldier returning from a lengthy deployment, and how it signifies the bonds of God's immanent love. Watch a documentary about the complexities of the universe; reflect on how it signifies the mystery of God's power. Signs of the Divine exist all around us.

The Seven Sacraments, instituted by Christ and celebrated by the Church, are effective signs because they bring about what they signify. They are given to us so that through them we can share in God's life. They enable us to respond to our common vocation: our call to holiness. The sacraments give us grace, the gift of sharing in God's life, and the ability to lead a life worthy of the God who calls us. The Sacraments of Christian Initiation—Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist—bring us into the fullness of life with God and initiate us as members of the Church. The Sacraments of Healing—Penance and Anointing of the Sick—restore and reconcile us to God, and strengthen us in body and soul. In the Sacraments of Service—Matrimony and Holy Orders—we witness and celebrate the calling to love and ministry of married people and of bishops, priests, and deacons. A fundamental understanding of these sacraments—initiation, healing, and service—begins early in a child's life and progresses as he or she matures in faith. It is a process that makes the presence of God's life in and among us so wondrous.

Suggested Activities

- Visit the church to look for signs of the sacraments. Ask a priest, deacon, or liturgical minister to explain the various symbols to the children and how the Church celebrates the Seven Sacraments.
- Talk about ways new members are welcomed into the Church through the Sacrament of Baptism. Brainstorm a list of ways to welcome new members into the Church. Post the results around a baptismal font that is constructed on a bulletin board or drawn on a white board.
- Explain how the Sacrament of Penance directs us to think and act with fairness, to stand up for what is right, and to work for justice and peace in the world. Invite the children to think of examples of someone making a good decision. Act out the scenes as a way to further discuss the importance of choosing to follow Jesus.

Bright Ideas

To learn about the saints and for additional activities related to the lives of the saints, visit www.SadlierWeBelieveBlog.com.

Follow Kathy Hendricks' blog, www.WeBelieveAndShare.com for inspirational support and prayerful downloads.

Directions

The Seven Sacraments are signs of God's love and presence in our lives. Families also offer signs of love and presence by caring for, encouraging, and forgiving each other. Look at each of the symbols for the Seven Sacraments. In the space next to each one, draw or write something that shows how a family can be a sign of God's love and presence to each other.



BAPTISM

The Sacrament of Baptism welcomes new members into the Church. How does a family welcome a baby or other new member into their household?



CONFIRMATION

In the Sacrament of Confirmation, the Holy Spirit strengthens us to become more like Christ and to witness to our faith. How do families show that they follow Christ?



EUCHARIST

In the Sacrament of the Eucharist, we give thanks and praise for the gift of Jesus in our lives. How do families show that they are thankful for the gifts God has given them?



PENANCE

The Sacrament of Penance offers us an opportunity to experience the peace of Christ through forgiving and being forgiven by others. How do families extend peace and forgiveness to one another?



ANOINTING OF THE SICK

The Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick extends the healing ministry of Jesus to those who are suffering. How does a family show the healing love of Jesus by caring for someone who is sick or suffering?



MATRIMONY

In the Sacrament of Matrimony, a married couple promises to love each other as Christ loves us. How do families show their love for one another?



HOLY ORDERS

In the Sacrament of Holy Orders, a man promises to serve the Church through his calling to the priesthood. How do families serve others in their homes, neighborhoods, schools, parishes, or places of work?