

GRADE EIGHT
CHRISTIAN SACRAMENTS

NOTES TO THE TEACHER

In Grade Eight, students are entering into a detailed study of the theme, Christian Sacraments, in five lessons. They have already studied the various aspects of this theme as an introduction in seven early classes from Nursery to Grade Five. It is lesson 3 in all these classes. They are introduced to the seven sacraments through different activities. The teacher, before teaching the details of the theme in five lessons, is expected to be familiar with the previous seven lessons they have already learned. He/she devotes a few minutes at the beginning of the class to recall some main points with reference to the class and the lessons, placed in the same book (all sixty lessons of twelve classes in one book). In the last two years, in Grade 6 & 7, students studied two other themes in detail and they are History and Worship. Now, let us move on to the third theme, Christian Sacraments. We recommend a book as a good resource to teach this theme. It is "Gleanings: The Mar Thoma Church: Its Faith, Practice and Mission" (Revised Second Edition), Published by The Madras-Calcutta Diocese of the Mar Thoma Syrian Church, 1997.

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GRADE EIGHT
CHRISTIAN SACRAMENTS

Lesson 1

**ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF
SACRAMENTS**

Aim:

To grasp the spiritual meaning rooted in Sacraments by learning the five essential elements in Sacraments

Bible Verse: 1 Timothy 5:21

In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of the holy angels I solemnly call upon you to obey these instructions without showing any prejudice or favor to anyone in anything you do.

Main Ideas:

The Mar Thoma Church is part of One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church. The faithful members of this religious community in an area are recognized as a parish. Each Parish exists for the purpose of worship, proclamation of the Gospel and the administration of sacraments.

The word "Sacrament" is derived from the Latin word *Sacramentum*, which usually means an oath or surety. It is a pledge taken by a soldier before his king to make declare his loyalty

and faithfulness to him. Sacrament assures God's blessings when the participants receive it in faith. In the Church, each sacrament is administered as a means of God's grace. So Sacraments are the visible, outward rites conducted by the Church, using specific elements for inward and unseen blessings. Every faithful member of the Church needs God's grace to experience salvation.

Sacraments are special encounters with Christ that help us grow in grace and lead a holy life. Jesus gave his church sacraments to continue his saving work and to build up the community of believers. Sacraments have some visible expressions. These visible, outward expressions point to inner grace that is given to us (spiritual truths). They carry meaning only out of the inward spiritual life experience of the participants. In other words, life of a believer must be a visible sign of the spiritual presence.

Participating in the Sacraments is really a Christian believer's liturgical act. The liturgy is not just a text or a set of prayers, but an act of the congregation. We are really blessed with our liturgical tradition. Our ancestors are nurtured by their full and repeated participation in this liturgical act. We are obliged to continue that tradition by our full bodily and mental attention to the whole service. We should recognize the integral parts of the liturgical act such as the gestures of the priest and the laity, the kiss of peace, the bowing of heads, the reverence paid to the Eucharistic elements, making the sign of the Cross etc.

Each Sacrament has five essential elements:

1. Intention: It is the declared purpose of the Sacrament. For example, the intention of Holy Confession is to receive forgiveness of sins and admission into the covenant community.
2. Meaning: Baptism means commissioning of one's identification with the death and resurrection of Jesus.

3. Words of Institution: Words of Institution in the Holy Communion are: "When the sinless one, of his own will, chose to suffer death for us sinners, he took bread in his holy hands. He gave thanks, blessed, sanctified and broke it and gave it to his Apostles saying - take, eat, this is my body given for you. This do in remembrance of me. In the same way, he took the cup. He gave thanks, blessed, sanctified and gave it to his Apostles saying drink this all of you. This is my blood of the new covenant which is shed for the many for the forgiveness of sin."

