

Love Made Visible

The Sacraments

When we love someone, we express it in tangible ways.

Parents hug their children and tell them, "I love you." A young man gives flowers and chocolates to his sweetheart. A husband leaves a love note on the bathroom mirror for his wife. Whenever we seek to communicate spiritual realities, such as our love or care for another person, we necessarily use such words or actions.

Through the body, spiritual realities are communicated.

Like the angels, we are immortal spirits, with the ability to know and to love. Unlike the angels, God created us as embodied spirits: an immaterial spirit united with a material body. Since we are "body-persons," we cannot communicate directly with each other in a spiritual manner, as the angels do. Instead, it is only through the body that we can make visible that which is invisible, communicating and interacting meaningfully with one another.

God reveals himself to humanity in physical ways, too.

Since God made us as body-persons, he always communicates spiritual realities through words and actions. Think of how he interacted with his people in the Old Testament: a voice from heaven, a burning bush, the parting of the Red Sea, a pillar of fire, manna in the desert, and many other signs and wonders. Whenever God wished to reveal himself or demonstrate his love for his people, it was in ways that they could perceive with their senses.

Jesus is the supreme example of God's love made visible.

So deep was his desire to reveal himself fully to us and reunite humanity to himself, that God chose to become one of us, being born as Jesus of Nazareth. When Jesus walked among the people, God himself was walking in their midst and revealing his love in a personal, physical way. Since Jesus was ministering to body-persons, his gifts were almost always accompanied by words, touch, gestures, or other physical elements. For example, he healed the man born blind by spitting on the ground, making clay, and anointing the man's eyes with the clay. (John 9:1-12)

Jesus still continues his ministry today in a visible way.

It was not just his generation of believers that he wished to give new life, nourish, strengthen, heal, and forgive. He intended to continue giving these spiritual gifts to his people through his family of faith, the Church, until the end of time. For this purpose, he gave the apostles seven spiritual gifts, which became known as the sacraments. Through the sacraments, Jesus continues to minister to us in a personal, visible way in each generation.

Through the sacraments, Jesus expresses his love for us.

The sacraments are visible signs through which Jesus freely gives his spiritual gifts. He communicates his love for us still, in ways that are both physical and spiritual, in the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist, Confession, Anointing of the Sick, Matrimony, and Holy Orders. In this message series, we will give an introduction to each sacrament and discuss how each is a gift by which Jesus continues to make his love visible for us today.

