

Dennerle, George M.
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Wonder 7 Gifts

BY GEORGE M. DENNERLE



SEVEN WONDER GIFTS

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SEVEN WONDER GIFTS

DO older people ever tell you that you are full of life? They mean that you run and jump and play from morning till night. You are happy when you are active.

Jesus came into the world that you might have life. But it was to be life for the soul, not for the body. It was to make you like God. It was to fit you for heaven.

The price Jesus paid that you might have this life was His suffering and death. Through His cross He earned it. Today, the Holy Ghost gives you this life, when you pray and especially when you receive the sacraments.

There are seven sacraments. Each one was instituted by Jesus Christ to give life to your soul. All of the seven will prepare your soul for the happiness of heaven.

Rightly you may call them **THE SEVEN WONDER GIFTS**.

These seven gifts are:

Baptism

Confirmation

Holy Eucharist

Penance

Extreme Unction

Holy Orders

Matrimony

Baptism



BAPTISM

Long ago Jesus told a man named Nicodemus how this wonderful new life is given at Baptism. He told Nicodemus how much everyone needs this sacrament. "Unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Ghost," Jesus said, "he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."

Jesus wanted everyone to be saved. So He gave orders to His Apostles before He ascended into heaven: "Going therefore teach all nations: baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."

And He added: "He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved."

The Apostles Baptize

The Apostles obeyed this command. Ten days after Jesus ascended into heaven, St. Peter preached to a large crowd of people.

"You crucified Jesus," he told them.

The people felt sorry in their hearts that they had sinned. They said to Peter and the rest of the Apostles: "What shall we do?"

Peter answered: "Do penance, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost."

About 3,000 people that day believed and were baptized. The Apostles continued to preach, and more and more people believed and were baptized. Later, the Apostles went into many parts of the world. Everywhere they found people to baptize.

Priests Baptize Today

For more than nineteen hundred years Bishops and priests have continued to baptize. Today all over the world little babies receive this sacrament.

Did you ever see this done? The godmother carries the little child. Near-by stands the godfather and the priest. All are grouped around the baptismal font in the rear of the church.

The priest pours water on the head of the baby and says at the same time: "I baptize thee in the

name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." Other prayers and sacred actions are added, but the pouring of the water and the saying of the words are the main part.

That is the part you would do, if you had to baptize a little child that was dying. Just pour plain water on the head and say: "I baptize thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."

At Baptism something wonderful takes place in the soul of the child. It receives a new life, called supernatural life or sanctifying grace. This makes the baby a child of God, takes away original sin, gives it the right to live in heaven, and joins it to the millions of people who belong to the Catholic Church.

If you were watching the baptism of a child, you would not see any change. The change is not in the body, but in the soul.

However, the priest does something to show how white and pure the baby's soul has become. He places a little white cloth upon the child and says: "Receive this white garment, and may you carry it without stain before the judgment seat of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you may have life everlasting. Amen."

When you were a baby, you received this wonderful Sacrament of Baptism. From that moment you were God's child, with a right to heaven. The Holy Ghost gave you the new life of sanctifying grace. He gave you power to believe in God, to

hope in God, to love God. He gave you power to grow up a good child of God: obedient, kind, pure, honest and truthful.

Things to Do

Ask yourself this question: Am I trying to keep the white garment of my Baptism free from the stain of mortal sin?

Say an *Our Father* for the many pagan children who need Baptism to reach heaven. Can you think of some boy or girl you know for whom you might say this *Our Father*?



CONFIRMATION

Children do not always remain children. When they grow up, they act differently than when they were children. They are stronger, they can think for themselves, they can do things for others.

Jesus gave a special sacrament to help the children of God grow strong and more active, to help them know their faith better. This is the Sacrament of Confirmation.

How the Bishop Confirms

The Bishop is the one who confirms people. He prays over those who are to be confirmed. He

asks the Holy Ghost to come into their souls with His gifts. Then he lays his hand on each person's head and anoints the forehead with holy oil, in the form of a cross.

At the same time he says: "I sign thee with the sign of the cross, and I confirm thee with the chrism of salvation, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." The *Sign of the Cross* is a reminder: Never be ashamed that you are a Catholic. The Bishop also gives each person a slight tap on the cheek. That means: Be brave for Jesus.

Then the Bishop says this prayer:

O God, who gave the Holy Spirit to Your Apostles and wished that He should be given through them and their successors to the rest of the faithful, look with favor upon our humble service; and grant that the same Holy Spirit, coming upon those whose foreheads we have anointed with the holy chrism and marked with the Sign of the Cross, may graciously consecrate their hearts as a temple of His glory by dwelling within them: You, who with the Father and the same Holy Spirit live and reign, God through all eternity. Amen.

