

LESSON 7: Sign, Symbol & Sacrament

AIM

To explore the origins and understand the meaning of particular sacraments in daily life (5.1.20, 5.3.10, 5.3.11, 5.3.12)

OUTCOME

Learners understand the concept of sacrament, and the role of the sacraments in the life of the believer.



WHAT YOU NEED

- * Copies of the worksheet ⇒ (4)(5)(6)
- * Bibles (6)

TEACHER'S NOTE

In the Intermediate Phase the learners have become familiar with the seven sacraments of the Catholic Church and their symbols. It may be well to revise this briefly. Note the specific objectives of this year's lesson. Be sensitive that this is a particularly Catholic area of belief. Depending on the time available choose the most appropriate learning activities.

Recall that in Grade 6 Lesson 8 we defined a sacrament as “a symbolic action that makes present the reality that it points to. It is an outward sign of an inward grace, a sharing in the life of God.” Thus a symbol is a special kind of sign.

TEACHER BACKGROUND

The following quotes from *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* will supply you with the necessary background.

SACRAMENT

A sacrament is a sign and instrument of communion with God (775). Christ himself is the mystery of salvation, the first sacrament, sign and instrument of God. The seven sacraments are the signs and instruments by which the Holy Spirit spreads the grace of Christ, the head, throughout the Church, his Body (774). The Church in this world is the sacrament of salvation, the sign and the instrument of the communion of God and men (780).

The purpose of the sacraments is to sanctify people, to build up the Body of Christ and to give worship to God. Because they are signs they also instruct. They not only presuppose faith, but by words and objects they also nourish, strengthen and express it. That is why they are called sacraments of faith (1123).

Grace is the free and undeserved help that God gives us to respond to his call to become children of God, adoptive sons and daughters, partakers of the divine nature and of eternal life (1996). Grace is participation in the life of God (1997).

ORIGIN OF THE SACRAMENTS

Adhering to the teaching of the Holy Scriptures, to the apostolic traditions and to the consensus of the Fathers, we profess that the sacraments of the new law were all instituted by Jesus Christ our Lord (1114). The Church, by the power of the Spirit who guides her into all truth has gradually recognised this treasure received from Christ, and has determined its dispensation (1117).

THE SACRAMENTS IN DAILY LIFE

Sacraments are efficacious, because in them Christ himself is at work. It is he who baptises, he who acts in his sacraments in order to communicate the grace that each sacrament signifies (1127).

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

- 1 **What Are Signs?** Start a discussion with the learners on signs and their messages along the following lines.

Drive along a main road and note the different signs. There are road signs giving a message, or a warning. There are also other signs, for example, big and small advertisements that invite you to do or buy something. Some signs show that something is happening: a traffic officer waving his arms tells us that he is controlling the traffic. Cars that have stopped tell us there is an accident or a traffic jam. Then there are signs that are instruments that make things happen. For example, a traffic light turning red, orange or green makes us, the drivers, stop or go. Consider the TV switch.

- On its own it is a sign telling us something.
- If we press it TV will come on, but we have to activate it, to do something to make that happen.
- The electric current will flow.
- The TV picture and sound will appear.
- Note that the TV picture exists in other homes even when we do not activate the switch.

- 2 **Understanding the Concept ‘Sacrament’** Brainstorm the meaning and use of the word sacrament. Focus on "sign, instrument and grace." Give additional input bringing out that sacraments are signs of something happening and also the instruments to make it happen. Illustrate by comparing ‘sacrament’ and the TV switch. (Use any of the seven.)

- A sacrament is a sign. The Sacrament of Reconciliation, for example, is a sign of forgiveness.
- I go to confession, confess, and express sorrow and a desire for repentance.
- God's grace flows.
- I am forgiven, reconciled, restored in my relationship.
- I celebrate the forgiveness that God is always offering me.

- 3 Expand on what is happening in general terms. **In all the sacraments** we celebrate and participate in the life of God, and in what God is always doing for us. The celebration makes God's action more visible and effective. In response to our action God reaches out to us through his gift of grace. God shares himself with us, and creates and strengthens the bond that exists between people too. God becomes more fully present in the world.

Sacraments involve the Trinity. They are the gift of life with the Father, from Jesus to the Church and the Holy Spirit is the one who makes this happen.