4. Matter: Water is the matter used in Baptism. Bread and wine are used as material means in the Holy Communion.

5. Celebrant: The celebrant is the ordained minister of the Church.

Teaching Strategies and Activities:

Teacher explains the meaning of the word "Sacrament" and the five essential elements. Discuss the spiritual significance of the Sacraments in Christian life. The faith of the participants is equally important. Emphasize that the spiritual truth carries meaning only out of the inward spiritual experience in real life situations.

Review Questions:

1. What is a Sacrament? Explain the meaning and significance of sacraments in Christian life. (Write 4 or 5 sentences)
2. What are the five essential elements of a sacrament? Write 1 or 2 sentences for each.

Conclusion:

Sacraments become means to receive God's blessings and inspires the recipient to remain faithful and committed in Christian life. Our life must be a visible sign of the spiritual experience.

[Chart is followed: *Foundation and Vision*. Five Essential Elements of all Sacraments are listed in the table].

FIVE ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF A SACRAMENT

Sacrament	Baptism	Confirmation	Confession	Communion
Intention	Testimony and allegiance to the discipleship of Christ	Ordination to the priesthood of believers	Receive forgiveness for sins	Become partakers of the atoning death of Christ
Meaning	Incorporating into the Body of Christ	Anointing of the Holy Spirit	Receiving forgiveness before approaching the Holy table	Identification with the death and resurrection of Jesus
Words of Institution (Scriptural Bases)	Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Mat.28 :19	Anoint Aaron and his sons and consecrate them so that they may serve me as priests. Exodus 30:30	It we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness 1 John 1:9	“Do this in remembrance of me” Luke 22:19
Matter	Water	Mooron	The words of confession in the worship book	Bread and Wine
Celebrant	Priest / Bishop	Priest / Bishop	Priest / Bishop	Priest / Bishop
Type	Dominical	Part of baptism	Part of Communion	Dominical

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Lesson 2

HOLY BAPTISM AND CONFIRMATION

Aim:

To devote ourselves on the spiritual meaning and significance of Holy Baptism and Confirmation as Sacraments.

Bible Verse: Romans 6:4

By our baptism, then, we were buried with him and shared his death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from death by the glorious power of the Father, so also we might live a new life.

Main Ideas:

Baptism is one of the Dominical Sacraments. The practice of baptizing children varies from Church tradition to tradition. In the Mar Thoma Church, both infant baptism and adult baptism are being practiced.

The Aramaic word 'Mamodisa' means "immersion or washing". Its equivalent in Greek is 'Baptisma'. The Mar Thoma Church through its long association with the Aramaic Syriac speaking Nestorian and Syrian Churches continues to use the term 'Mamodisa'.

Someone always administers baptism. It is not taking a bath. However, it is a cleansing process, that is, by faith; a cleansing act is done by the Holy Spirit. The minister who administers the baptism only declares that spiritual truth.

Baptism of John the Baptist

The New Testament evidence suggests that the Christian baptism followed the baptism of John the Baptist, incorporating its idea of repentance and deliverance from wrath and adding those of union with Christ and admission to the Christian Church. It is an undeniable fact that there is a link, if not a recognizable continuity, between Christian baptism and the baptism that was initiated by John the Baptist. For John's baptism, see Mark 1:4-5; Luke 3:7; Acts 18:25, 19:1-7.

One Baptism

In Ephesians 4:4, we read, "One Spirit", "One Hope", "One Lord", "One Faith", "One Baptism". A second baptism is discouraged in the pages of the New Testament itself, Hebrews 6:4-6. The explicit reference to baptism in the Nicene Creed "we acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins" speaks of the unrepeated efficacy of baptism. The Mar Thoma Church does not insist on rebaptism of those who have been baptized earlier in any Church denomination if the baptism was administered in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Anointing with "Mooron" will only be done for confirmation.

