

SACRAMENTAL LIFE

As we continue our Lenten Journey into the fourth week, we shall meditate on the next pillar of our Jesus Youth spirituality – Sacramental life. This translates not just into a simple reception of the Sacraments, but a deeper experiential living of the Sacramental grace.

A Sacrament literally means ‘that which is holy or sacred’. It carries a sense of ‘mystery’ as well. Sacraments help us to transcend our physical or human realm and enter the divine milieu. Thus becoming for us each time a healing, forgiving, strengthening and enriching experience. Sacraments are also signs of God’s positive love for us. Though God is invisible and intangible, the Sacraments make present, through visible and concrete signs, the presence of God among us. The worthy reception of the Sacraments in turn compels us to return this love.

The ‘Sacramental Economy’ is a life-time accompaniment of a loving Father. The seven Sacraments are so arranged that from birth to death, the loving and caring hand of God is with us. We who are born to the fallen human nature are transformed into the children of God in Baptism. The Eucharist becomes the food for our life. Sacrament of Reconciliation conjoins us with God and one another. Confirmation strengthens us and makes us courageous and committed Christians. Matrimony and Holy Orders bids us to become servants of charity. Sacrament of Anointing brings hope and healing to the sick. Though this is the reality and we all know this catechesis about the Sacraments, it is imperative for us during this Holy Season to go deeper into the personal aspects of Sacraments.

Let us look into our lives. How many years has it been since we received the Sacrament of Baptism? And how have we been growing in the grace of Baptism? How many times, after our First Communion, have we received Jesus sacramentally? What effects of sanctification are visible in our lives? How strong are we in our commitment to faith even after the reception of Confirmation? How many times have we asked the Lord’s forgiveness in Confession? How many days - if not hours - have we refrained from our confessed sins? What is the level of commitment to our promises of Matrimony or Ordination? How many of us daily recall those covenantal words? ***Where do we stand in our life of grace?***

There is this *incarnational* aspect to the Sacraments. Jesus is the true Sacrament of God - visible sign of God’s love for us. He is not just a passive or static sign, rather a dynamic and life-giving sign. He carried and actualised what he symbolised. Likewise, each Sacrament is the living symbol of God’s loving presence and action. These are given to us because we are beings with feelings and emotions. So in the Sacraments we are able to experience God not only in a mere intellectual way, but empirically. *In turn we, who receive the Sacraments, are to become Sacraments to others around us, just as Jesus is the Sacrament of the Father.*

In our daily journey, two of the Sacraments are of more importance and practical application: Reconciliation and Holy Eucharist. Lent itself has a penitential nature. The Lord's invitation during this Season is for us to cleanse ourselves of our iniquities. What better means than to frequent the Sacrament of Reconciliation for this goal? Receive the Sacrament with due

preparation; take time to seriously think of our life, our commitment, our duties, etc. Then resolve to transform our life. We shall thus see, through the observance of this Lent, at least one aspect of our life that we know is not pleasing to God totally removed from us.

Again, participating in the Holy Eucharist as often as possible is an aim we can set. It is not enough that we just go for Mass, but we need to really prepare for it. The Eucharist must become our life. It is in sacrificing our own life that we actualise the Mass. Frequent communion (if possible daily communion) should be our priority.

Many of us may have been observing these Sacraments for some time now. But down the road the fervour dies down. ***It is time for us to return to the original love.*** Let this Lenten Season transform us through the Sacraments of Penance and Holy Eucharist.

Finally, it is important for us to take a few moments in the presence of God to see the actualisation of Sacraments in our daily life. How many wounds are there on our body - the broken body of Jesus? How much of our 'self' has been immolated to bring life to others? Do our life partners see and experience God in us? Do our children understand the love of God in and through us? Do our neighbours touch and hear God in us? Do the multitudes flock to us as they did to Jesus, to hear God, see God, touch God, and experience God? If this happens, then our Sacramental life is real and active.

Wishing you all a fruitful Sacramental life, not just during this Lent, but all through your life.

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