What the Holy Ghost Does

This prayer reminds us that the Apostles received the Holy Ghost many, many years ago. Do you remember how the Holy Ghost made them strong and helped them to understand on that first Pentecost Day? What a different person Peter was after the coming of the Holy Ghost! Before, he did not always understand what Jesus taught:

after, he understood all so clearly. Before, he was afraid to tell a servant girl that he knew Jesus; after, he was ready to tell the world even though it cost his life. The other Apostles were changed too.

God the Holy Ghost comes into your soul with the same gifts when you receive the Sacrament of Confirmation.

He comes to make you strong in your faith, so strong that you would be ready to die for it as the martyrs were.

He comes to increase your love for God and neighbor. Do you remember the two great commandments of Jesus? "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind." This is the first great commandment. And the second is like to it. "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."

Ask Yourself These Questions

- Do I say my prayers daily?
- Do I go to Mass every Sunday?
- Do I receive Holy Communion often?
- Do I think well of other people?
- Do I always speak kind things of them?
- Do I act kindly to them, as I would have them do to me?

The Holy Ghost also increases your loyalty. Loyalty makes you think of a soldier. He is loyal to his country even to the point of giving his life.

Confirmation makes you a soldier of Christ.
One who has been confirmed should do something
for the Kingdom of Christ.

Do I pray for other people?

Do I give good example to my schoolmates
and playmates?

Do I contribute pennies to the missions?

Do I try to lead other children closer to
God?

THE HOLY EUCHARIST

I am the living bread which came down from heaven. He that eats this bread will live forever. This bread is my flesh, and this wine is my blood. Who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him.

Jesus loves you. He wants your soul to be strong and healthy. He gives you food for your soul. He feeds you with His own Body and blood.

Food for your soul.
One day He told the people who came to hear Him: "I am the living bread which came down



THE HOLY EUCHARIST

Your mother takes care that you get enough to eat. She loves you and wants to see you grow healthy and strong. The food your mother gives you is for the life of your body.

Jesus loves you. He wants your soul to be strong and healthy. So He gives you food for your soul. He feeds you with His own Body and Blood.

Food for Your Soul

One day He told the people who came to hear Him: "I am the living bread which came down

from heaven. If any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever; and the bread that I will give, is my flesh for the life of the world."

"He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, hath everlasting life: and I will raise him up on the last day."

"He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, abideth in me, and I in him."

Jesus kept His word at the Last Supper. He took bread and changed it into His own Body, saying to His Apostles: "Take and eat; this is my Body." Then the cup of wine over which He said: "Drink of this; for this is my Blood."

Then He gave the Apostles power to do what He had done. They could say Mass, they could change bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Jesus, and they could give Jesus in Holy Communion to the people.

Priests have that same power today. They change bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Jesus and give Him to the people. Holy Communion is the eating of the Body and Blood of Jesus. It is the banquet or meal of the soul.

How to Prepare

Before every meal it is proper to say a prayer. At Mass the meal prayer before Holy Communion is the *Our Father*. This is the prayer Our Blessed Lord Himself made for us.

Just before Communion time the altar boy recites the *Confiteor*, "I Confess to Almighty God."

If you know it, say it for yourself; or say the *Act of Contrition*.

The priest turns around and asks God to take away the little stains of sin from your soul. Say: Lord, have mercy on me. Make the sign of the cross with the priest.

Then the priest shows you the Sacred Host. As he does so, he prays: "Behold the Lamb of God, behold Him who taketh away the sins of the world!" Then he adds those words that you know so well: "O Lord, I am not worthy that Thou shouldst enter under my roof; say but the word, and my soul shall be healed." He recites this prayer of the Centurion three times. Say it devoutly with the priest.

At the Communion rail, the priest places the Sacred Host on your tongue. While he does so, he says these beautiful words: "May the Body of Our Lord Jesus Christ preserve thy soul to life everlasting. Amen."

The Greatest Wonder Gift

There is a prayer of the Church that tells you what Holy Communion does for your soul.

O Sacred Banquet,
In which Christ is received,
The memory of His passion is renewed,
The mind is filled with grace,
And a pledge of future glory is given to us.

O Sacred Banquet! The Mass and Holy Communion is God's own Banquet. Receive Holy Communion with great devotion. Go to the Communion rail with hands folded, eyes cast down, slowly. And returning from the altar rail, you should show even greater devotion. Why? Because in this Sacred Banquet

Christ is received. It is the same Christ who fed the hungry, cured the blind, the lame and the deaf, who raised the dead to life; the same Christ who was the Friend of children.

