

Sacraments Talk Men's Cursillo Saturday, January 20, 2007 St. Charles Borromeo Center

This is called the "Sacraments Talk," and I'd like to begin with the first Chapter of the Gospel of John.

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made, without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light men; the light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it."

This gospel, Prologue, as it is called—was really intended to parallel the first book of the Bible, the Book of Genesis, which is about the beginning. "In the beginning was the word"; **the word of God spoke and the world was created. And everything was good.** But that story of the creation of the world in its goodness has a story within it about the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Now that, of course, has to do with humanity, because **only human beings can know good and evil.** It's not about an apple tree, although it's often pictured as a fruit tree. It's not a fruit tree; it's a tree of knowledge. We often speak in symbols and images about abstract ideas—abstract, but real—reality. So the Bible is full of these images, and one of them is the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. You could say that **the world itself is the first sacrament, that is, the first sign, of God's love,** the whole creation, the billions and billions of galaxies you heard about in Bob's talk. That's a sacrament of God's presence and God's intelligence and God's power.

But this sacrament now is focused on the human creation made in the image and the likeness of God, but with one stipulation: this image of God, which means an image that is **conscious because God is conscious.** When Moses approached the burning bush he heard the voice, "I AM WHO AM." That means the ground of consciousness. So in every human being we have **a feeling of "I," a self-awareness that is a created reflection of the very essence of God,** the very nature of God. And that is the human spirit. So the human spirit is a created participation in the divine Spirit. Likewise, we have an intellect, which is a created participation in the divine intellect. We have a will that is a created participation in the divine will, which is free.

Now God gave humanity his own image. He placed it upon them, but said, "Now do not eat of the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil. Do not eat the fruit." Now we have to play with that and try to understand what it means. I think it means **you cannot decide for yourself what is good and evil.** If you say what's good for you is good and what's evil for you is evil, you are really not observing the objective order that God has already created. You are making a separate creation. You are using your power wrongly. You are creating a world just for yourself with you in the middle. That is really what **original sin** is. What was the basis of that sin? It was the temptation or the suggestion of the serpent. "You know, Eve, God really doesn't want you to have what you could have. God doesn't

want your best. In fact, God knows that if you eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, if you just decide what to do on your own, you will be equal to God, and God doesn't want you to be equal." Well, in fact, God does want us to be equal, but we can only be equal in a limited, created way.

Now the Word becomes flesh. The Word is the Word that created the world. The Word becomes flesh. "And apart from the Word nothing comes to be." This is something we do not experience due to sin. This means that **there is actually nothing that can exist without God**. In fact, rather than saying God is in us, which is true, we could also say we are in God. St. Paul says that in Ephesians: "In God we move and breathe and have our being." Indeed, without God there would be nothing. Yet we do not experience this through sin. "Our mind," as St. Augustine says, "has been darkened," and we imagine that we are somehow independent, that we have some kind of autonomy. Well, we do have autonomy in the sense **we have free will**, but we do not have real autonomy! Our being is not free. **Our being is totally dependent on God at all times in every way**. Even our sin is dependent upon God. God actually wills our sin in the sense that he does not will the sin itself as an objective intention, but he does will that we be free! He prefers that we sin to not being. And that is, of course, his love, which is very similar to the love of a very devout parent, who would rather see his or her child screw-up life than not be. Why? Because, of course, God always sees what's possible. "With God are all possibilities."

So part of God's plan for us is to **restore us to a proper vision**. He sends the vision, the Word, the understanding. **The mind of the universe itself becomes flesh and dwells among us**. St. Paul refers to this back in Philippians. He says, "Son though he was, Jesus did not deem equality with God something to be grasped at," which is exactly what Eve did, which Adam did, which human beings do whenever we play God and whenever we decide for ourselves what's good. We are really denying our creatureliness. **We are saying, "Well, I'm not going to be a creature. I am going to be the Creator of my own little world!"** But then my little world will be **my confinement and my prison**. But God doesn't want us to be confined and in prison. God wants us to live in the bounty, in the infinite bounty, of his own creation.

