

Sacraments

Bishop Vincent Thakore

Why is the church concerned about SIGNS? A sign tells us that either something is happening or should happen. The stop sign tells us to stop, but the sign cannot make us stop. The sign only gives information.

A central part of human beings consists in the fact that a great deal of our day is spent sharing and responding to signs.

We read in St. John's gospel, Chapter 14:8 where St. Philip asks Jesus, "*Lord, let us see the Father and then we shall be satisfied.*" Jesus answered, "*I have been with you all this time, and you still do not know me? If you have seen me then you have seen the Father.*"

Through the scriptures, we see the love of God reflected in the life of His Son, Jesus. We see the power, compassion and forgiveness of God in His Son Jesus. We see the concerns of God in Jesus. Through the gospel in the portrayal of Jesus, we see a sign of the Father.

The church is a sign of God's presence, here, on earth. St. Paul says, "*The church is the body of Christ.*" St. Paul was persecuting the church. One day Jesus appeared to St. Paul in a voice form and said "*Saul, Saul why are you persecuting me?*" St. Paul fell on the ground and asked, "*Who are you, Lord?*" And the voice answered, "*I am Jesus, and you are persecuting me.*" (Acts 9:4...) and St. Paul became the follower of Jesus.

By using water, oil, bread and other familiar items from life, the church provides a visible channel of God's blessings, and establishes a relationship with the individual, the community and God.

Christianity is not for one individual. We cannot have faith in a vacuum or in a house or an apartment. We cannot pray alone as this action does not please God. It is written if two or three ask anything in my name (let's pay attention to the words two or three and not one person alone). Christianity requires a community. Jesus came down from heaven to save all the people who believed in Him. Remember our Lord's second commandment; Love thy neighbor as thyself. How can you fulfill this commandment if you live a lonely life, pray to God alone and do not come to His Temple?

He says, "*You should not be like the Pharisees who stand in the corner and pray.*" Your faith in Jesus is not complete unless you proclaim His Gospel to other human beings.

A sacrament is a sacred sign, which brings us into intimate personal union with God. In the sacrament of Baptism, God, through the church touches us with water and Holy Spirit. Baptism brings about new life within us. We become members of His church. In the case of a sacrament, the event that occurs in our lives becomes a deep and more intimate union with Christ.

Since there is only one God, and since Jesus is God, we can conclude that Jesus not only tells us about God's presence here on earth, but Jesus is the presence of God.

Where does the sacrament take place?

A sacrament takes place within the Christian community called the church. The church is the living sign of the continued presence of Christ here on earth today. A community called church shares Christ's gifts through the sacraments. Each sacrament becomes a community event.

Some occurrences take place in every life. We are born, we eat to live, we grow as an adult, we choose to marry, we dedicate our lives to serve the community in Christ's name and finally we die. At these important moments of our existence, God has chosen to touch us with his sacraments.

After physical birth, Christ invites us to a spiritual Christian birth in the sacrament of Baptism. As we grow nourishing our bodies, Christ offers us spiritual nourishment in the sacrament of Holy Communion to enable us to live more fully in union with Christ. At times when we experience anxiety, guilt and insecurity, Christ offers us a spiritual healing in the sacrament of reconciliation.

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