



# Encounter Christ in the Sacrament

## What is sacramental grace and who needs it?

Sacramental grace is a specific grace that is attached to a sacrament that helps us to live out what the sacrament signifies.

First of all, let's make sure we understand what grace is. "Grace" literally means "free" and it signifies that grace is a "gift freely given." But what is it a gift of? Grace is the gift of God's presence in our souls. When we talk about having a relationship with God through grace, we're not talking about a relationship with a distant God who separates Himself from us. We're talking about an incredible intimacy in which God dwells in our very hearts.

A sacrament is defined as "a sacred sign instituted by Christ that gives grace." A sacramental sign is very special in that Jesus actually acts through the sign to bring about what it signifies.

Specifically, Marriage is a sacramental sign of God's love for His Church. How does Jesus bring this about through marriage? First, through the sacrament the married couple enters into a vocation – a special "school of love," where they learn how to love each other more and more like Christ loved the Church, as a complete gift of self. They build an environment of love and welcome new life into that environment. They then love their children and, through their love, bring their children to God's love, specifically by bringing them to the Sacraments, but also by introducing them to a lived relationship with Jesus.

The sacramental grace that comes from the Sacrament of Holy Matrimony is really Jesus' presence in our marriage, strengthening us to love our spouses and children with His love. Jesus empowers us to go beyond the limits of our human love and strengthens us to give ourselves to our loved ones completely

and without reserve. When we love with Jesus' love through the sacramental grace of Holy Matrimony, our love can never be exhausted.

So who needs the sacramental grace of Holy Matrimony? Every married couple who truly wants to live a Christian marriage needs this free gift from God.

There are a number of ways you can tap into the sacramental grace – Jesus' presence in your marriage.

1. Frequent the Sacraments of Reconciliation and Holy Eucharist – the two ongoing sources of grace that Jesus gave us to renew our relationship with Him.
2. Pray every day; by yourself, together as a couple, and together as a family.
3. Take an active role in preparing your children to receive the Sacraments.
4. Be open to children in your marriage. Let your love be life-giving and let your marriage be selfless and generous toward new life.
5. Strive every day to "notch up" your selfless love for your spouse and for your children.

Most importantly, be aware that your marriage is a living Sacrament – God's presence in the world. Nurture your relationship with Jesus within your marriage and strive to cooperate with Him to be able to love as He loves.

