



The Holy Sacraments

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“Onward Christian Soldiers”

From Sabine Baring-Gould’s

The Golden Gate

Fr. Baring-Gould is most famous for his hymn, “Onward Christian Soldiers”.

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By a Sacrament is meant an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace, ordained by Christ Himself to convey grace to the soul. Sacraments may be generally necessary to salvation, and such as are not generally necessary. Those generally necessary are such as we must receive to be placed in a condition to be saved. Sacraments not generally necessary are those which though means of grace and channels of the Holy Ghost, yet are designed for particular persons or states of life only.

There are *Two Sacraments only generally necessary to salvation*. These are Baptism, by which we are admitted into the state of salvation, and Holy Communion, by which we maintain ourselves in a state of grace. The term “generally” is derived from the Latin *genus*, a race, and means exactly the race of man. “Generally necessary” accordingly signifies “necessary for all men.”

There are, in addition, other *Sacramental rites*. Of these there are five – Confirmation, Penance, Holy Unction, Holy Order, and Matrimony.

Of these Matrimony and Holy Order are absolutely necessary for the continuance of the visible Church; but they are not necessary for all members of the Church. The other three are means of grace, but not of essential necessity. Three confer *character*, that is, they leave an indelible mark upon the recipient, and can never be repeated without sacrilege. These are Baptism, Confirmation, and Order.

The Sacraments are the appointed means for the conveyance of pardon for sin and grace. Without Baptism there is no admission into the Kingdom of God.¹ Penance is the appointed means for the giving of pardon for sin.² The Holy Eucharist is the means appointed for planting in the human nature the germ of resurrection, and for quickening the spiritual life begun in Baptism.³

The conditions required in the recipient of a Sacrament do not constitute the reality of the Sacrament. Faith does not give virtue [power] to either Baptism or the Eucharist, nor does Contrition make Absolution an

emanation of Christ’s healing grace; but Faith is a disposition of the soul without which the grace of a Sacrament cannot take effect. A seed falls on frozen soil and does not germinate; the soil must be soft and deep to receive it. So unless there be a disposition of the soul – that disposition being true repentance – Absolution cannot take effect. So also with the Eucharist. Christ says, “Whoso eateth My Flesh and drinketh My Blood hath eternal life”⁴; but on the other hand disbelief does not make the consecrated elements to be naught – “Whoso eat this Bread and drink this Cup of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the Body and Blood of the Lord.”⁵

Fire is not considered destitute of burning quality because it cannot consume incombustible materials.

The Sacraments are vehicles of grace, not efficient in themselves apart from Christ. The windows of a room are not regarded as the cause of light, although they ensure its admission.

¹ John 3:5; 10:1

² Matthew 16:19; 18:18

³ John 6:50, 51, 54, 56, 57

⁴ John 6:54

⁵ 1 Corinthians 11:27