Confirmation

The latter part of the Baptismal service is called Confirmation. Here the celebrant anoints the candidate with *Mooron* (consecrated oil - Holy Oil). This consecrated oil symbolizes the anointing of the Holy Spirit. In this sacramental moment the church prays for the gift of the Holy Spirit. The experience of receiving the Holy Spirit is to be an ongoing

experience in the life of a Christian. In the Old Testament the "Mooron" is used for the ordination of the priests (Exodus 30:30). Baptismal anointing is to signify the candidate's ordination to the priesthood of believers. The candidate thus becomes God's anointed.

Infant Baptism

The idea of infant baptism must be understood in the total context of Christian family. The situation in the early Church warranted the practice of adult baptism. The biblical reference to "household" baptisms implies that the infants/children and servants were also included in "oikoforomula" of baptism in the early Church (Acts. 16:31). By the end of the second century, the practice of infant baptism became very popular.

Baptism: - A Spiritual Service

Baptism is not a meaningless ritual. It is a sacrament, which communicates to the participant a spiritual truth. The truth in this case is the Christian faith that Jesus Christ came to the world and gave His life for our sins and whosever would confess him as Lord and Savior shall live a new qualitative life and inherit the life eternal. Baptism is our identification with His death and resurrection (Rom. 6:3-7). It is the washing away of our sins by His vicarious death. If this spiritual meaning is not understood and accepted in life, baptism becomes a meaningless ritual.

Baptism leads one into the fellowship of the Church where one learns the deeper meaning of one's Christian life. Through baptism one is sealed to eternal life and becomes a member of the family of God (Ephesians 2:19).

Teaching Strategies and Activities:

Students read the Bible verses on baptism noted above. Discuss the characteristics of baptism. Help the students understand the spiritual truth.

Review Questions:

1. What is Baptism or 'Mammodisa', as practiced in the Mar Thoma Church. (Write 3 or 4 sentences)
2. Explain Confirmation as one of the sacraments. How does the priest administer this ritual? (Write 4 or 5 sentences)

Conclusion:

Baptism is one's identification with the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

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Lesson 3

CONFESSION AND HOLY COMMUNION

Aim

To experience the Healing Power of receiving Holy Communion after Confession. To recognize the different segments of the St. James Liturgy used for Holy Communion.

Bible Verse: 1 Corinthians 11:28-29

So then, everyone should examine himself first, and then eat the bread and drink from the cup. For if he does not recognize the meaning of the Lord's body when he eats the bread and drinks from the cup, he brings judgment on himself as he eats and drinks.

Main Ideas:

The Holy Communion is one of the Dominical Sacraments. It is regularly celebrated in the Church on Sundays and feast days. The different terms used in Christian traditions for this sacrament carry various emphases. The Aramaic word 'Qurbana' means 'offering'. 'Holy Communion' denotes 'sacred unity' of the participants. 'Lord's Supper' points out Jesus' initiation for first Qurbana and the celebration of heavenly joy by sharing the resources. 'Eucharist' indicates 'good grace'

bestowed upon the participants. By participating in the Holy Qurbana, we are getting ready to lead a sacrificial life with joy of the Holy Spirit for the benefit of others.

For a brief reference, read 1 Corinthians 11:20-34, Mark 14:22-26, Matthew 26:17-30, Luke 22:14-20, John 6:35-65 and 13:130.

The Confessional Prayer is one of the important parts of our liturgy of Holy Communion.

The Liturgy (*Taksa*) of the Holy Qurbana:

The Mar Thoma Church is using the St. James liturgy in the Holy Qurbana. There are other liturgies of the Christian Church from which our forefathers incorporated prayers from time to time. St. James liturgy includes the following segments:

1. Anticomunion: The curtain that separates the altar from the *baikala* is removed at this time. Then follows the reading of Epistle, Gospel, a group of prayers, Nicene Creed and collection of offertory.
2. Sermon: Preaching of the Word of God.
3. Confessional Prayer: Confession is a sacrament that is administered before receiving the Holy Communion. Through this prayer, we are asking God's forgiveness for our sins. It is repeated after the priest. After the general confessional prayer, the priest declares the Absolution.
4. Kiss of Peace: Believers share peace and love with one another through the kiss of peace.
5. First Blessing: Communication of blessing is in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.
6. Words of Institution: The elements (bread and wine) are consecrated and sanctified. The prayer of consecration is very important.

