



The Jewish Roots of Seven Catholic Sacraments

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To use a phrase from Deuteronomy, and to understand how sacraments join us to God, we can see that they bring us “into a good country.” In other words, they bring us into communion with God where we are to live in accordance to his laws and where we are to experience an abundant life (John 10:10).

Baptism and Eucharist

To begin with, this “good country” God speaks of is a land with streams of water. It has springs and fountains welling up. Water, of course, is representative of Baptism. For Catholics this is the first Sacrament. It is considered a Sacrament of Initiation as it begins our journey “in a good country.” Next, there is reference to wheat which is representative of Communion. The bread of Christ which feeds the flock is the wheat found in the good country God speaks of in Deuteronomy. This is often seen as the second Sacrament of the Catholic faith.

Confirmation

In a flurry we read that this good country will have grape vines and fig trees and pomegranates. It will have olive trees and honey. As a dweller in this land, we will lack nothing—we will want for nothing. Everything that we need is supplied by our Creator. Confirmation is a Sacrament that seals us with the Holy Spirit. Catholics use oil as the representation of this sealing of the Holy Spirit—the very same oil mentioned in Deuteronomy that would have been pressed from the olive trees. There for the taking!

Reconciliation

A very important part of the Sacramental life of a Catholic is Reconciliation—or what is also called Confession. This is found in the good country of Deuteronomy by the mention of figs. To practicing Jews, figs represent redemption; they are reminders of God’s great love. For Catholics this is the same love that sent the Savior—to whom we are reconciled through Confession of our sins.



Sacraments of Marriage and Holy Orders

Oftentimes, as adults, Catholics enter into the Sacrament of Marriage. This is considered a sacred institution whereby Catholics welcome life and become co-creators with God. Grapes are often seen as symbols of fertility. Adult Catholic men who are called to the vocation of the Priesthood are said to enter into the Sacrament of Holy Orders. Catholics see the priesthood as a continuation of the royal priesthood of Christ. Pomegranates symbolize royalty.

Anointing of the Sick

Finally, the last Sacrament a Catholic undertakes will be the Anointing of the Sick. Once called Extreme Unction, this sacrament is for the critically ill and in some ways is a final preparation for either death or for the healing of one's soul to be more fully in union with Christ. In the good country spoken of in Deuteronomy, barley would be the symbol of transition becoming the Jewish roots of what is most often considered "Last Rites" where a Catholic is prepared for transition from this life to the next. The beauty of the seven Sacraments of the Catholic Church is only underscored when tied to their Jewish roots. Reaching into the rich background of the Old Testament gives new life and meaning to the practices of those whose belief rests in the New Testament.

Details found at <https://www.beliefnet.com/faiths/galleries/jewish-roots-of-seven-catholic-sacraments.aspx>