The memory of His passion is renewed. Jesus wants people to remember Him. He wants them to remember especially His suffering and death. So He gave them the Mass and Holy Communion to remind them of His suffering and death on the cross. Don't you think the Apostles remembered Jesus' passion at every Mass and Holy Communion?

The mind is filled with grace. The greatest grace, of course, is to receive Jesus Himself into your soul. But Jesus does not come with empty hands. He makes you strong against sin and temptation. He helps you in the practice of the virtues. He makes you obedient, because He was obedient. He makes you kind, because He was kind to everyone. He makes you truthful and honest and pure. He teaches you how to pray and honor God.

A pledge of future glory is given to us. Every time you receive Jesus in Holy Communion you

make your soul and body ready for heaven. All the hard things you do for God will be repaid. Was it hard to keep from eating and drinking when you went to Holy Communion on Sunday morning? Did you give up some pleasure to go to Confession on Saturday afternoon? Those efforts cost your body a little pain. But the pains will be changed into joys in heaven. Jesus made this promise.

Jesus Lives With Us

He lives in our churches. Day and night He is there. The sanctuary lamp reminds you that Jesus is there.

It reminds you that you are in God's house. Do not talk or disturb others. You come to church to pray and to sing devoutly.

Try to visit Jesus in His tabernacle home often. For He is pleased when you come.

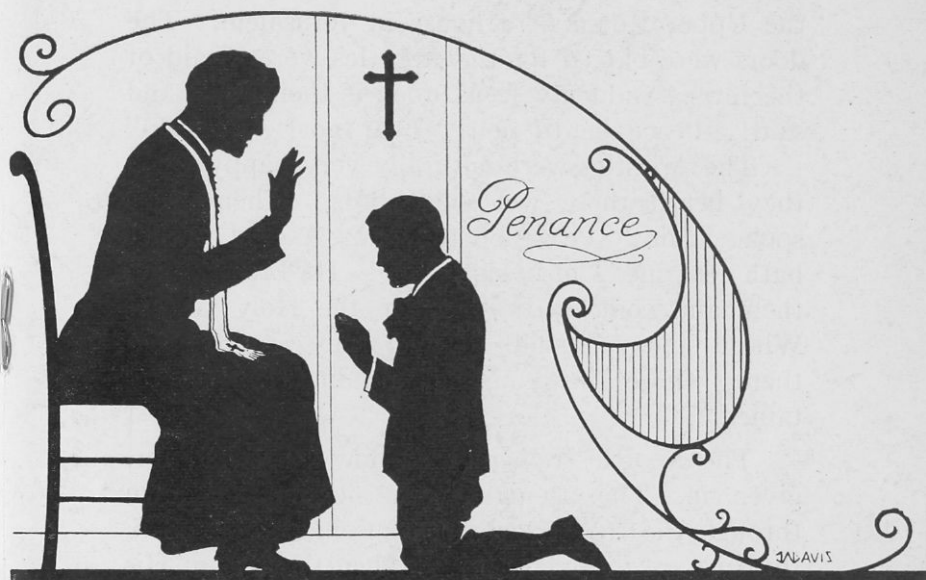
Questions to Answer

How can you be united to Jesus in the the closest possible way?

How does Holy Communion help you to be good?

How do you know that Holy Communion will prepare your soul for heaven?

When *must* you go to Confession before receiving Holy Communion?



PENANCE

Have you ever felt tired and weak? Something like that happens to the life of your soul when you commit venial sin. Mortal sin takes all the life from your soul. It is like death.

Jesus knew that you would need His help if you sinned. He prepared that help in the Sacrament of Penance. How kind He was to think of everything when He lived on this earth!

How Sin Is Forgiven

It was late evening of the very day He arose from the dead. The Apostles were together in

the Upper Room of a house in Jerusalem. The doors were barred for the Apostles were afraid of the Jews. Suddenly Jesus stood in their midst and said: "Peace be to you! Fear not! It is I!"

The Apostles were naturally very happy when they heard these welcome words. Then Jesus spoke again: "Peace be to you! As the Father hath sent me, I also send you." He breathed on them and continued: "Receive the Holy Ghost! Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them; whose sins you shall retain, they are retained."

The Apostles remembered how Jesus had forgiven sin. They thought of the sick man let down through the roof to whom Jesus had said: "Son, thy sins are forgiven thee." They thought of His words to the sinful woman who cried at His feet: "Thy sins are forgiven thee; go in peace." They also recalled how kind Jesus had always been with sinners.

Now Jesus was giving *them* His power of forgiving sins. They could say to sinners: "Go in peace; your sins are forgiven."

