

1.7 What are the sacraments?

Learning objectives

- You will ...
- learn what the sacraments are
 - understand what the different sacraments celebrate
 - analyse why the sacraments are important.

Sacraments are special celebrations that mark different stages in a person's life in the Church. In the Roman Catholic Church there are seven sacraments:

- **Baptism**
- **Reconciliation**
- Communion
- **Confirmation**
- Marriage
- **Holy Orders**
- the **Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick**.

Sacraments are regarded as very special celebrations as they are times when Roman Catholic Christians believe they receive the gift of **grace** (special holiness) from God.

Sacraments

Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick: a person receives strength to face their future.

Baptism: a person, usually a baby, becomes a member of the Church.

Reconciliation: a person has their sins forgiven (also called **confession** or **penance**).

Communion: a person receives the Eucharist (body and blood of Christ).

Confirmation: the final sacrament of initiation. It joins the person more closely to the Church.

Holy Orders: a person becomes a member of the **apostolic ministry** (priesthood).

Marriage: two people join together in the eyes of God.

Knowledge check

- 1 What are sacraments?
- 2 How many sacraments are there in the Roman Catholic Church?
- 3 What do sacraments do?
- 4 Write down two reasons why a Roman Catholic Christian might think that sacraments are important.

Sacraments of initiation

Initiation is the formal entry of someone into an organisation. There are three sacraments of initiation in the Roman Catholic Church:

- Baptism
- Eucharist
- Confirmation.

They mark the person's membership of the Church and are public ways of marking the person's discipleship. These sacraments are seen as ways of strengthening the faith of the person and the whole Church. All sacraments are given in a formal ceremony or **rite** and involve the use of **symbols** which are intended to show something important about the sacrament taking place.

Baptism in the Roman Catholic Church takes place only once, usually when a person is a baby, but it can in some cases take place when the person is older. The ceremony uses water which is poured over the person's head as a sign of washing away sin; the person wears white clothing as a sign of purity; the sign of the cross is traced on the person's forehead to show dedication to God; and oils are used which show kingship and strength.



The Eucharist is also called Communion. The word Eucharist means thanksgiving. For Roman Catholic Christians, taking part in the Eucharist is a thanksgiving for the life and sacrifice of Jesus. It is also called Communion, a word which emphasises the unity of all Roman Catholic Christians taking part. The sacrament of the Eucharist, the body and blood, can be received as part of Mass, so for Roman Catholic Christians it is a way they can regularly strengthen their faith.



Confirmation is the final of the three sacraments of initiation. After being confirmed, Roman Catholic Christians are expected to spread and defend the faith. The sacrament is celebrated by a bishop and symbols are used to show that the person is receiving the gifts of the Holy Spirit.



Activity A

Create a table which names the three sacraments of initiation, explains their purpose and gives two facts about each of the sacraments.

Sacraments of healing

The Healing of the Paralysed Man

... When Jesus again entered Capernaum, the people heard that he had come home. So many gathered that there was no room left, not even outside the door, and he preached the word to them. Some men came, bringing to him a paralytic, carried by four of them. Since they could not get him to Jesus because of the crowd, they made an opening in the roof above Jesus and, after digging through it, lowered the mat the paralysed man was lying on. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, 'Son, your sins are forgiven.'

Now some teachers of the law were sitting there, thinking to themselves, 'Why does this fellow talk like that? He's blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?'

Immediately Jesus knew in his spirit that this was what they were thinking in their hearts, and he said to them, 'Why are you thinking these things? Which is easier: to say to the paralytic, "Your sins are forgiven," or to say "Get up, take your mat and walk"? But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins ...' He said to the paralytic, 'I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home.' He got up, took his mat and walked out in full view of them all.



The sacrament of Reconciliation in an open confession.

Mark 2:1-12

The sacrament of Reconciliation (confession or penance) is an opportunity for Roman Catholic Christians to speak to a priest and have their sins forgiven. This sacrament can be received many times, as can the Anointing of the Sick.

The Anointing of the Sick includes reading and prayers about healing and an anointing with oils to give the person strength: physically, mentally and spiritually. It can also include the sacraments of Reconciliation and the Eucharist.