- 4 Present the **worksheet** to the learners. Invite them to read the first three columns, namely SACRAMENT, SIGN and MEANING. Clarify anything necessary. 📖 ⇨

- 5 In the most appropriate way for the learners work towards having them complete the FUNCTION IN LIFE column of the **worksheet**. 📖 ⇨ They could discuss in groups, and give feedback or work out their own answers individually. Keep in mind the objective of having them reach an understanding for themselves. Possible responses are given in the table below:

SACRAMENT	FUNCTION IN LIFE
Baptism	Becoming a member of the Christian community and receiving a life-long call to witness
Confirmation	Receiving strength through God's Holy Spirit to live a committed Christian adult life
Eucharist	Providing spiritual food for each person and building up the community
Reconciliation	Expressing conversion, forgiveness and reconciliation.
Anointing of the Sick	Strengthening and healing of the sick in mind and body
Holy Orders	Setting apart and sustaining a priest for a way of life, a ministry of love to the community.
Matrimony	Providing God's grace for the way of life, a ministry of love by husband and wife to each other and to their children

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

- 6 **Origin:** Explain that while there is no definite indication in the gospels when each sacrament was instituted Catholics believe they were all instituted by Jesus and that the Church has been given the authority to determine what they are and how they are administered. Explain that not all Christians would recognise these sacraments in the same formal way. They are however still a real part of Christian life. Work through the **scripture references** on the worksheet in groups and let the learners give feedback to the class.



- 7 **The Sacraments in Daily Life:** Sacraments could be called the life-blood of the Church, making it function, keeping it alive. Some sacraments are administered once only, for example, Baptism, Confirmation, Marriage, Holy Orders. But they are still something ongoing and we live as baptised or married people all the time. The other sacraments are ongoing in a different way. We can receive the sacraments of the Eucharist, Reconciliation and Anointing more often and still live them out all the time. Let the learners tease this out from the following statements:

He has been confirmed. He is a confirmed Anglican.

She has been married. She is married. Marriage is a way of life.

They are living out their baptismal calling.

He is a priest..

A person may receive communion every day.

- 8 Allow all the learners, Catholics and others to respond in their own personal way. After reflection invite them to make up a **personal definition** or presentation of the concept 'sacrament', and share it with the group or class.

TO REMEMBER

A sacrament is a visible sign, a symbol that points to, and makes present, God's invisible action in the world.

The Sacraments

SACRAMENT	SIGN	MEANING	FUNCTION IN LIFE	SCRIPTURE
BAPTISM	Pouring water	Death to sin and entry into the life of God.		Mt 3:13-17
CONFIRMATION	Anointing with chrism	Empowerment by the Holy Spirit		Jn 16: 5-13
EUCCHARIST	Jesus' words of consecration spoken over the bread and wine	Jesus is truly present in the bread and wine. His sacrifice on the cross is relived.		Lk 22: 14-20
RECONCILIATION	Words of absolution	Sins are forgiven		Lk 7: 36-50
ANOINTING OF THE SICK	Laying on of hands, and anointing	Strengthening, healing		Mk 8: 22-26
HOLY ORDERS	Laying on of hands and prayer of consecration	The ordained deacon or priest is consecrated as a minister to God's people.		Mt 28: 16-20
MATRIMONY	Exchange of vows to each other	Husband and wife establish a lifelong love covenant relationship		Jn 2: 1-11

LESSON 8: Confirmation

AIM

To help the learners develop a personal understanding of the sacrament of Confirmation (5.1.18)

OUTCOME




Learners understand the Sacrament of Confirmation as a public commitment to live out one's faith.

TEACHER'S NOTE

In the Catholic Church, Confirmation normally takes place at about age 16. However it is good for the younger learners to understand that this will mean making an adult commitment to their faith, to the Church and to Jesus Christ. Practices in other Christian churches could be explored and discussed.



WHAT YOU NEED

- * Bibles (4)
- *  Copies of the worksheet (8) ⇨
- *  *Holy Spirit of Fire, God's Spirit Is in My Heart, or The Spirit Is Moving* (10)
- *  *Sing for Life- Come Holy Spirit* (p.96), *Moya O Halalelang* (p.229) or *Song of Confirmation* (p.156)

