THE DAILY BREAD

The Fiat of the Beloved



Called and Configured

The Sacraments

A FORMATION BOOK BY

Kendall Peterson

The Everyday Apostle

THE DAILY BREAD

Fiat of the Beloved

Called and Configured

The Sacraments and the Woman You Are Becoming

✦ ✦ ✦

A Daily Bread Formation Book

The Everyday Apostle

INTRODUCTION

More Than You Think They Are

Most Catholic women receive the sacraments as a matter of course, part of the furniture of a Catholic life, the Mass attended each Sunday, the children baptized, confession made from time to time, and they receive them, often, as routine, familiar rituals performed more or less attentively, without quite believing, in the depths of the heart, what the Church says these sacraments actually are. For the Church makes an astonishing claim about the sacraments, that they are not mere symbols or beautiful ceremonies but real channels of grace, actual encounters with God that do what they signify, giving the very grace of God to the woman who receives them. And the difference between receiving a sacrament as a routine and receiving it as what the Church says it is changes everything.

This book is about what the sacraments actually are and about receiving them as if a woman truly believes it. It will show that the sacraments are real instruments of grace, not symbols of it; what each of the seven sacraments is and does; and how, received with faith, they are not routines to be gotten through but encounters with God that form a woman over a lifetime into the person she is becoming. The question at the heart of it is simple and searching: does a woman receive the sacraments as if she actually believes what they are? Understanding what they are, and learning to receive them as such, opens the sacraments as the great channels of grace they were given to be.

From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. — John 1:16

The Scripture says that from Christ's fullness a woman receives grace upon grace, and the sacraments are the chief way that grace reaches her, the channels through which Christ pours His own life into her soul. This book takes up the sacraments one by one: what a sacrament is, a real instrument of grace; Baptism and Confirmation, which make a woman a daughter of God and a bearer of the faith; the Eucharist, the source and summit of it all; Reconciliation, which restores her to God and to herself; Matrimony and Holy Orders, the vocational sacraments; the Anointing of the Sick, grace for suffering and dying; and the disposition that receives them as if she believes what they are. By the end, a woman will see the sacraments as more than she thought they were, and will know how to receive them as the encounters with God they truly are.

CHAPTER ONE

What a Sacrament Is

A Real Channel of Grace

Before considering the sacraments one by one, a woman must understand what a sacrament actually is, for the whole of how she receives them depends on this, and the Church's claim about the sacraments is far greater than most women realize. A sacrament is not a mere symbol or a beautiful ceremony that reminds a woman of grace, but a real and effective channel of grace, an instrument through which God actually gives the grace it signifies, so that the sacrament truly does what it represents. Understanding what a sacrament is, a real channel of grace and not a mere symbol, is the foundation of a woman's whole sacramental life.

I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. — Ezekiel 36:26

Not a Symbol but an Instrument

A sacrament is not merely a symbol that points to grace or reminds a woman of it, but an actual instrument that gives the grace it signifies, so that in the sacrament God really does what the sign represents. There is a crucial difference between a symbol, which only points to or reminds of something, and an instrument, which actually accomplishes something, and the sacraments are instruments, not mere symbols, for they do not merely signify grace but actually confer it, actually give the grace they represent to the woman who receives them. This means that when a woman receives a sacrament, grace is really given, really poured into her soul, not merely represented or remembered, so that the sacrament is an actual encounter in which God does what the sign signifies, giving His grace through the sacred action. The woman who understands a sacrament as an instrument and not a symbol knows that in receiving it she actually receives grace, not a reminder of grace but the thing itself. Not a symbol but an instrument is what a sacrament is, actually giving the grace it signifies rather than merely pointing to it, so that when a woman receives a sacrament grace is really poured into her soul and God truly does what the sign represents.