Activity B

- 1 In groups read the Healing of the Paralysed Man. Discuss how this shows forgiveness and healing and whether the two are linked.
- 2 Work out why it was important for Jesus to heal and to forgive.
- 3 Write down four reasons why you think healing and forgiveness are important today.

Sacraments of vocation

	Matrimony	Holy Orders
Also called	Marriage	Ordination
		
Main purpose	To show commitment/ service to each other	To show commitment/ service to God
Why needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As a public declaration of their exclusive relationship • For strength and blessings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A visible sign that the man has special powers to do God's work • For strength and blessings
Minister of the sacrament	The couple minister this themselves and the priest is a witness	A bishop

Activity C

- 1 Vocation means a calling or urge towards a certain way of life. How do the two sacraments of vocation in the table above show a calling to live in a certain way?
- 2 Why do you think Roman Catholic Christians celebrate these sacraments?

Activity D

- 1 Get into small groups. Each group should be allocated one of the types of sacrament: initiation, healing or vocation.
- 2 Prepare a mind map to cover the issues of the sacrament allocated, which can be used to teach the rest of the class.
- 3 Prepare revision questions that the group can ask the rest of the class to check learning.
- 4 Produce a quiz which can be handed out for homework.

1.8 How are different Christians baptised?

Learning objectives

- You will ...**
- discover how Christians are initiated into the Christian Church
 - compare ways in which the different denominations baptise Christians
 - summarise the reasons why Baptism is important for Christians.

Initiation means beginning or starting, and most Christian Churches mark the beginning of a person's membership of the Church with the sacrament of Baptism. There are two forms of baptism. In some Churches this usually takes place when the person joining the Church is a baby (**infant baptism**), in others it occurs when the person is more grown up (**adult baptism**). All Churches practice adult baptism if a person joins the Church later in life (in the Roman Catholic Church adults may receive **RCIA** – the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults).

Churches that practise infant baptism include the Methodist, Anglican, Lutheran, Roman Catholic and Orthodox Churches. These Churches believe that baptism brings the baby into the faith community, who will then take part in raising the child as a believer.

During most ceremonies of infant baptism the baby is dressed in white. The parents and **godparents** will make promises to bring the child up as a Christian, and a minister will pour water over the baby's head, **blessing** them and naming them. In Roman Catholic and Orthodox Churches the baby will also be **anointed** with oils.

Churches that practise adult baptism include the Baptist and many Evangelical Churches who believe the person should be baptised only when it is their own personal decision and not that of their parents. They also call adult baptism **believer's baptism** to show that the person being baptised is a believer. During this ceremony the person being baptised makes the **confession of faith**.