So he sends his Word into his sacrament, the earth, into his sacrament of material creation. **The Word takes its being the way God originally intended all of us to take our being**: in a creaturely way, not grasping at equality with God. Jesus simply lives as truly a Son of God. But—and you can read further on—what the Word does after the Word becomes flesh is **the Word enters into baptism**. And here John the Baptist really protests! He says, "Oh, it is not I who baptize you, but you should be baptizing me." Well, why? The point is very deep. John didn't even understand it. This was a baptism of **repentance**, and that word you heard earlier *metanoia*—that's what repentance is in the Bible: *metanoia*. It means, literally, "**new mindedness**" or "**new thinking**," which, of course, involves new feeling and new living. **John the Baptizer was telling his people**, those who listened to him, they had to have this; **they had to have a new way of living**. And Jesus says, "I'm going in there, too, into the water of baptism. And John says, "You don't need it." But John didn't understand the plan. **The plan was for Jesus, the Word**

of God, to take upon himself our condition totally, including the consequences of sin, which naturally he would not have suffered. He would not suffer that merely because he was human, because in the creation itself there was no evil, so in his human nature there was no evil. He took it upon himself in his baptism. He joined in solidarity, and **he did it through a sign because God speaks and acts—speaks and acts—through signs.**

So the baptism is the second Epiphany. The first Epiphany is the birth and manifestation in the physical body of the child. Ordinarily, the manifestation is usually considered to the Magi, but really to the world. That's the first Epiphany. The second Epiphany is the baptism in the Jordan. And in the baptism the Holy Spirit comes down like a dove, in the form of a dove, which doesn't mean it looked like a dove physically. It means that the descent is dovelike, which means gentle, because God enters our lives in a gentle way, never forcefully as an eagle would descend, forcefully, loquaciously, greedily—God does not—gently.

So that's the second manifestation. And he hears the words: "You are my beloved Son." You know why? Because **insofar as Jesus entered into solidarity with sin, he also entered into alienation and loneliness and a feeling of being separate.** That is the result of sin, not the result of human nature—the result of sin. Jesus entered into sin, and therefore he needed affirmation at that very moment. "You are my beloved Son," which you are in danger of forgetting since you've, after all, entered into sin, and which as sinners **we all forget and do not carry in our minds that we are the beloved children of God.** But **the sign of Baptism is meant to restore that relationship,** and so we talk rightly about Baptism **adopting us as children of God,** because being a child of God is not simply a physical thing. It cannot be a physical thing!

We are spirit, we are soul and we are body. Now the soul means our experience, all that we experience is our soul. Our spirit is the feeling of "I" at the center of our consciousness. Now if this spirit becomes absorbed in a soul, it experiences life with all of the senses in the world around us impinging upon us through the body, since it's in a body we experience, this is the human person, and we don't know God, we are going to grow up alienated. Baptism is meant to restore the original intention of God for us to live in this material world, but knowing God—**knowing God!**

In the early Church, the sign of Baptism was not simply the dunking. Of course, they did use water in various forms, sometimes just a pool or a puddle, sometimes a river. But when the Church actually started building baptisteries, the first baptisteries were circular pools. The one who was to be baptized would enter down into the water and traverse the water. That traversing the water—they would unclothe themselves; normally men were baptized in the nude and women wore only a slight wrap—and this **traversing of the water was seen by them** as, you might say, **a new form of Exodus.** So Baptism, the work of God, is **already speaking out of a whole sacramental system of symbols that existed in Judaism.**

So we have to talk about this story of the **Exodus through the Red Sea,** or some say the Sea of Reeds, which is a little different part of it, that same area. So the baptized let

go of all his or her old clothes, went through the font, and, of course, in the middle then would be baptized by crouching, and there was the bishop, usually it was the bishop, would put water over their head and say, “I baptize you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,” then go to the other side to be **clothed with Christ**. That’s where all that symbolism of being clothed in Christ comes from. It comes from this rite of Baptism itself, when a person would be clothed in a white garment, called an “**alb**.” It’s still used in liturgy by all the liturgical ministers. That’s the white **baptismal garment**. It is also the origin of the white **wedding garment**. It is also the origin of the—well, at least in the early Church—it was the garment people saved for their own **burial**. The people were buried in that. I know that up until not too long ago in Baptist circles, at least in Europe, European Baptists were buried in a white nightshirt, little did they know it was an old Roman custom! They probably wouldn’t have done it if they had known where it came from!