Grace That Actually Changes You

The grace a sacrament gives is not a mere feeling or idea but a real divine life that actually changes a woman, giving her a new heart, transforming her soul, so that the sacraments really work in her the change they signify. Grace is the very life of God shared with the soul, and the grace the sacraments give is this real divine life, which actually transforms a woman, cleansing her, strengthening her, giving her a new heart and a new spirit as God promised, so that the sacraments do not merely symbolize a change but actually effect it in her soul. This means a woman who receives the sacraments is being really changed by them, really given the divine life, really transformed over time by the

grace they pour into her, so that her sacramental life is the actual means of her transformation and not a set of empty rituals. The woman who understands that sacramental grace actually changes her receives the sacraments as the real means of her transformation, the divine life really given and really at work in her. Grace that actually changes you is what the sacraments give, a real divine life that transforms the soul rather than a mere feeling or idea, so that the sacraments actually effect the change they signify, giving a woman a new heart and really transforming her over time.

Encounters With Christ

The sacraments are not impersonal mechanisms but personal encounters with Christ, who acts in each of them, so that in receiving a sacrament a woman meets Christ Himself, who gives His grace through the sacred sign. It is Christ who acts in the sacraments, Christ who baptizes, Christ who forgives, Christ who gives Himself in the Eucharist, so that the sacraments are not impersonal channels but personal meetings with the Lord, who comes to a woman in each of them, giving His grace and acting in her life through the sacred action. This means every sacrament is an encounter with Christ, a real meeting with the Lord who comes to give Himself and His grace, so that a woman who receives a sacrament is not performing a ritual but meeting her Lord, who acts in the sacrament to pour His life into her. The woman who understands the sacraments as encounters with Christ receives them as meetings with the Lord Himself, who comes in each to give His grace. Encounters with Christ is what the sacraments are, personal meetings with the Lord who acts in each of them rather than impersonal mechanisms, so that in receiving a sacrament a woman meets Christ Himself, who comes to give His grace through the sacred sign.

CHAPTER TWO

Made His Own

Baptism and Confirmation

The sacramental life begins with Baptism and Confirmation, the sacraments that make a woman a daughter of God and a bearer of His Spirit, establishing her very identity as a Christian and commissioning her for the mission that identity carries. These are not merely the rituals that made her a Catholic as an infant but the sacraments that define who she is, a daughter of God, a member of Christ, a temple of the Holy Spirit, and a commissioned bearer of the faith, so that understanding Baptism and Confirmation is understanding her deepest identity.

You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses. — Acts 1:8

Baptism Makes You a Daughter

Baptism does not merely wash away sin but makes a woman a daughter of God, a new creation, a member of Christ's body, giving her a new identity and a new life that is the foundation of everything else. In Baptism a woman is reborn, cleansed of sin, made a child of God, incorporated into Christ and His Church, given the divine life of grace, so that Baptism is not a mere naming ceremony but the sacrament that makes her who she is, a daughter of God sharing His life. This identity, given in Baptism, is the foundation of a woman's whole Christian life, for everything she is and does as a Christian flows from this, that she is a daughter of God, reborn and made His own, a new creation sharing the divine life. The woman who understands that Baptism makes her a daughter knows her deepest identity is this, a child of God made His own in Baptism, the foundation of all she is. Baptism makes you a daughter, not merely washing away sin but reborning a woman as a child of God, a new creation and a member of Christ's body, so that Baptism gives her the identity that is the foundation of her whole Christian life, a daughter of God sharing His life.

Confirmation Commissions You

Confirmation completes Baptism by sealing a woman with the fullness of the Holy Spirit and commissioning her as a bearer and witness of the faith, so that she is not a passive recipient of Christianity but an active, Spirit-filled bearer of it. In Confirmation a woman receives the fullness of the Holy Spirit, is sealed and strengthened, and is commissioned, like the apostles at Pentecost who received power to be witnesses, to bear the faith and to live it as an active member of the Church's mission. This means a woman is not meant to be a passive recipient of the faith, simply receiving what the Church gives, but a commissioned bearer of it, sealed with the Spirit and sent to witness, so that Confirmation gives her an apostolic identity, a share in the Church's mission. The woman who understands that Confirmation commissions her receives her identity as an active, Spirit-filled bearer of the faith, not a passive recipient but a commissioned witness. Confirmation commissions you, sealing a woman with the fullness of the Holy Spirit and sending her as a bearer and witness of the faith, so that she is not a passive recipient of Christianity but an active, Spirit-filled bearer, given an apostolic identity and a share in the Church's mission.