7. Prayer of *Anamnesis* (remembrance): It is a recall on Jesus' act of salvation through earthly life, death and resurrection.
8. Prayer of Epiclesis: It is the prayer to the Holy Spirit to sanctify the bread and wine.
9. Intercession: Through the intercession we remember ordained clergies, evangelists, believers, the forefathers and foremothers, state leaders, etc.
10. Second Blessing.
11. Breaking of bread.
12. Third Blessing.
13. Participation.
14. Final Blessing: There are three component elements in the final blessing. The faithful are commended to the grace and blessing of the Holy and gracious Trinity and are given the assurance that the Holy Trinity will forgive their sins and comfort their souls. The last part is a prayer of request to the congregation for their prayer and support in the life of the celebrant. The faithful are dismissed with the greeting that they may be "Filled with gladness and rejoicing".

Some Churches, including the Roman Catholic Church, believe that the bread and wine are transformed to become the body and the blood of Christ during the communion. Some western protestant churches see it as symbolic for remembering the Last Supper. The Mar Thoma Church doctrine is different from both of these, i.e. Mar Thoma Church believes in the spiritual presence during the Holy Qurbana and the change taking place in the recipient. Christ gives himself in an inexplicable way. It produces results when one receives it in faith. Holy Spirit is working and transforming the recipient.

Teaching Strategies and Activities:

This lesson aims at getting to know the content of the Eucharistic (related to Holy Qurbana) liturgy we use. Students bring *the Mar Thoma Church Order of Worship Prayers and Hymns* and note the various terms (subtitles) used in both English and Malayalam. Discuss the significance of public confession in our Church, as it differs from the Catholic and Orthodox Church practices of private confession before the priest.

Review Questions:

1. Explain the St. James liturgy as used by the Mar Thoma Church in 2 or 3 sentences.
2. Select any two or three segments of St. James liturgy and write two to three sentences each.
3. On the issue of remembering or transforming the substance (bread and wine), what are the teachings of the Mar Thoma Church?

Materials:

The Mar Thoma Church: Order of Worship, Prayers and Hymns, Pages 37-90.

Conclusion:

In the celebration of Holy Communion, Christ gathers, teaches and nourishes the Church. It is Christ who invites us to the table and presides over it. We are expected to attend the Holy Communion service with reverence and get actively involved in the prayers. If so, we can experience the Healing Power of the Holy Spirit that prompts us to witness our Lord throughout our daily life.

The Different Versions of the Cross

The LATIN cross, formed by two straight lines that intersect is the type of cross most often used.

The CALVARY cross has three steps beneath it that stand for faith, hope and love. You may find this cross on the altar in your church's sanctuary.

The CELTIC cross was taken from Ireland to the island of Iona in the Hebrides by Columba, a sixth century missionary who started a monastery there.

The ANCHOR cross, which originated in Egypt was used by Christians who met in the underground burial chambers known as catacombs.

The JERUSALEM or CRUSADER'S cross has four small crosses between the main arms of the cross. Together they symbolize the five wounds of Jesus. Godfrey de Bouillon (c.1058-1100) was elected the first ruler of Jerusalem after the Crusaders won the city in 1099.

The MALTESE cross, made of four spears that point toward one another, dates back to the time of the Crusades. The order of the Knights Hospitallers also known as the Knights of Malta because they were headquartered on that island made this cross their emblem.

The CROSS and CROWN based on the words of Revelation 2: 10 symbolizes the crown that those who are faithful to the crucified Jesus will receive in the life after death.