Baptism is a sign then of this *metanoia*. Another word for this is “**new life**” or “**rebirth**.” So when Jesus speaks to Nicodemus he says, “Unless someone is born again”—or “begotten from above,” which is another translation. This phrase could be translated either way: “born again” or “begotten from above”; begotten from above actually makes more sense. It means unless life be begotten in the Spirit, that is, more than simply what nature has given, this person cannot enter into the kingdom of God because the kingdom of God is Jesus’ way of talking about the full possibility that God intends and intended in the beginning for life, for human life.

Incidentally, the Catholic Church in *Lumen Gentium*, in Vatican II, reaffirmed what people thought it taught all along. Now it made it very clear that the Catholic Church teaches that **God has willed the salvation of all people and has provided for it since the time of Adam**. That’s in the dogmatic constitution of *Lumen Gentium*. So it isn’t as if salvation is just for a few people or God was just picking up a few favorites. No, God willed the salvation of all, and has provided for it since the time of Adam. However, there are certain moments in which this salvation became very graphic and very visible within a community, chosen indeed for witness. And that’s how we understand the existence of **a chosen people** and their very particular experience of salvation or experiences of salvation. It doesn’t mean only they were saved, but it means they **were saved in a very dramatic way that became a sacrament, that is, an outward sign of God’s will for all people**. We don’t know; we cannot say, and no one knows to what degree other people have been touched by the grace of God. We won’t know that until we are in heaven. But we know, and the Fathers of the Church really did imply, at least in my understanding, that God’s will was universal, that he has always willed salvation.

Now certain people have been privileged for a very close, you might say, a close and very intimate role in that work of salvation, like the Blessed Mother, like St. Joseph, and so on. That is indeed a special privilege, which St. Augustine called “predestination.” That doesn’t mean that God has given up on anyone else because God is constantly working for the salvation of all, and in some ways very dramatically. **The coming of Christ, of course, is the most dramatic and the most focused of God’s saving works**. So Jesus comes and he is baptized to join totally with us and the consequences of our sin,

and the **immediate response of God is to affirm him as his beloved, and we are to take that as personal as well.** He has affirmed each of us as his beloved in our Baptism.

Now there are different ways of talking about the sacraments, but I would like to for a moment talk about the tradition **Jesus came from**, that is, **the Jewish tradition.** He was born into a tradition. He did not come to life totally from nowhere; he was Jewish. The story of the Hebrew people is that they were—the word is *apiru*. It's somewhat speculative, but some believe "Hebrew" is from the word "*apiru*." Now the word "*apiru*" does exist in an ancient document, and what it really means is the, you might say, "the outcasts." In other words, as cities started developing, the cities put up walls and they started farms and they built granaries and they defended their granaries; they protected their granaries. Now there were people who were out beyond the walls, and they may be farmers or they may be shepherds, probably more shepherds, with their flocks, **very poor people living off the land, living off their flocks, but excluded from the centers now of wealth as they start developing.** And many people think that that's what the word "*apiru*" refers to, and it does look very much like the word "Hebrew" as well. So it could be one of the original meanings of the word "Hebrew." The language of Hebrew is very similar to other languages including Neo Babylonian, which is also called Akkadian, very similar to Aramaic; it's very similar to other Semitic languages, so it's not that remarkable. But if that's true, that would explain how these people, these *apiru* **ended up in Egypt** and without any sort of, you might say, support. They were more or less down there, as it says in the Bible, for food.