An Identity to Live Into

The identity given in Baptism and Confirmation, daughter of God and commissioned bearer of the faith, is not a static label but an identity to live into, a truth about who a woman is that she is called to grow into and to live out through her whole life. A woman does not merely possess the identity given in these sacraments as a fact on a baptismal certificate but is called to live into it, to become more fully the daughter of God and the Spirit-filled witness she was made in Baptism and Confirmation, growing into her identity through a lifetime of grace. This means the sacramental identity is a calling as well as a gift, a truth about who she is that summons her to live accordingly, to become what she already is, so that a woman spends her life growing into the daughter and apostle she was made in these foundational sacraments. The woman who sees her baptismal identity as one to live into grows throughout her life into the daughter of God and bearer of the faith she was made, living out the truth of who she is. An identity to live into is what Baptism and Confirmation give, not a static label but a truth about who a woman is that she is called to grow into and live out, so that she spends her life becoming more fully the daughter of God and commissioned witness she was made in these sacraments.

CHAPTER THREE

The Source and the Summit

The Eucharist

At the center of the sacramental life stands the Eucharist, which the Church calls the source and summit of the Christian life, for in it a woman receives not merely grace but the very Author of grace, Christ Himself, truly present, given to her as food for her soul. The Eucharist is not one sacrament among the others but the center from which they all flow and to which they all point, the real presence of Christ given as the food of eternal life, so that understanding the Eucharist is understanding the heart of a woman's whole sacramental life.

I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats of this bread will live forever. — John 6:51

The Real Presence

The Eucharist is not a symbol of Christ but the real presence of Christ Himself, truly, substantially present under the appearances of bread and wine, so that in receiving the Eucharist a woman receives not a sign of Christ but Christ Himself. The Church teaches, on the words of Christ Himself, that the Eucharist is truly His body and blood, that under

the appearances of bread and wine He is really, substantially present, not symbolically but actually, so that the Eucharist is Christ Himself, given to the woman who receives Him. This real presence is the astonishing heart of the Eucharist, that a woman receives not a reminder of Christ, not a symbol, but the living Christ truly present, taken into herself as the food of her soul, so that in Communion she is united to Christ Himself. The woman who believes in the real presence receives the Eucharist as Christ Himself, truly present and truly given, not a symbol but the living Lord. The real presence is the heart of the Eucharist, Christ truly and substantially present under the appearances of bread and wine rather than merely symbolized, so that in receiving the Eucharist a woman receives not a sign of Christ but the living Christ Himself, given as the food of her soul.

Source and Summit

The Eucharist is called the source and summit of the Christian life because everything flows from it and everything points to it, the center of the whole sacramental life and the goal toward which all grace tends, so that the Eucharist is the heart of a woman's life with God. As the source, the Eucharist is the font from which grace flows into a woman's life, the living bread that nourishes her soul, the center from which her whole Christian life draws its strength; as the summit, it is the high point toward which all the other sacraments and all her devotion lead, the fullest union with Christ available on earth. This means the Eucharist is not merely one practice among many but the center and crown of a woman's life with God, the source of her strength and the summit of her union with Christ, so that her whole sacramental life revolves around it. The woman who understands the Eucharist as source and summit centers her life on it, drawing her strength from it and directing her devotion toward it as the heart of her life with God. Source and summit is what the Eucharist is, the font from which grace flows and the goal toward which all grace tends, the center of the whole sacramental life, so that the Eucharist is the heart of a woman's life with God, both the source of her strength and the summit of her union with Christ.