The CROSS and TRIANGLE is often found in needlework art in the church such as altar cloths and kneelers. The triangle symbolizes Christ's part in the Trinity Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

The Cross Crosslet composed of four Latin crosses that are joined represents the spreading of Christianity to the four corners of the earth.



The cross on the Mar Thoma Church Logo has been evolved from this last version, among several, with smoother curves at the extremities.

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Lesson 4

CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE

Aim:

To be aware of the Christian principles and cultural norms rooted in Christian Marriage as a Sacrament

Bible Verse: Matthew 19:4-5

Jesus answered, "Haven't you read the Scripture that says that in the beginning the Creator made people male and female? And God said, 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother unite with his wife, and the two will become one.'"

Main Ideas:

Christian Marriage is one of the three optional Sacraments. This Sacrament is optional because marriage is a personal choice to the Church members. The Church accepts marriage as a Sacrament because it is a Divine call. Every spouse is called by God to lead a Christian family life. Christian family life is a miniature form and sign of God's Kingdom. It is the primary space where we experience various aspects of Divine characteristics and traits like God's love, care, sacrifice, respect and right relationship. Our responsibility is to extend these kingdom concerns to the wider community.

In our Church understanding, marriage is not just a contract but a covenant between two parties. Marriage is a status bestowed by God. Bible enforces it because it is God's plan. God only founded the establishment of Marriage in Eden (Genesis 1:27-31; 2:24). Husband-wife relationship must reflect God's relationship to Israel and also Christ's relation to the Church. Marital relationship is sacred and mysterious. Mutual submission and loyalty controlled by divine love and concern makes it holy. Hence Jesus taught about the indissolubility of marriage (Matt 19:1-12; Mk 10:1-12). The Church accepts the Matrimony as a sacrament.

The order of service to administer Christian Marriage proclaims the sanctity of Marriage Relationship. It consists of two parts. First part is the **blessing of the rings** . It is the service of betrothal. The celebrant on behalf of the Church and as God's representative adorns the couple with the rings offering special prayers for the blessing of God. The couple's rings symbolize their mutual sealing for each other and their mutual responsibility to live together.

The second part of the service is the **service of consecration** , which is the blessing with Crown. The blessing of the Almighty is invoked on the bride and the bridegroom. During this service the candidates have to clasp their right hands when the priest reads the gospel. This gospel reading (Matthew 19:1-6) is symbolic that Christ affirms the sanctity of the marriage bond. The Epistle we read is Ephesians 5:22-28. The service of coronation or crown is another act of the second part. It is significant as it represents the bestowal of the crown of righteousness upon the couple. An Indian custom is accepted in Christian Marriage service. The bridegroom ties up a diminutive cross, named *thali* , around the neck of the Bride and places a bridal cloth on her head. Although the *thali* is used in Hindu weddings, the symbol of the cross on the *thali* makes

it distinctively Christian. The atoning death of Christ is remembered in keeping the couple's mutual faithfulness and loyalty. The believing community prays together for God's grace to keep the couple's married life sacred.

Review Questions:

1. Discuss the Christian marriage as a covenant, more than a contract. Write 3 or 4 sentences.
2. What are the two parts for the order of service in a Christian wedding? Write 2 or 3 sentences on each.

Conclusion:

The union of a man and a woman in the Christian marriage is a mystical relationship. Married life is a Divine call. God chooses every spouse for His own purpose. The Church recognizes the married relationship as a Sacrament because it highlights the biblical teaching that God, by His grace, established and sustained the family relationship upon the earth. Our responsibility is to continue this understanding of Christian Marriage from one generation to the next.

GRADE EIGHT CHRISTIAN SACRAMENTS

Lesson 5

ORDINATION AND UNCTION

Aim:

To become knowledgeable with the meaning and significance of Ordination and Unction as Sacraments

Bible Verse: 1 Timothy 4:14

Do not neglect the spiritual gift that is in you, which was given to you when the prophets spoke and the elders laid their hands on you.