Now this group, the *apiru*, is not simply one little group but it's actually a name for various groups all over. Now what might have happened in the formation of the covenant is this small group from Egypt left and started to move into what we now call the Promised Land, and they may have simply joined with other groups of *apiru*, which would explain how they soon **arrived at twelve large tribes.** The whole idea that twelve tribes would come from one family doesn't really make any sense, if you ever thought about it. Well, I don't want to get into this, but it's the other way around usually—right? Many families in one tribe, not many tribes from one family. But the story is eventually many tribes. But how did they come about? **This came about through the intervention of God in a very powerful way with a group of slaves or at least non-citizens in the land of Egypt.**

The Book of Genesis tells about how the Hebrews arrived in Egypt. It doesn't really explain the whole political and sociological conditions, but it does say they arrived there. For a while they did very well because one of their relatives had preceded them, but after awhile a new pharaoh came, who did not know about these people. He started to **oppress them and they were forced into labor**, and they built the supply cities of Pithom and Raamses. We need to know that story. Then, of course, Moses is born and he is adopted and he runs away, and so on. Then God goes to Moses and he says, "**Moses, I want you to lead these people out.**" And he says, "Are you kidding? I can't do that! I don't speak well. So get somebody else." He says, "Moses, I'm calling you."

Now after all those times of God's power, when finally the Egyptians say, "Okay, get the heck out of here; we don't want you here anymore. You are not even welcome here; leave," it says, "They despoiled the Egyptians." What did that mean? It meant they took stuff. **They took whatever they needed.** They didn't borrow it saying, "Well, I'll bring it back later." They just took what they needed. And it says that God disposed them so well they collected all kinds of gold. I don't know if that's really an exaggeration or not, but anyway they despoiled the Egyptians. And then because of this, which is probably very rude—they were probably very rude about the whole thing—they marched out and they camped by what is now called the "Sea of Reeds," which is really a marshy section of the Red Sea. This seems to be what happened.

Then the Egyptians thought again about this. They said, "We let those people go; they took all our stuff! Let's go get it back." So they proceeded. I'm not really a biblical scholar, but scholars who try to reconstruct the event say that the Egyptian army showed up and camped here with the marsh here. Then the narrative says: "**Then the Lord made a strong east wind.**" They say today that in this area when there is a strong east wind, that the whole area dries up and you can walk on it just like dry ground. So it says, "The Lord made a strong east wind." So then what they imagined happened was—see there was a pillar of fire here. Now the pillar of fire is what they used to carry. They have actually pictures of this in the ancient hieroglyphics—people carrying a big burning something, torch. "The pillar of fire went before them," it says. Well, they probably planted it right there and, meanwhile, during the night **snuck across the Sea of Reeds.** Now with dawn, it says, "And dawn came," and the Egyptians said, "Oh, my goodness, they are leaving; so we are going to go"—and they pursued them. Then the wind shifted, and they got stuck in the Sea of Reeds, and then most of them drowned. Now that might also be an exaggeration. Maybe not most drowned; maybe some of them drowned—I don't know. But anyway, this was **a great saving event, and this is called the "Exodus," which literally is Greek for the "exit, the "departure."**

Now the point is that the Jewish people considered this so much the **formative moment in their life**, it made them who they were. I shouldn't have used the word "Jewish" because I should use the word "Israelite," because it would include not just one tribe, the one tribe of Judah, but all the tribes who even later would come in, because in Joshua you see how later other tribes will join in the covenant. They said, "We want to be part of this too." **That formative moment is made possible for all generations to be part of through the very process of ritual.**

Now the **ritual was created through story and through symbol and through gesture and through action.** It was developed into what was called the "**Seder.**" The Seder was precisely a meal in which the whole story of Exodus was told in such a way that **everyone who ate the meal was part of it.** They really believed that they were being transported across time and they were there. There is an old Spiritual: *Were you There When They Crucified My Lord?* Well, according to the Israelite mentality, they were at the Exodus when they go to Passover, and because of Passover they all participate. So **God saved all of them over a time at the Exodus and through the Passover.**

Now what was the Passover? The **Passover was really a combination of two even more ancient rituals** that already had a life of their own. First of all, the **Passover of the Paschal Lamb**. We don't know what it was originally, but they were agrarian people and when the first baby lambs were born they slaughtered them, used their **blood as a purification rite and a protection against evil, sprinkled it on the lintels of their tents, and ate the lamb**. They had done this for centuries. Now that ritual became part of something else as they told the story of the Exodus.

