



Parish of St. Vincent Ferrer
and St. Catherine of Siena

KEYS TO THE KINGDOM:

The Sacrament of Confession and the Eucharistic Revival

Tuesday, July 11 – Tuesday August 1, 2023

Rev. Br. Charles Marie Rooney, O.P.

Series Outline:

1. *July 11: The Sacraments and Our Salvation*
2. July 18: Penance, Confession, and the Christian Life
3. July 25: Inside the Box: The Essential Dynamics of the Sacrament of Confession
4. August 1: Raised to Eternal Life: Confession, Communion, and the Kingdom of Heaven

Talk 1: The Sacraments and Our Salvation

Goal for tonight's session: To grow in knowledge of what the sacraments are, why Christ instituted them, and how they conform our lives to the Passion of Christ, whereby we receive salvation. Special emphasis will be placed on the Sacrament of Confession and the Eucharist.

I. Introduction: Eucharistic Revival and Sacramental Revival

- A Crisis in Faith: 2019 survey by the Pew Research Center showed only 28% of Catholics know and believe the Church's teaching about the Eucharist.
 - The U.S. bishops thus launched a 3-year National Eucharistic Revival (2022–2025).
- Eucharistic revival necessitates a sacramental revival—a renewed understanding of what the sacraments are and how they work together for the salvation of the human race.
- The overarching goal of this series is to elucidate how Jesus Christ causes our salvation through the sacraments, and most especially through the Sacrament of Confession in connection to the Most Holy Eucharist.

II. The Basics of Christian Salvation: Incarnation, Passion & Death, Grace & Faith

- In Jesus Christ, God becomes like us (human) that we might become like God.
 - 2 Pet 1:3-4: *His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness... that through these you might escape from the corruption that is in the world and become partakers of the divine nature.*
- It is fitting that God became man in Jesus Christ. God saves us in a human manner.
- Every word and deed of Jesus Christ is instructive for our salvation, but it is Christ's love shown in his Passion & Death that specifically saves us.
 - By his death, Christ bequeathed to us the New Covenant of grace (Heb 10:15-22).
- Grace gives us a participation in the eternal life of God, which gives us eternal life.
- Grace is given to us through living faith—through believing in the truth of God's love.
- Living faith (i.e., faith with charity) puts us in spiritual contact with the Passion of Christ.
 - *We have the mind of Christ* (1 Cor 2:16): Living faith unites us in mind (faith) and will (charity) to Christ's Passion, so we can know and love as Christ knows and loves.

III. The Saving Death of Christ and the Sacramental Economy

- Jesus Christ instituted the sacraments to extend physically the effects of his Incarnation.
 - Jesus Christ saved us by his death.
 - Through the sacraments of faith, Jesus Christ continues to save us.
 - Therefore, the sacraments of faith save us by uniting us to Christ's saving death.
- Through each of the sacraments, the Risen and Ascended Jesus Christ unites his faithful to his saving Passion and Death in a different respect, according to each sacrament.
- Just as Christ lived a whole human life, so the sacraments span the whole of human life.
 - Birth → Baptism
 - Adolescence → Confirmation
 - Daily nourishment → Eucharist
 - Justice, apology, and reconciliation → Confession
 - Natural marriage and family life → Holy Matrimony
 - Public governance and distribution for the common good → Holy Orders
 - Bodily care at the end of life → Anointing of the Sick

IV. Sacramental Structure: What Is a Sacrament?

- Sacrament: a sacred sign-action of Christ's Passion that causes the holiness it signifies.
- The threefold structure of the sacraments:
 - Cause: the sacramental action (matter and form).
 - Effect I: sacramental character (a new power), or an enduring interior mark (e.g., marriage bond, interior contrition, the sanctification of one's sickness, etc.).
 - Effect II: Sanctifying grace in the essence of the soul in a *mode specific to that sacrament*. This grace is the effect that properly heals and elevates us.
- Every sacrament helps the Christian to ascend toward God and to recede from sin.

V. Confession and Its Key Relationship to the Eucharist

- The Eucharist, being Christ's very substance itself, is the "sacrament of sacraments" (St. Thomas Aquinas) and the "source and summit of the Christian life" (LG 11).
- All sacraments are ordered to the Eucharist, but Confession in a special way.
 - Confession washes us in the Blood, making us apt to receive the Body and Blood.
 - Confession restores us to grace. The Eucharist strengthens us in grace.
- Confession and Communion are the only sacraments that are regularly repeated.

Further Resources:

- *The Seven Sacraments of the Catholic Church* by Fr. Romanus Cessario, O.P.
- *Meeting Christ in the Sacraments* by Fr. Colman O'Neill, O.P.
- YouTube: Thomistic Institute, "Aquinas 101: The Sacraments (Season 3)"
- Podcast: *Godsplaining*, "Episode 140: Back to Belief – Sacraments"

Questions for Prayer and Reflection:

1. Why is it significant that the sacraments derive their saving power from Christ's saving death? How might this help me to see in my own life ongoing conformity to Christ's death?
2. Given the basic link between the sacraments, what connections do I see between the sacraments I have received and the ways God has drawn me to himself throughout my life?