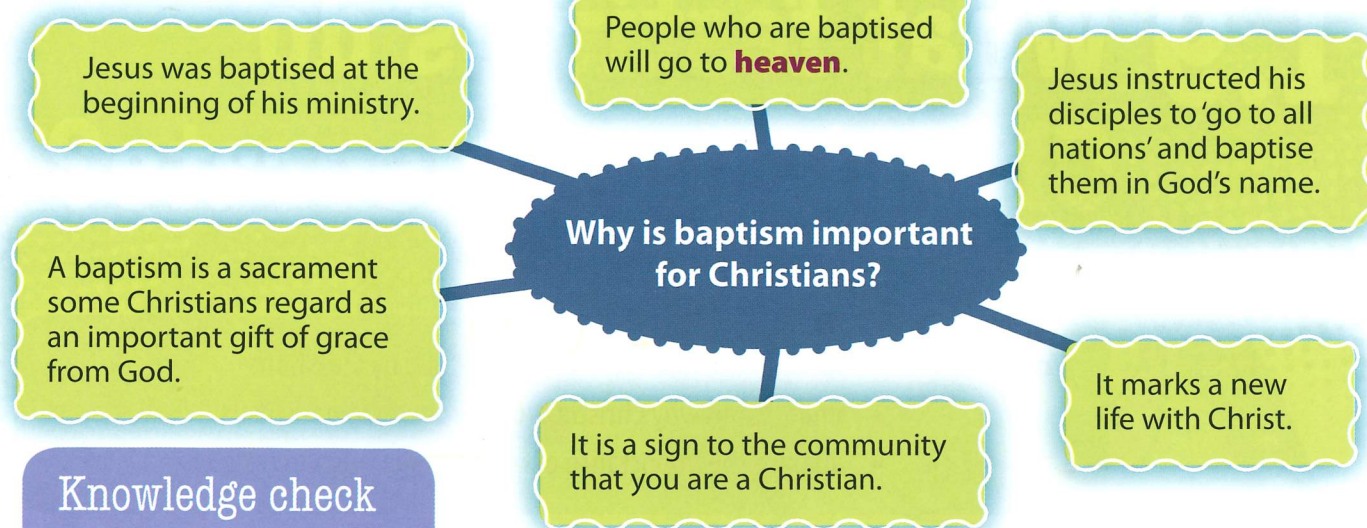


A baby has water poured over its head as part of the ceremony of baptism.



In adult baptism, the person walks into the **baptistry** where they are completely immersed in the water. This is known as **total immersion**.

Why is baptism important for Christians?



Knowledge check

- 1 What does initiation mean?
- 2 Why do Christians think initiation is important?
- 3 What is the ceremony of initiation called?
- 4 What is infant baptism? Why do some Christian Churches carry out infant baptism?
- 5 What is adult baptism? Why do some Christian Churches carry out adult baptism?

Activity A

- 1 Watch videos of an infant baptism and an adult baptism. There are several you can view on the Internet. In groups, discuss the reasons why some people might prefer an infant baptism and why some might prefer an adult baptism.
- 2 Draw up a table to record the differences and similarities between infant and adult baptism.

Activity B

- 1 In pairs, discuss why baptism is important for Christians. Then discuss the significance of each reason and rank them in order of importance, with (1) being the most important.
- 2 Write a letter to a non-Christian explaining why baptism is important. Use the reasons in the spidergram above and any others that you can think of.

Activity C

- 1 In small groups, talk about the groups that you belong to and how you joined them. Were there any ceremonies to mark your joining? How important were they to you? Were you given special clothing? Were you given certificates or badges to mark the fact that you had joined?
- 2 Design an initiation ceremony that could be used when starting the new school year. This should include the use of symbols and special words, and you could also make reference to important things that are likely to happen in that school year.

Activity D

- A Baptist Christian might say that it is important for a Christian to be baptised when they are old enough to make the decision for themselves.
- 1 In small groups, make a list of all the reasons why you think believers' or adult baptism is important. Then make a list of the reasons why you think infant baptism is important.
 - 2 Hold a class debate to decide whether you think adult or infant baptism is better.

1.9 What festivals do Christians celebrate?

Learning objectives

- You will ...**
- identify the main festivals celebrated by Christians
 - understand why Christians celebrate certain festivals
 - analyse the importance of celebrating Christian festivals.

Here are some of the festivals celebrated in the Christian calendar:

- **Advent** starts four Sundays before Christmas and is the period of time during which Christians prepare for the coming of Christ
- **Christmas** Day is the day when Christians celebrate the birth of Christ, which was predicted in the Old Testament
- **Epiphany** is a celebration that takes place on the 6th January when most Churches celebrate the visit of the Magi to the infant Jesus. Eastern Churches celebrate the baptism of Jesus on this date and the time when he was revealed as the Son of God
- **Lent** is the period of preparation for Easter which lasts 40 days. During Lent, Christians try to become better people by fasting and doing good deeds
- **Easter** is the celebration of the resurrection of Jesus three days after his death on Good Friday. It is the most important festival in the Church calendar
- **Pentecost** is a feast which takes place 50 days after Easter and celebrates the beginning of the Church when the Holy Spirit descended upon the disciples. It is the last day of Eastertide.