Then there was another great festival, the **festival of Unleavened Bread**, because later on they became farmers. When they became farmers they grew their barley, and when it came time for the harvest, they would celebrate the harvest with the first baking, when **the first baking was all flat bread**, because in those days the rising of bread did not come from yeast you bought at Jewel. It came from enzymes that were in the wheat already, but it took time to grow like sourdough. Well, of course, if you just make a fresh dough, it's always flat. That's what they did. So the first festival bread was flat bread, unleavened bread, called **matzoth**. That festival already was there too. That got combined with the Passover Lamb, and that all then bore the brunt of this ritual of bringing people to the Exodus.

Now what is significant for Christians is **Jesus chose that very ritual to interpret his own life and death**. He deliberately chose that ritual to interpret his own life and death. So the night before he died he went into a sort of ritual, a **Passover Seder**. Now there is no lamb. There was lamb at that original, but the lamb did not take part in Jesus' ritual. That's really interesting. John, our evangelist I started with today, picks up on that. You know why he says the lamb wasn't used? He didn't actually say this is so many words, but he implied, because **Jesus is the lamb**. But the bread, the **matzoth**, Jesus takes that [Mt, Mk, and Lk] and says, "This is my body. It will be broken for you." Then there is another part of the ritual, which is a **kiddush cup**. They had several blessing cups. He is saying, "This is my blood poured out so that sins may be forgiven." So **he interprets his death as a death for sin, as a sin offering**.

Now how do you understand this? In a physical way, no, it doesn't make any particular sense. But in the sense that his death is an offering of love to the Father, and it is in love that all forgiveness comes. So **the very idea of Passover and Exodus is essential to understand the very idea of the Sacrament of the Eucharist**, because it interprets Jesus' death as a **sacrifice**, and it also interprets it as something **totally voluntary**. Reading the Bible from a non-faith point of view, you might say they murdered Jesus. But no, not if you understand the ritual, the Passover. No one murdered him. He gave his life. **He gave his life to the Father**. And, moreover, **he wanted future generations to be able to enjoy this and be part of it just as Jews believed they could be part of the Exodus, and so he gave the cup**: "Take and drink." He gave the bread: "Take and eat. Do this in memory of me," so that all generations will be able to participate and be part of what he was doing.

Now the whole story of the meaning of Jesus' life and death is not contained on earth. The Letter to the Hebrews said that when **Jesus entered into the holy of holies, he brought his blood with him and he poured it out in front of the *Kapporeth***. That means the **mercy seat** in the holy of holies, because the **idea that** they had, the author had anyway and many people had at that time, was that **heaven was like the earthly Temple** but more beautiful. The earthly Temple had a holy of holies, so did the temple in heaven. In fact, why did the earthly Temple have one? Because heaven had one. And of course, on earth there was a *Kapporeth*, *Hilasterion*, in Greek. It was an empty chair. Why was it empty? Well, because you couldn't see God. So that's where God is sitting. And that's where once a year on Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, the high priest would enter and pour the blood—only once a year could anyone enter. He poured the blood in front of that mercy seat.

And the Letter to the Hebrews says that when Jesus went to heaven he went **once for all in the eternal moment that has no past or future**. He poured his blood in front of the mercy seat of God and **he remains forever our eternal mediator**, our eternal intercessor. That's the high priesthood of Christ; it's his eternal mediation. So as the Church looks at the ritual that Jesus gave us, it says **through the blood that we share from the table of the altar we are sharing in the blood Jesus now is pouring forth in the eternal moment in heaven**. It is the same blood. So the sacrament then becomes a window into eternity. Christians developed this thought in a way rather different from Jewish thinking. It was related to Jewish ideas, but went beyond them: this idea now that a sacrament is a window into the eternal moment. It has no past or future. Through the Eucharist the **ordained priest** is, in fact, **representing the eternal high priest** in his eternal oblation. That is why Christians can come together and join into this offering of Jesus to the Father, because it is indeed present to them, and according to theology, because the cup is the blood, and the blood is what is poured forth.