Main Ideas:

Ordination is an optional Sacrament. God calls certain people to do special ministry in the Church. The ordination assures the anointment of the candidate by the Holy Spirit to accomplish the special ministry of shepherding, preaching, teaching and administering the Sacraments. It is not a private act. Rather the congregation has to recognize the candidate's call from God and has to pray for the bestowal of Divine Grace upon the candidate. The Church members accept them by their prayers and apostles' laying of hands (Gen 48:14; Lev 9:22; Num. 27:18; Deut 34:9; Mark 5:23; 10:13; Luke 24:50; Acts 13:3; 1 Timothy 4:14; 2 Timothy 1:6). Ordination is a specific task undertaken in obedience to Christ's call and by the approval

of the Church members. The purpose of ordination is the edification of the Church. Laying on of hands by the bishop upon the candidate represents the continuation of the apostolic authority from the Ancient Churches to the current ages. Jesus Christ sent the apostles for teaching, preaching and baptizing the people and thus to continue His ministry. The Patriarchs, our former bishops and overseers in the ancient Church continued this laying on of hands as a sign of bestowing the gift of Holy Spirit to do the ministry with *Charis* (Grace).

In the act of ordination, the Church sets its seal on its commission in the name of the Head of the Church. The service of ordination is offered through spoken words and actions as an experience of spiritual empowerment. This service is conducted always in the middle of the Holy Communion Service. The celebrant, the Metropolitan or the Episcopa, reads out a declaration of the faith of the Church (*Analogia*). Then the candidate draws the sign of the cross against his name in the register and puts his signature under the cross, expressing his agreement with the faith the Church declared. As an expression of his dedication to the Lord's ministry among the people, the candidate is to get his hair removed from the top of his head in a circular shape the previous day and in the form of a cross during the ordination service. Special dress (*Casak* and *Kapha*) and girdle are given to them after special prayers as symbols of authority to administer Sacraments and of sacrificial service.

Uction is the Sacrament of anointing the Sick with Holy Oil (*Moorom*). In the Old Testament, we see that Holy oil is used for the coronation of Kings and commissioning of prophets. For healing the sick, Apostle James directs elders to anoint the sick with holy oil and pray for them (James 5:11-16). Jesus healed many sick people and declared his ministry as healing the sick also (Lk 4:19; Mk 1:24-45). Jesus brought back the healed

persons into their community with good social relationship, from which they were segregated earlier. Jesus commissioned his disciples to heal the sick (Matthew 10:8; Lk 10:8, 9). The Lord's final commission announces the healing of the sick by his followers' laying on of hands upon them (Mk 16:18). During the time of apostles, healing happened through the anointment of the sick. Anointing the sick was accepted as one of the sacraments in the 13th century. The order of service for anointing the sick followed by the Mar Thoma Church has two parts: Healing service for the sick and service for critically ill patients. Healing the sick includes both the bodily and the spiritual healing with forgiveness of sins. The Church community prays together to pour the power of the Holy Spirit upon the sick.

Sacraments are visible signs to receive God's unseen blessings. The material elements are used in the celebration of Sacraments as means to accept blessings from God. The whole believing community prays together by chanting the liturgies and follows the Church accepted practices (rites). Thus, the participants receive God's grace as gift of God.

Review Questions:

1. What are the different forms of ministry? How does the Church assign responsibilities to the ordained pastor?
2. What is Uction? Discuss it as an optional sacrament in Churches. Write three or four sentences.

Conclusion:

Ordination and Uction are two optional Sacraments. The Church assigns ordained ministers like deacons, presbyters or priests, episcopas or overseers and Metropolitan. The anointing of the sick by holy oil is intended to continue the healing ministry began by Jesus Christ. Physical, mental and spiritual relief from pain is God's offer through the bestowal of Holy Spirit upon the sick.