

Orthodoxy:

New City Catechism Question 43

What are the sacraments or ordinances?

Answer: The sacraments or ordinances given by God and instituted by Christ, namely baptism and the Lord's Supper, are visible signs and seals that we are bound together as a community of faith by his death and resurrection. By our use of them the Holy Spirit more fully declares and seals the promises of the gospel to us.

We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. - Rom. 6:4

And he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, "This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood." - Luke 22:19–20

Ordinances are things we're given to do. Jesus gave his church two things to do in worship besides reading, preaching, praying, and singing God's Word. He gave them baptism in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and it is to be done once in the life of his followers. He also gave them the Lord's Supper. It is to be done on an ongoing basis. The reason Jesus gave his church these things to do is because of what he wants to do through them for his church. That's why we call them sacraments. A sacrament is a means of God communicating the blessing of his grace to his church. God's pleasure is to give his people his grace and his people are created and redeemed to share in his joy. Therefore, God ordains his sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper. We use the language of signs and seals to describe the blessings and benefits of these two sacraments. As signs they symbolize to our senses the grace of God in salvation. As seals they actually bring these blessings to us as we participate by faith in our union with Jesus Christ through the Spirit. J.I. Packer writes, "As the preaching of the Word makes the gospel audible, so the sacraments make it visible, and God stirs up faith by both means."

These sacraments are for the whole church. We participate in them by faith as people who are part of the gathered people of God. Baptism is the sign signifying that we are members of the community of Jesus Christ. The Lord's Supper is the sign that we continue by his grace to belong to that community. The sacraments "put a visible difference between those that belong to the church and the rest of the world." (Westminster Confession of Faith 27.1) The sacraments remind us and identify us with Christ and all who belong to him. But the visible difference that is made between the community belonging to King Jesus and the community belonging to the world (The City of Man), is that we need the benefits and grace communicated to us as his community so that we may serve one another and the world of our neighbors in love.

The church is given these sacraments so that we will make use of them. We should not be afraid of their overuse in our services of worship. Is there a baby born to believing parents? Do not delay their baptism. Is there a profession of faith in Jesus Christ? Do not delay their baptism. We can gather to worship. We have bread and wine at our disposal. Let us eat and drink with thanksgiving in our hearts. The community of Jesus Christ should seek to grow in our understanding of these ordinances. Let us teach one another through our

confessions and catechisms. Let us take up and read those who have written to the church of their importance and who encourage our observance by faith. We should be thankful for them. We should look back on our baptisms and improve on them by faith in all that God has communicated to us through that outward visible sign. We should eat and drink with thanksgiving looking forward in faith and with gratitude to the promised grace that is being given. We should participate in union with Christ and one another. We should make use of God's grace in the sacraments to join us together in worship around his throne and to stir up us up in the faith together for love and good works through the grace of the gospel heard and seen.

Praying for Our Missionaries

Garry and Anita Chambers

Mission to the World

Regional Director for the Caribbean and Indigenous Ministries in North America

Some prayer requests are as follows:

1. Ask God to give Garry and Anita Chambers wisdom as they give oversight to MTW's ministries in the Caribbean and Native Americans.
2. Pray for John and Karen Stodghill as they minister in Santa Elena, Cayo District of Belize. Ask God to give them wisdom as they seek creative ways to minister while group meetings have been canceled due to the corona virus outbreak.
3. Pray for Ray and Michelle Call as they minister in Northern Belize. Pray for wisdom as they seek creative ways to minister to the Orange Walk and San Pablo churches as group meetings are canceled.
4. Pray for pastors: Ernest Betson, Juan Patt, Leogardo Catzim, Alvaro Pott, Eliseo de la Cruz and Ismael Puente. Ask God to empower the preaching and teaching of His Word and for lives to be transformed.
5. Pray for God to give the Presbyterian school teachers and staff wisdom to know how to minister to their students and their families during this time of school closure.
6. Ask God to bring a revival in Belize. Pray for the gospel to transform lives and bring peace in the hearts of the people and healing in marriages and families. Ask God to open doors to evangelize the lost and that He would grant boldness to Christians to share during this time of fear and concern.
7. Ask God to grant the Presbyterian pastors, elder, deacons, school teachers, clinic staff, and MTW missionaries health, strength, and spiritual growth. Also, ask God to supply all their physical needs.

A Good Read for Parents

Parenting First Aid: Hope for the Discouraged, Marty Machowski

In this uplifting and faith strengthening devotional book for parents, best selling children's author Marty Machowski encourages parents in the midst of parenting trials. Full of Scripture, testimonies of faithful parents, and insightful meditations, this book equips parents to run to God and trust his ability to do what they can't.

"But then it happened - God allowed a trial to upset our utopia. I remember as if it were yesterday the call from the police, asking me to pick up my eldest son at the station. Who was he arrested with? Another church kid. Though I had done many things right, God had a tender lesson in humility and dependence planned especially for me. I will never forget the encouragement the Lord gave me in the midst of those difficult days: "I don't want you parenting standing up; I want you parenting kneeling down...I've written Parenting First Aid as a wartime medical kit for parents in the thick of the battle...The goal is to encourage you r should with the Scriptures, to help you gain strength to trust in a God who can capture the of the heart of the most rebellious son or daughter, and to help you through the most heart rending parenting situations." - From the Introduction