The Apostles passed on this power to other men whom they made bishops and priests. Today, bishops and priests use their power of taking away sins in the confessional.

They say these words: "I absolve you from your sins in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen." These words are called the Absolution. When the priest

speaks them to you in the confessional, your sins are forgiven just as surely as if Jesus Himself spoke them. For Jesus said: "Whose Sins *you* shall forgive, they are forgiven them."

But you must do your part if you want your sins forgiven. These words will tell you what to do:

Pray, examine, be sorry,
Promise, confess, do penance.

You might use your prayer book to assist you in finding your sins. Under the preparation for Confession, you will see the Examination of Conscience. The sins listed there will help you to remember the ones you committed.

Be Sorry for Your Sins

Jesus once told a story that will give you sorrow.

There was a certain rich man who wore the finest clothes and ate the best food every day. Outside the gate of this rich man's house sat a poor man, named Lazarus. His body was covered with sores. He had nothing to eat. He would have been satisfied with the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table. But no one gave him even these.

Poor Lazarus died and was carried by the angels to limbo. Some time later the rich man also died. He was buried in hell where he had to suffer very great pains.

Looking up from his place of suffering, the rich man saw Lazarus. "Send Lazarus to me," he cried. "Let him dip his finger in water to touch and cool my tongue, for my pains are very great." But the rich man had to suffer forever.

He lost heaven because of his sins. He had to suffer in hell, for they were very great. God is just. He punishes all sinners who are not sorry.

O my God! I am heartily sorry for having offended Thee, and I detest all my sins, because I dread the loss of heaven and the pains of hell (purgatory).

A still better kind of sorrow comes from the thought that sin offends God and helps to make Jesus suffer. Look at the crucifix and see how much God loves you. No one has done more for you than Jesus. How it must have hurt Him to hang on the cross!

But most of all (I am sorry) because I have offended Thee my God who art all-good and deserving of all my love.

If you are really sorry, you will promise to do better. Think of one of your venial sins that happens very often, and make up your mind strongly not to commit that sin. If you have mortal sins, you must make up your mind to keep away from every one of them.

I firmly resolve with the help of Thy grace to confess my sins, to do penance and to amend my life. Amen.

Tell Your Sins to the Priest

Do not be afraid when you go to Confession. The priest takes Jesus' place. He is bound to keep secret the sins you tell him. Priests must die rather than tell the sins people confess to them. Nor should you be ashamed, no matter how many or how terrible your sins. Most probably the priest will not know you. Even if he does, he will think more of you, if you tell all your sins truthfully. Besides, he remembers the words of Jesus, that there is more joy in heaven over one sinner who does penance than over ninety-nine who do not need penance.

Say the Penance

The priest tells you to do something for your penance. Be sure you understand; ask if you do not. Do the penance as soon as you can. It will shorten your purgatory. You must also do everything else the priest tells you: make good any harm or damage as soon as possible.

Discuss These Questions

Why should you pray to the Holy Ghost before preparing to go to Confession?

Why is "contrition" the most important part of a good Confession?

Why should you never be afraid to tell your sins to the priest?



EXTREME UNCTION

If someone in your family is very sick, the doctor is called. The doctor, of course, can only cure the body. Someone else must be called to help the soul. Do you know who?

Long Ago

St. James, one of the twelve Apostles and also a cousin of Jesus, tells us. Here are his words:

“Is any man sick among you? Let him bring in the priests of the church and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith shall save the sick man: and the Lord shall raise him up: and if he be in sins, they shall be forgiven him.”

Today

Has the priest ever come to your house to give the Sacrament of Extreme Unction? Or have you ever seen the priest going on a sick call?

Someone in the house meets the priest with a lighted candle and shows him the way to the sick room. Usually the priest brings the Blessed Sacrament, and everyone kneels down.

Coming into the sick room, the priest says: "Peace be to this house and to all who live in it." Then he sprinkles the sick person and the room with holy water, and says some prayers.

If the sick person is able, he goes to Confession and then receives Holy Communion as Viaticum. The word Viaticum means "with you on the way." The words the priest uses when he gives Holy Communion as Viaticum will help to explain the meaning.

"Receive, brother (sister), Viaticum of the Body of Our Lord Jesus Christ, and may He protect you against the wicked enemy (the devil), and lead you safely to eternal life. Amen."

Last Anointing

After several other prayers, the priest anoints the eyes, ears, nose, mouth, hands and feet of the sick person with holy oil. He says at each: "Through this holy anointing and through His tender mercy, may the Lord forgive all the sins you have committed through sight (hearing, smell, taste and speech, touch, walking)."