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

- 1 As appropriate refer to **cultural initiation rites** with which the learners are familiar. Black cultures have more defined rites and rituals but all cultures have some kind of rite of passage into teenager years and adulthood. Name and discuss the purpose of these? What benefits and responsibilities do they provide?
- 2 **Sacraments of Initiation:** Invite the learners to recall these three sacraments, namely Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist. In the early adult Church these three sacraments were received together. Thus still happens when an adult becomes a Christian in the Catholic Church. With children and younger people, however, the initiation into the community happens in stages.
 - God welcomes us into the Church in the Sacrament of *Baptism*. Members of the community promise to help us live as followers of Jesus by loving and serving others.
 - Jesus gives himself to us in the *Eucharist*. This celebration is the family meal of the Christian family.
 - In the Sacrament of *Confirmation*, the Holy Spirit comes to us in a very special way to share many gifts, energise and sanctify us. The Spirit helps us to make known our faith in God and to serve others.
- 3 Help learners to obtain an understanding of the meaning of **the term 'confirmation'**. When you book to go on holiday, or phone to make a reservation you often need a confirmation letter. What is the purpose of this? To let you know for sure, hold you responsible or liable. If you don't keep your dentist appointment you might have to pay anyway. A confirmation is therefore a serious thing a proof of a commitment on both sides.
- 4 **Scripture:** Jesus was confirmed at his baptism. Read [Matthew 3:13-17], paying particular attention to the Holy Spirit and the Father's confirming words. Point out that at the Last Supper the night before he died, Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit to help them. "I will ask God to give you another helper, who will stay with you forever." [John 14:16-17].

Read the Pentecost Story [Acts 2:1-21].

- 5 Catholic and Christian Confirmation is a serious commitment to the person of Jesus Christ, the Way, the Truth and the Life, who gives us the **gift of his Holy Spirit** as our mentor, guide, comforter, or advocate. This gift of the Holy Spirit can be understood as an inner light. Just as the white light of the sun is actually a combination of seven colours, so the gift of the Holy Spirit comes to us in seven ways. Invite the learners to name them. They are knowledge, understanding, wisdom, counsel, courage, piety, and respect for God.
- 6 **Symbols and Gestures:** In the celebration of the sacrament, two signs are used.
- The celebrant, usually a bishop, *lays his hands* on the candidate.
 - The celebrant *anoints the forehead* of the candidate with chrism (oil).

The anointing indicates a special task, and the laying on of hands indicates the gift of the Holy Spirit in whom this task will be performed.

- 7 **Prayer:** At the laying on of hands the bishop prays:



My dear friends, in baptism God our Father gave the new birth of eternal life to his chosen sons and daughters. Let us pray to our Father that he will pour out the Holy Spirit to strengthen his sons and daughters with his gifts and anoint them to be more like Christ the Son of God.

All-powerful God, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, by water and the Holy Spirit you freed your sons and daughters from sin and gave them new life. Send your Holy Spirit upon them to be their helper and guide. Give them the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of right judgement and courage, the spirit of knowledge and reverence.

Fill them with the spirit of wonder and awe in your presence.

We ask this through Christ our Lord.

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

- 8 Learners read ***Jesus to a Teen*** on the worksheet quietly and reflectively.  
- 9 In some churches young people are confirmed from age 12. Ask the learners how they feel about making a commitment to Jesus Christ at this time? Are you ready; do you need to be better informed; more grown-up? They write a short **letter** to Jesus in their journal, stating how they feel.
- 10 **Sing** a suitable hymn, such as: *Holy Spirit of Fire*, *God's Spirit Is in My Heart*, or *The Spirit Is Moving*. *Sing for Life* also has a number of options – *Come Holy Spirit* (p.96), *Moya O Halalelang* (p.229) or *Song of Confirmation* (p.156)

Jesus to a Teen

Dear Friends, or should I say ‘Hi guys!’

I say friends rather than Jane, Thabo, Michael, or Lerato, even though of course I know each of your names. Rather I call you friends because I know how important friendship is to teenagers. Without friends it is hard to love yourself, to feel important and valued.

Your parents or teachers may have told you a long time ago that God made you to love and serve him and be happy with him in heaven. But you know, and I know, that there is a lot more to it and that when you’re 12, or 13 or 14 heaven seems an awful long way off. In reality it is all about relationships.

It was your parents’ love that gave you life through the power of my Father, it is their love that should be sustaining you and nurturing you still, but then again we don’t live in an ideal world. We are tempted, we are weak, we fall. Parents, mothers or fathers, like anyone else, as you have discovered are not perfect, just human – and loveable. My mom, of course was different and you may think I don’t understand because I always seem to be so remote, so perfect. But you know, part of the incarnation thing (big word meaning “becoming flesh”) was becoming fully human, not half God and half man, not God dressed up as a man, knowing all things and having an easy ride. I was tempted too. I found it hard not to choose miracles or personal power as the way to get people to follow me. It seems nowadays that unless you have popularity no one wants to buy into doing your thing. I found the same. One of my really good guys, Judas, was ambitious. He probably saw himself as the future Minister of Finance, and when he realised my way was through suffering for a cause he gave up and even sold me out.

