



LESSON FIFTEEN

The Liturgy and the Sacraments: Christ with Us

Opening Prayer

*Lord, you said that where two or three are gathered in your name,
you are there in the midst of them.*

*Be with us when we are together,
and open our hearts to the promptings of your Holy Spirit.*

*Guide us in the weeks ahead,
that we may approach your sacraments
with thanksgiving and praise.*

Amen.



Lesson Objectives:

- ❖ Understand the significance and beauty of liturgical prayer and recognize how the Church's public worship unites us to Christ's perfect offering and forms us through sacred rhythm and communal participation.
- ❖ Define what a sacrament is and explain how it works as a physical means of encountering God. Explore matter and form, and appreciate how God uses visible signs to communicate invisible grace.
- ❖ Identify the role of the sacraments in God's plan of salvation (sacramental economy) and recognize Christ as the author of the sacraments who continues to act through them.

BURNING QUESTIONS

- ❖ What is the point of the sacraments? Am I trying to earn God's grace by receiving them?

We know we cannot earn grace; it is a free gift from God. So why did Jesus institute the sacraments? What is their purpose?

- ❖ What is the Liturgy? How is it different from simply praying or practicing a sacred ritual?

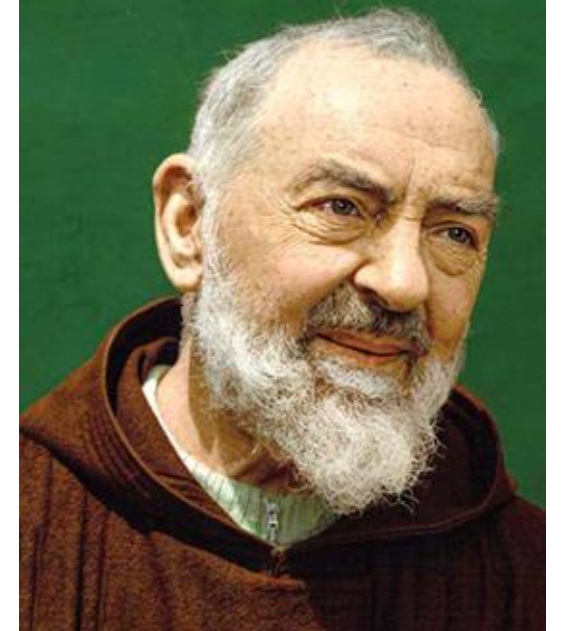
In the Liturgy, we are putting ourselves in God's presence. What do you think God wants us to know about him that he communicates only through the Liturgy?

St. Pio of Pietrelcina (Padre Pio)

Feast Day: September 23

Lived: 1887–1968 · Pietrelcina, Italy · Patron of Civil defense volunteers, Adolescents, Stress relief

A Capuchin Franciscan priest who bore the stigmata for fifty years, Padre Pio made the Holy Mass the center of each day, sometimes spending hours in visible agony and tears before the altar, as though he were standing at the very foot of the Cross. He devoted more than ten hours a day to the Sacrament of Reconciliation, guiding thousands back to the Church through his extraordinary gift of reading souls. He remained for fifty years in a small monastery, offering his constant suffering for souls, teaching by his life that Christ truly meets us through the sacraments.



“May Jesus always be yours, may he always assist you with his vigilant grace, and may he make you holy!”

St. Pio of Pietrelcina

The God Who Moves Toward Us

Divine Initiative

From the beginning, God is the one who moves first—creating, calling, setting up covenants. Then, in the fullness of time, he becomes flesh and dwells among us in Jesus (see John 1:14). This divine initiative continues today through the sacraments and the Liturgy. The sacraments are how God continues to draw near to his people.

What Is Liturgical Prayer?

“Liturgy” comes from the Greek *leitourgia*, meaning “the work of the people.” Liturgical prayer is the Church’s public, communal worship. Not primarily something we do for God but something God does for us in which we participate. It forms us and teaches us how to pray in ways personal prayer alone cannot.

“The liturgy is the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed; it is also the font from which all her power flows.”

CCC 1074, quoting *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 10

What Are the Sacraments?