Now you know in the Latin Church there was not an emphasis on receiving from the cup. Well, the reason was the cup was seen primarily merely in this term of bringing your own lives to Christ and offering yourself to the Father. The bread was seen basically as the means of communion.

Now that did not come from the words of institution itself, and it was never accepted quite that way in the Eastern Church. At Vatican II, one of the first things the bishops agreed after they said, "Yes, we should have other languages besides Latin," they said, "Yes, we should restore the cup to the laity," because the ritual actually really calls for it, but the theology doesn't. But then, after all, they said, "Well, let's do the ritual in its fullness, and don't cut back even though theologically there's no need for it." So that's why we have seen the restoration of the cup in many churches.

Now the word itself, "*sacramentum*," in Latin, the Latin word—it was not used in Greek. In Greek, the word was "*mysterion*." *Mysterion* means simply something we cannot totally understand, but we can enter into and live. The Latin word "*Sacramentum*" had a very specific meaning. It came from the Roman army. When a Roman legionnaire

was sworn in, he had to swear that he would **fight for his commander until death. That oath is called “Sacramentum.”**

Now if you know anything about the early Church, you know, especially in the West, that if you were to become a baptized Christian, the very great possibility was you would die a violent death because of that decision. **So Baptism became a Sacramentum, an oath of loyalty until the end.** But, of course, those who then later denied the faith were seen as total traitors, apostates. That’s what apostasy really is. Apostasy really was denying the faith, especially under pressure. That’s where the word “sacrament” comes from, *sacramentum*. **So Baptism and Eucharist are the two primary sacraments in the Church.**

In terms of initiation into the Christian life there is a third, which is, again, disputed in whether it’s distinct from Baptism. And that’s called “Confirmation.” Confirmation amounts to what is called, in Aramaic, “*sphragis*.” It means a sealing, putting a seal. So in Baptism the Holy Spirit descends and the idea of Confirmation is we’re going to seal him in so he can’t get out.

Along with the Spirit comes, of course, **the gifts. The sacrament of Confirmation** is disputed: What it really means? When it should be given? How it should be given? What the theological effects are? Some like to stick to the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit listed in Isaiah, like wisdom, understanding, and so on. Others say, “Oh, no, you should include all of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, which are many, many, many. Of course, it’s true not everyone gets all gifts. Not everyone gets all seven. I mean, have you ever meet a Christian who is not prudent? I think you have. Now St. Thomas says that prudence, justice, temperance, and fortitude are infused at Baptism. But I’ve meet intemperate Christians, so I don’t know what infusing means. It’s a nice idea. I think we have to be very open to the transformation, again, *metanoia*, that the Spirit gives us, and not think about one gift at a time or one virtue at a time or eliminating one vice at a time. I think transformation is **transformation into the heart of God**, and that’s where you have to start.

So Confirmation is anyway **the seal of the Spirit**. Many today believe it should be given immediately with Baptism or shortly thereafter. In the Eastern Church it is, in the Eastern Rite. It’s always given at the very same day as Baptism. But then in the Eastern Church deacons never baptize. In the Latin Church deacons baptize, but they cannot confirm. It was always agreed that either a bishop or a priest had to confirm. So then confirmation occurred on the first visit of the bishop, a year or two after Baptism; but then it kept being delayed or even dropped altogether.

Matrimony—I don’t have to say a whole lot more about Matrimony because you had such a good teaching last night. But I would add one thing: that Matrimony, which is this **union of male and female**, is also meant, and I think Pat said it, is **meant to reflect the union of God with the human**, and, therefore, **the union of the human and divine in each person**, so our union with God, our soul united with God. Therefore, **Matrimony is both a baptismal and a Eucharistic sacrament**, baptismal in the sense it **causes a**

rebirth, a change in two peoples lives. No longer are they going to be two separate, but now they are going to be a new being; so that's baptismal. And yet, it is more than Baptism because, as Pat says, that new union doesn't happen overnight. There are a lot of struggles involved. And so it's also **Eucharistic because it requires this constant giving of self—this constant sacrifice of self.** So Matrimony is a reflection already. That's why it was disputed for so long in the Middle Ages whether it was a distinct sacrament. The Protestants eventually said, no, it wasn't; it was just an ordinance. But in the Catholic view, both East and West, it was accepted as a distinct sacrament, but the word "distinction" is taken with quotation marks. **Everything is connected to Baptism and everything is connected to Eucharist.** Without Baptism and Eucharist you can't have another sacrament indicating something else, coming from some other direction.