Teenagers are some of my favourite people. They are so full of life, of enthusiasm and, as Michael Jackson says, they want to make the world a better place for you and for me. But I also find they often do not put their money where their mouths are. Sometimes I am really disappointed. Teenagers come to be confirmed, full of zeal, but it often doesn’t last.

I was born into a simple, poor, humble family living in a village in the middle of nowhere and when as a young teenager, just before my bar mitzvah our family went to Jerusalem for the Passover. I was amazed, and so excited to hear these important people talking about God and his plans. I just couldn’t help joining in and I know I upset my parents terribly by losing track of time and staying on, making them think I was lost. Even then I knew that I had to show a way to live, not just a way to die, and show them, not just tell them. As I said to my followers later, ‘I am the way, the truth and the life.’ I had to be their model. As my task involved total commitment and integrity I couldn’t just go and live a loose life, use all those women who were constantly crowding around me. I know that they were attracted to me but I had chosen my way. I had to be strong too when I saw injustice, like with the money changers riding the gravy train, cheating the poor people who had no other place to buy their animals for the sacrifices. I had to work hard. I told them the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head, so my job wasn’t exactly cushy.

You know I found it hard that in my whole life as I travelled through the countryside I probably truly converted no more than a few thousand people. In my own village of Nazareth they even threatened to throw me over the cliff thinking I was mad. Then I was put to death and, hanging on that cross, for a moment, I really felt abandoned. I could see it coming, because the Romans and the Jews were so threatened by what I had to say, but I hung in and stayed faithful to my Father and to my friends.

After I died I sent my Spirit to that little group of followers and they became strong and started growing. Just like some of the young people of the last decades who stood up for their beliefs, many of them were also put to death, crucified, beheaded, even fed to the lions, but they hung in and I am really proud of them. Now nearly 2000 years later my little band of followers has grown and there are more than 1 billion Christians. They believe in my message, which is really so simple:

“Love one another as I have loved you.” I showed them. I will show you too, if you spend some time with me, reading the gospels, listening to me, being with me, not only in church but being with me – doing my thing, in school, in families, at parties, even in your clubs.

Talking of parties, one of my favourite things were weddings. Just imagine how much fun that family in Cana had when I saved them from embarrassment and gave them enough wine to let them carry on the celebration for probably another couple of days. Meals are really special: that is where people relate, can have fun and get to know each other. I was also pleased to be able to help that young couple because I think marriage is so important for the future of my church. Loving one another as they have to do, through good and bad times, faithfully and totally, not giving up, I know is hard, and that is why I gave them a special sacrament.

My special young friends, I am here, knocking at your door, willing to be your friend if you will let me. I will come to you in many ways - through the sacrament of Eucharist, sharing my life, through the Sacrament of Reconciliation, sharing my forgiveness. One of the hardest things for me too when I was carrying that great heavy cross up the hill to Calvary was falling down, just not having enough strength. You, as young people, are also called to grow to perfection, to become just who your Father intends you to be. That will be your happiness. It will take a life time, but that is OK - that is why my Father gave you life, to journey along with your family and friends, with your own future families, learning to love as I love you. And remember I’ll be there always, to show you the way.

See you around.

Jesus.



LESSON 9: Sacraments of Calling

AIM


To develop an understanding of the Sacraments of Calling or Commitment, namely, Marriage and Holy Orders (5.1.19)

OUTCOME

Learners understand that the sacraments of marriage and Holy Orders are callings to distinct forms of life and ministry.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

- 1 Refer back to LESSON 7: revising the following definition: A sacrament is a visible sign that points to, and makes present, God’s invisible action in the world.
- 2 **Commitment:** Answering our special call requires commitment. Together brainstorm and explore the idea of ‘commitment’. Some of its implications are the following:
 - sticking with a chosen option through thick and thin
 - having the discipline to persevere faithfully in a course of action or way of life (for example, committing oneself to a diet, a sports programme or study schedule)
 - involving hard work, sacrifice, struggle, joy of fulfilment.

Discuss the slogan, ‘No pain, no gain.’ What are some advantages of commitment? Discuss the word ‘vow as a solemn promise of commitment. After this exploration and explanation you could apply this in an exercise. *How Loving Are You* in ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY 7 looks at love as a commitment, and asks the reader to evaluate him or herself.  ⇒




- 3 **Sacraments of Calling:** Every Christian is called at Baptism to live as a witness to the Good News of Jesus. Some people are called in a special way. We now look at the two Sacraments of Calling celebrated in the Catholic Church- Marriage and Holy Orders. They are real and effective signs to the community, and special graces are given to help those who are living these sacraments on their journey of life. Ask the learners to recall the signs used in these sacraments, and their significance. (See the worksheet for LESSON 7.)