Activity A

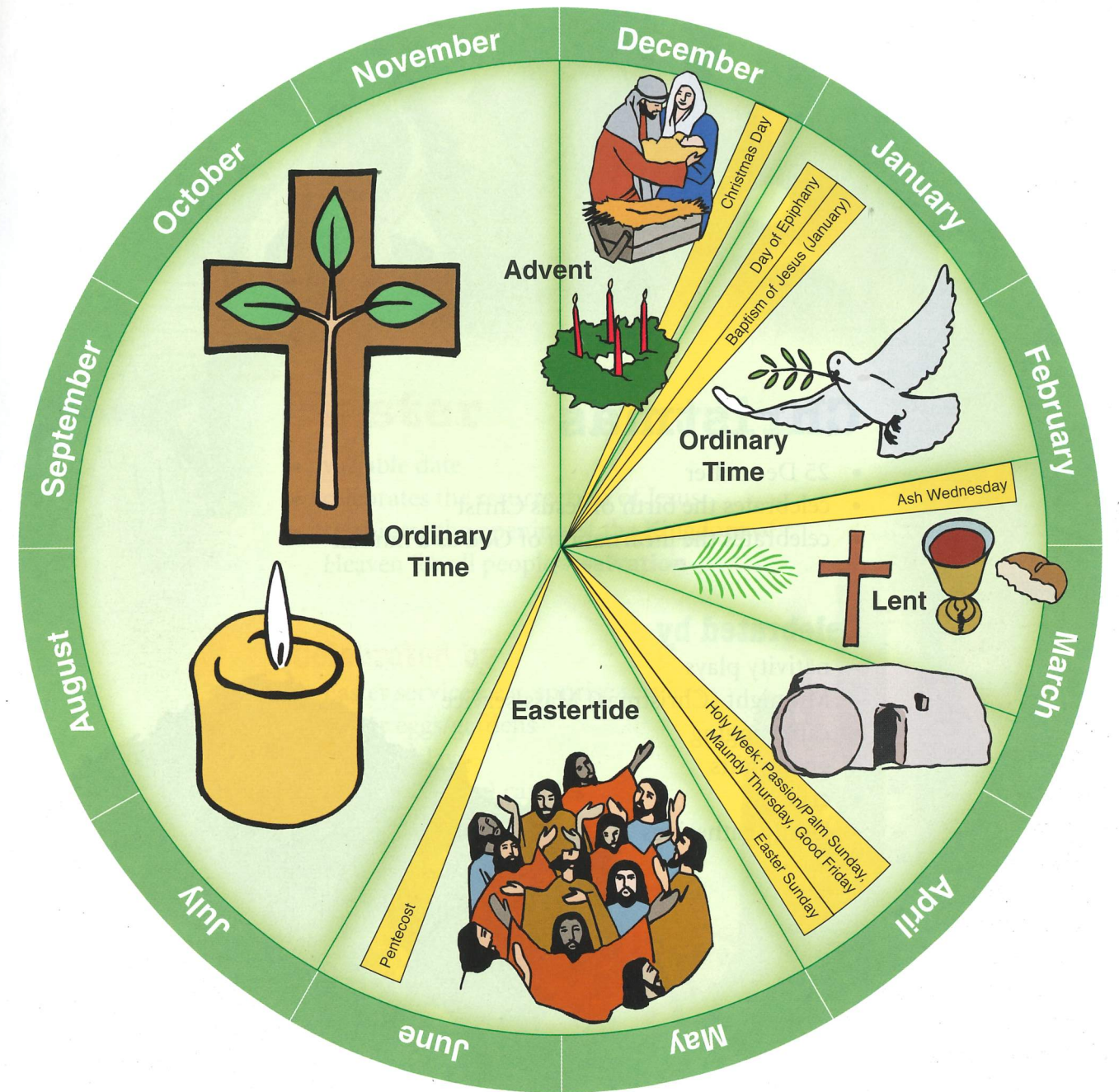
- 1 Make a list of all the things that you celebrate in a year. It can include both religious and non-religious celebrations. You could do this as a diagram similar to the one on page 31.
- 2 Which of your celebrations do you enjoy the most? Describe in five lines what you do to celebrate it. Write down three reasons why you enjoy celebrating it.

