

ADORATION 101

THE SACRAMENT OF CHARITY

The Eucharist and Christian Initiation

In my column a week ago, using Pope Benedict's Apostolic Exhortation *Sacramentum Caritatis* as our guide, we took a brief look into the connection between the Holy Eucharist and the other Sacraments of the Church. We discovered how all the other Sacraments were instituted by Jesus Christ and directed towards the Eucharist. This week we will focus specifically on the Sacraments of Christian initiation: Baptism and Confirmation and their specific relationship to the Eucharist.

First, let it be known that the Holy Eucharist brings Christian initiation to completion and represents the center and goal of all sacramental life. Being involved with the RCIA ministry for some time now has certainly shown me the truth of this statement. Everything that the Catechumens and Candidates are taught is always directed towards the reception of this Sacrament. Baptism and Confirmation are always ordered towards the Eucharist. They are the "gateway" Sacraments which allow us to even have access to the Sacrament of Love. Therefore, a better understanding of these Sacraments will help to better understand the importance of the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist.

For us Latin Rite Catholics, there is a time set aside *between* the reception of Baptism, Confirmation and then the reception of the Eucharist, unlike our Eastern brothers and sisters who receive all three Sacraments at once. Both, however, still have the same Eucharistic understanding as becomes its relationship to the other Sacraments. The Roman Curia and the Bishops Conferences in the West felt that time between first reception of the Sacraments of Initiation ought to be had in order to help the faithful both to mature through the formation received in their communities and to give their lives an authentic Eucharistic direction.

Moreover, the link between the Sacraments of Initiation and the Eucharist draw our attention to the relationship between the reception of these and the domestic family. Pope Benedict relates, "*The whole of Christian initiation is a process of conversion undertaken with God's help and with constant reference to the Church community, both when an adult is seeking entry into the Church, ... and when parents request the Sacraments for their children.*" The domestic family is called to be a part of the Christian initiation process; whatever we learn at our parishes about the teachings of the Church needs to always be reinforced in the home through education and example. The initial reception of the Sacraments of Initiation are memorable moments that lasts a lifetime, and for many, give them their first real profound and practical encounter with Jesus Christ. Having the full support of the family is a vital component in the growth process for the newly converted. Without the support of those closest to them, the chances of maintaining a healthy spiritual life grow dim. NEXT WEEK: The Eucharist and the Sacrament of Reconciliation – Paul A. Ray