Holy Orders is nothing other than **the call to service** and especially the call to order, **the call to order in the body.** We do not actually need the sacrament of Holy Orders for service or for ministry. We need it for order **so that we don't have a chaotic community.** So it's really **a sacrament of the bestowal of authority,** and therefore by nature it's **hierarchal.** "Hierarchal" comes from the word "*hieros*, holy" and "*archein*" meaning "to rule." So it is a holy order put in the Church so that we don't have confusion. We have one bishop, several priests, more deacons, and even more laity, so that there's sort of order in our living together.

Penance is a very important sacrament. There are two sacraments of healing. Again, Jesus' life was all about healing, and these directly related to also Baptism. Penance or Reconciliation is a sacrament by which the Church **extends to the baptized further help in overcoming sin and in living in reconciliation** with their brothers and sisters and with God.

The **Anointing of the Sick** is a sacrament that is really very ancient. This was never disputed. Some of these others were disputed whether they were really sacraments. Penance was accepted in the early Church only for apostates and murderers or adultery maybe, but for lesser sins they didn't think that was necessary. So the form we have now really comes from about the twelfth century, eleventh century, something like that. Anointing of the Sick goes back to the **Letter of James.** James says, "Are there any sick among you? Call for the elders, presbytery, presbyters, call the presbyters and have them anoint the person in the name of the Lord. And if this sick person has committed any sins, they will be forgiven, and they will be restored." So the Anointing of the Sick is a **sacrament of restoration.**

Now the Church requires **certain sacraments to be celebrated only with people who are conscious and able to participate.** Baptism—no. Children can be conscious but not able to participate in Baptism. But the assumption is that the parents, who are in charge of the formation of the child, accept it and will fulfill their role in forming these children. If this role of the parents is not fulfilled, the sacrament can become a mere shadow. I mean, the grace is given, but if there's no conscious reception of the gift, then it's not received. So we have to have conscious reception.

Now in regard to Confirmation, obviously you have to be able to receive it. You have to be conscious. But on the other hand, you don't have to be old enough. There is no age of Confirmation. **There is no age for Baptism. There is no age for Confirmation.** Oddly enough, **there is an age for Eucharist and Anointing of the Sick, which is age seven.** It's for seven years old in the Western Church to receive Eucharist or Anointing of the Sick. In the Eastern Church babies can receive Eucharist. That's Church law, and it comes from a different way of looking at what's going on. So not all of this is written in stone. It's a matter of different approaches and different points of view.

Matrimony—there is an age. What is the age of Matrimony? How old do you have to be to be married in the Church? Twelve for a girl and fourteen for boys, I think. You say, "That's illegal in our country." So we can't do it in our country because it's illegal, but in some societies it could be.

Penance is like Eucharist. You need to be seven years old because **you have to be able to examine your conscience**, so it means you have to be conscious of and aware of sin in order to be able to confess.

Now all these things are speaking of what basically is our basic faith: that we believe Jesus lived; he lived as a Son of God. He lived not grasping equality with God. He lived simply as a creature. He lived as a creature, oddly enough, the only one who wasn't purely a creature, although his human nature was created; but Jesus the person is not a creature—the Word of God, but **he lived as a creature showing us what a creaturely life is like and what is pleasing to God and what we are supposed to be.** He died, again, in total obedience to the Father, not fighting off his opponents, which he could have, but he didn't. Why? Violence begets violence. He says, "Return not evil. Return not violence." He lived the way he preached. And, of course, the working of all violence is the hatred it causes inside of you, and so he did not want to get near it. **So he rather died than to become hateful or violent toward other people.** That's what has brought new life. As we live the sacramental life in the Church, we are living the resurrection of Christ.

We will now be going into the chapel to celebrate these sacred mysteries. Ultreya!