SACRAMENT	SIGN(S)	SIGNIFICANCE
Marriage	exchange of vows, rings	lifelong commitment
Holy Orders	laying on of hands	consecrated to God, called to serve

- A married couple ideally is a sign to each other and to the whole community of the way Jesus loves the Church [Ephesians 5: 21-33].
- The priest represents Jesus for the community by his behaviour and his actions. His duty and task is to offer sacrifice for the people and to minister to them in their spiritual needs.



WHAT YOU NEED

- * Pictures of married couples and priests of different ages (3)
- *  Copies of the worksheet (2)(4)(7) ⇒
- * Pictures of religious men and women (8)
- *  *Take My Hands; Here I Am, Lord* (Celebration Hymnal); or *I Give My Hands* (Our Songs) (9)
- *  *Sing for Life – The Call* (p.146) or *More Than Just* (p.174) (9)

GRADE 7

- 4 Study and discuss the **wording of the promises** made in either of these sacraments. They will be found on the worksheet. 📖 ⇨
 - 5 **Stories:** Invite the learners to share with their group some stories of commitment in marriage and consecrated life from their experience - perhaps their parents, grandparents, or others they know. What they have observed about commitment through good times and bad?
 - 6 End with a **prayer of thanksgiving** for the sign that these committed people are and pray for encouragement for them to remain faithful to their vows.
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ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

- 7 **How Loving Are You?** Invite the learners to evaluate their depth and breadth of loving through the exercise on the worksheet. 📖 ⇨
- 8 The calling of **religious sisters and brothers** is not celebrated in a particular sacrament. But they also serve as deep signs of commitment through the way they live their lives. They usually take vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience.
- 9 **Songs:** *Take My Hands; Here I Am, Lord; or I Give My Hands. Sing for Life* offers the following options – *The Call* (p.146) or *More Than Just* (p.174)

Sacraments of Calling

Exchange of Marriage Vows

PRESIDER

Since it is your intention to enter into marriage, join your right hands, and declare your consent before God and his Church.

THE COUPLE

I,, take you,, to be my wife. I promise to be true to you in good times and in bad, in sickness and in health. I will love and honour you all the days of my life.

I,, take you,, to be my husband. I promise to be true to you in good times and in bad, in sickness and in health. I will love and honour you all the days of my life.

PRESIDER

You have declared your consent before the Church. May the Lord in his goodness strengthen your consent and fill you both with his blessings. What God has joined, men must not divide.

Assent to Serve: Rite of Ordination

The bishop questions the candidate on his willingness to serve.

BISHOP: My son, before you proceed to the order of the priesthood, declare before the people your intention to undertake this priestly office.

Are you resolved, with the help of the Holy Spirit, to discharge without fail the office of priesthood as a conscientious fellow worker with the bishops in caring for the Lord's flock?

CANDIDATE: I am.

BISHOP: Are you resolved to exercise the ministry of the word worthily and wisely, preaching the Gospel and explaining the Catholic faith?

CANDIDATE: I am.

Are you resolved to consecrate your life to God for the salvation of his people, and to unite yourself more closely every day to Christ the High Priest, who offered himself for us to the Father as a perfect sacrifice?

CANDIDATE: I am, with the help of God.

BISHOP: Do you promise your bishop obedience and respect?

CANDIDATE: I do.

How Loving Are You?

Check where you are on the journey of love. Five means you are doing well; one means you have a long way to go.

(A) Love is not a feeling. Feelings change too much for love to be based on them. Feelings might start off a love relationship but they cannot sustain it.

(B) Love is a decision-commitment. Love involves first giving, not receiving. It is a decision to spend time with and follow through on responsibilities made to the loved one. It takes work.

(C) True love is without strings attached. - caring for a person for the way he or she is, and not the way I want him or her to be.

(D) Love is forever. True love does not waver or give up.

(E) Commitment of love involves decisions. If I love you, I must feel responsible for your life and growth.

(F) The most important gift of love is a sense of personal warmth that helps you love yourself.

(G) True love means affirmation. True love allows the loved one to be himself or herself.

SCORE ⇨	1	2	3	4	5
A					
B					
C					
D					
E					
F					
G					

(Adapted from Michael Pennock. *The Sacraments and You*, p 238)