A Precise Definition

“The sacraments are efficacious signs of grace, instituted by Christ and entrusted to the Church, by which divine life is dispensed to us” (CCC 1131). “Efficacious” means the sacraments cause what they signify, as water in Baptism does not merely symbolize cleansing; it truly washes away sin. Every sacrament is a “sign of grace” that communicates an invisible reality. This is all by virtue of Christ, who acts in every sacrament (see CCC 1127), not because of the minister’s holiness.

Matter and Form

Every sacrament requires matter—the sensible substance (water, oil, bread, wine, laying on of hands)—and form, the specific words that must be spoken with the intention of doing what the Church does. Together, matter and form are the “visible signs” through which Christ communicates invisible grace.

“It is he who baptizes, he who acts in his sacraments in order to communicate the grace that each sacrament signifies.”

CCC 1127



The Seven Sacraments

Sacraments of Initiation

Baptism, Confirmation, and the Eucharist lay the foundation of the Christian life. They bring us into God's family, seal us with the Holy Spirit, and nourish us with the very Body and Blood of Christ.

Sacraments of Healing

Reconciliation restores our relationship with God after grave sin. The Anointing of the Sick strengthens those in serious illness or facing death and can bring spiritual strength and sometimes, physical healing.

Sacraments at the Service of Communion

Holy Orders configures men as deacons, priests, or bishops to serve God's people. Matrimony unites a man and woman in a lifelong covenant as a visible sign of Christ's love for his Church. Both sacraments consecrate the person for a mission within the Church.

"[The sacraments] are 'the masterworks of God' in the new and everlasting covenant."

CCC 1116



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The Liturgy and the Sacraments: Beauty in Experience

Discussion Questions

- ❖ How are the physical aspects of worship different from your previous experience? What are the challenges? What has become easier?
- ❖ What are some ways the Sacred Liturgy helps us align our minds and bodies with the mind of the Church?
- ❖ In Catholic liturgy, we are invited to be “recipients” or “heirs” of something God has authored. What is challenging about this idea? What might be freeing about it?
- ❖ What does it mean to you to bring your whole self to worship while being receptive rather than demanding?

Faith and Fun

Who received the vision of the Miraculous Medal from the Blessed Virgin Mary?

a. St. Bernadette Soubirous

b. St. Thérèse of Lisieux

c. St. Catherine Labouré

d. St. Faustina Kowalska



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St. Catherine Labouré, a twenty-four-year-old novice with the Daughters of Charity in Paris, received visions in which the Blessed Virgin Mary gave us the Miraculous Medal. Her visions occurred in 1830 at the motherhouse chapel on the Rue du Bac in Paris. Millions of people around the world wear the Miraculous Medal as a sign of Marian protection and devotion.

It is a sacramental, not a magic charm; it is meant to dispose the heart to receive God's grace and to inspire faith in Mary's intercession.



The Liturgy of the Hours

The Church's Daily Prayer

The Liturgy of the Hours (also called the Divine Office) is the official daily prayer of the Church, prayed by clergy, religious, and laypeople throughout the world. It extends the worship of the Mass through the entire day, uniting the prayer of every member of the Body of Christ in praise, thanksgiving, and intercession from morning to night.

How to Begin

The canonical hours include Morning Prayer (Lauds), Evening Prayer (Vespers)—the two “hinges” of the day—along with Night Prayer (Compline), Midday Prayer, and the Office of Readings. Most laypeople begin with just Morning or Evening Prayer. The prayers are available in printed editions and in apps. Whether prayed alone or in a group, they anchor us in the life of the Church and draw our hearts steadily toward God.



Living It Out:

Another beautiful way to begin living the Church's rhythm is by using sacramentals. It could be an image, a rosary, or a sacred icon. Ask your priest or deacon to bless it, and use it as a reminder of your love for Christ and his Church.

Closing Prayer

*Almighty, ever-living God,
Almighty God, source of all creation,
you have made us in your image.
Renew us by the power of your Word,
and by your grace refashion us
so that in time we may assume the full likeness of Christ,
who lives and reigns for ever and ever.*

Amen.



Announcements / Reminders — add notes here

INVITED