What is done to the soul of the sick person? It is given a larger share in God's life. It is made strong, so as to bear suffering patiently. It is cleansed of venial sin, and is made ready to enter heaven quickly. Sometimes God gives health to the body.

Something to Do

Say a *Hail Mary* for a happy death.
What words of this prayer mention this?

Arrange a table for a sick call—white covering, two blessed candles, crucifix, spoon and glass of water, napkin, holy water, plate with small pieces of cotton and bread and a little salt.



HOLY ORDERS

A boy or girl of twelve years may receive any one of the first five sacraments. Likely, you have received all except Extreme Unction; and if you have been seriously sick since you were seven years old you have received that also.

The two remaining sacraments, Holy Orders and Matrimony, are for older persons. You will also notice that these two sacraments are given not so much for the good of the person receiving them, but for the good of others. For this reason they are called the *social* sacraments.

Our Lord's First Priests

Jesus said that He came into the world that you might have life. He was speaking, of course, of the life of the soul.

He chose men to help Him bring this life into souls. These men were His Apostles. He gave them power to change bread and wine into His Body and Blood. He gave them power to forgive sins. He gave them the right to teach His truth; and power to baptize, confirm, anoint the sick, and to assist at marriages. He made them priests like Himself. Jesus also gave His Apostles power to make other men priests.

Our Priests Today

The Bishops of the Catholic Church continue the work of the Apostles. They pick out young men, train them in special schools that are called seminaries, and then ordain them priests.

The Bishop lays his hands upon the head of the young man, just as the Apostles did many years ago when they ordained priests. He anoints with holy oil the whole inner part of the young man's hands, so that he can bless people and things. Then he allows the young man to touch the chalice of wine and the golden plate with the host. This gives the power of saying Mass, as you can see from the words of the Bishop: "Receive the power to offer sacrifice to God, and to celebrate Masses, both for the living and for the dead." Finally he places his hands for the second

time on the head of the young man and says:
"Receive the Holy Ghost; whose sins you shall
forgive they are forgiven them, and whose sins
you shall retain they are retained."

What wonderful power the priest receives!
To say Mass, to forgive sins, to give the sacra-
ments, to preach and to bless,—all for your bene-
fit! Thank God for your priests!

Ask Yourself These Questions

Do I respect and obey the priest?

Do I pray for him, especially at Mass
and on the Ember days?

Do I always greet him with a smile?



MATRIMONY

Another sacrament that is meant especially to benefit others is the Sacrament of Matrimony. Your father and mother received this sacrament when they were married. God promised to help them take care of you and your brothers and sisters.

The First Marriage

Do you know who were the first husband and wife? They were Adam and Eve, the first man and woman. God made them husband and wife.

So, whenever a man and woman today promise to be husband and wife, God is a partner to their promise. God hears their promise and they are not allowed to break it because God Himself

has said: "What God hath joined together, let no man put asunder."

Marriage is something sacred and holy. But when Jesus came to live on earth, He made it even holier. He knew it was not easy to be a good husband and a good wife without special help. That is why He made marriage a sacrament.

How the Sacrament Is Given

If you are an altar boy or if you sing in the choir, you have seen how a man and woman receive the Sacrament of Matrimony. They walk into the sanctuary and kneel on the platform of the altar. The priest asks the man this question:

"Wilt thou take (Mary) here present for thy lawful wife according to the rite of our holy Mother the Church?"

He answers: "I will."

The question is also asked of the woman and she answers:

"I will."

Then, with right hands joined, they both promise to be husband and wife until death. And the priest says: "I join you in marriage, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen." He makes the *Sign of the Cross* over them and sprinkles them with holy water.

The wedding ring is blessed and the husband puts it on his wife's finger. The ring is a sign of their love for each other and a sign that they will keep their promise until death.

During the Mass which follows, husband and wife again come to the altar. A special blessing is given to the bride immediately after the *Our Father* in the Mass. The priest prays that through Jesus, God the Father may protect this marriage and bless it with good children. The man and wife also receive Holy Communion at the altar and come for a final blessing toward the end of the Mass.

Special Graces

God gives man and wife very special graces during this ceremony. These graces are:

1. That they may love each other as God wants.
2. That they may be good parents and have good children.
3. That they may help each other and live together until death.

The great Apostle St. Paul wrote this about Matrimony in one of his letters: "Marriage is a great sacrament in Christ and in the Church. The husband should love his wife. The wife should honor her husband."

Answer These Questions

Why is Marriage something sacred and holy?

Before whom must Catholic people be married?

How long must married people live together?

How does a happy marriage help children?