Knowledge check

- 1 Write a list of all the main festivals that take place in the Church (**liturgical**) year.
- 2 Pick one of the festivals mentioned on the left. Write one reason why Christians might celebrate it.
- 3 Which of the festivals do you like the most? Write two reasons why you like it.

Activity B

- 1 Study the pictures of Christmas on page 32. What do the pictures tell you about how Christians feel about Christmas?
- 2 Do you have the same feelings about Christmas? Explain your reasons why in three sentences.
- 3 Some people worry that Christmas has lost its meaning because it is all about presents and decorations. What do you think?



This diagram shows how Christian festivals are linked to the Church year.



Christmas

- 25 December
- celebrates the birth of Jesus Christ
- celebrates the incarnation of God as a human

Celebrated by

- nativity plays
- Midnight (Christmas) Mass/service
- carol singing
- giving gifts
- cribs
- family gatherings



Activity C

- 1 Look at the fact lists about Christmas and Easter on this page and page 33.
- 2 Draw a spidergram for each festival – include all the facts in the relevant list and any more you can think of. If you can do this on a computer, include pictures to illustrate the various ways the festivals are celebrated.
- 3 Using your spidergram as notes, produce a booklet that could be used for teaching young children about either Christmas or Easter. This can be done on paper or using a computer. Include in your booklet some reasons why Christians might choose to celebrate the festival in different ways.



Easter

- variable date
- celebrates the resurrection of Jesus
- celebrates the opening of the Kingdom of Heaven for all people – **salvation**

Celebrated by

- Easter services, e.g. sunrise services
- Easter eggs/gardens
- passion plays
- paschal (Easter) candles



Activity D

- 1 Why is there a picture of hot cross buns in the collection of Easter photos? Discuss this with a partner.
- 2 In small groups, discuss why you think Christians like celebrating Easter and Christmas. Write down on a sheet of paper all the reasons your group can think of.
- 3 Do some background research into the ways in which Easter and Christmas have been celebrated in the past and how they are celebrated in various different cultures.
- 4 Produce a poster to explain why you think Christians celebrate festivals like Easter and Christmas. Present your poster to the rest of the class when you have finished.

The big assignment

Task

To produce a multimedia guide to a local Roman Catholic church.

Objectives

- To research the history, purposes, architecture and features of a Roman Catholic church and how it is used in worship.
- To use evidence from church leaders (possibly the parish priest) and/or worshippers to inform your findings.

Outcome

To produce an information pack that could be used by a Roman Catholic church to explain to its visitors what it is and what it does.

You should include information about:

- the history of the church

- services and celebrations

- other uses for the building

- features of the church and how they are used in worship

- symbols inside the church

- some of the feelings people have when they are in a church.

- what the worshippers do to help other people in the community and the world

Guidance

- 1 Work in groups of six or seven. Each person should be given a specific job to do, and the rest of the group should support them in carrying it out.
- 2 Suggested jobs:
 - a Asking the leader of a local church to help you with the Big Assignment.
 - b Writing questions to ask the leader of the church.
 - c Asking the questions and writing up the answers.
 - d Filming the interview.
 - e Filming the church (if you are allowed to).
 - f Photographing the various features of the church (if you are allowed to).
 - g Writing up descriptions of the church and the objects inside it.
 - h Drawing diagrams and plans to illustrate your descriptions and explanations.
 - i Writing up explanations of why the objects are included in the church and how they are used in worship.
- 3 As a group, go through the evidence – i.e. the outcomes of each job – and for each one decide what needs to be done to finish it.
- 4 Remember to include instructions for visitors about how they should behave in a church (and why), and how they should treat the objects within a church (and why).
- 5 Your completed information pack should contain your findings in a variety of media: film, photographs, plans, diagrams and writings.
- 6 Present your information pack to the leader of the church, and ask for feedback.
- 7 As a group, evaluate your pack. Decide what you did well and how you could have improved it.

Assessment

You will be assessed on:

- ✓ how well you use specialist vocabulary
- ✓ your ability to explain the importance of religious objects for worshippers
- ✓ your ability to explain how people should behave in a church, and why
- ✓ how you allocate roles, and how well you work with others
- ✓ your evaluation of the success of your team.