Union With Christ

In receiving the Eucharist a woman is united to Christ most intimately, taking Him into herself, becoming one with Him, so that Communion is the deepest union with Christ possible in this life, a real joining of the woman to her Lord. The very name Communion speaks of union, for in the Eucharist a woman does not merely receive grace but receives Christ Himself into her very body and soul, uniting with Him intimately, becoming one with Him, so that Communion is a real and intimate union with the Lord, Christ dwelling in her and she in Him. This union is the great gift of the Eucharist, that a woman is joined to Christ so intimately, taking Him into herself as food, so that He abides in her

and transforms her through the closest union possible on earth, drawing her into His own life. The woman who receives the Eucharist as union with Christ comes to Communion to be joined to her Lord, taking Him into herself and being transformed by the most intimate union with Him. Union with Christ is the great gift of the Eucharist, the woman taking Christ Himself into her body and soul and becoming one with Him, so that Communion is the deepest and most intimate union with the Lord possible in this life, Christ abiding in her and transforming her.

CHAPTER FOUR

Restored and Made New

The Sacrament of Reconciliation

Among the sacraments, Reconciliation holds a particular place as the sacrament of mercy, in which a woman who has sinned is restored to God and to herself, her sins truly forgiven, her soul truly cleansed, so that she is made new and set free. Far from being a grim obligation or an outdated practice, Reconciliation is the sacrament that heals a woman's deepest wounds, the wound of sin, restoring her to God's friendship and to her own true self, so that understanding it rightly reveals it as one of the greatest gifts the Church offers.

If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them. — John 20:23

Real Forgiveness

In Reconciliation a woman's sins are not merely declared forgiven in a general way but really and personally forgiven, truly washed away by Christ acting through the priest, so that she receives not a vague assurance but a real and certain absolution. Christ gave His Church the authority to forgive sins, telling the apostles that whosever sins they forgave would be forgiven, and so in Reconciliation a woman's sins are really forgiven, truly absolved by Christ acting through the priest, not merely hoped to be forgiven but actually and certainly forgiven in the sacrament. This real forgiveness is a great gift, for a woman does not have to wonder whether her sins are forgiven, to hope vaguely in God's mercy, but receives a real and certain absolution, her sins actually washed away, so that she can know with certainty that she has been forgiven. The woman who understands the real forgiveness of Reconciliation comes to it to receive a certain absolution, her sins actually forgiven rather than vaguely hoped away. Real forgiveness is the gift of Reconciliation, a woman's sins truly and personally absolved by Christ acting through the priest rather

than merely declared forgiven in general, so that she receives a real and certain absolution and can know with certainty that she has been forgiven.

Restored to God and to Yourself

Reconciliation restores a woman not only to God, repairing the friendship that sin had damaged, but also to herself, healing the self-division and self-estrangement that sin creates, so that she is made whole as well as forgiven. Sin wounds a woman's relationship with God and also her relationship with herself, dividing her against herself, alienating her from her own true identity as a daughter of God, and Reconciliation heals both, restoring her to God's friendship and to her own true self, so that she emerges not only forgiven but made whole. This restoration to herself is a hidden gift of the sacrament, for a woman burdened by sin is estranged from who she truly is, and in being forgiven and cleansed she is restored to her true identity, reconciled with God and with herself, made whole again. The woman who understands Reconciliation as restoring her to herself comes to it to be made whole, healed of the self-division of sin and restored to her true identity as a daughter of God. Restored to God and to yourself is what Reconciliation accomplishes, repairing the friendship with God that sin damaged and also healing the self-estrangement sin creates, so that a woman emerges not only forgiven but made whole, reconciled with God and restored to her own true self.

Why Regular Confession Matters

Because Reconciliation restores and renews a woman so deeply, regular confession is not an optional extra for the especially devout but a vital practice for any woman serious about her life with God, keeping her cleansed, renewed, and growing. Regular confession matters not because a woman must obsess over sin but because it keeps her soul cleansed and renewed, addresses the sins and faults that accumulate, provides grace to grow in holiness, and keeps her honest and humble before God, so that it is a vital practice for serious spiritual life and not a mere occasional duty. A woman who confesses regularly is kept in a state of ongoing renewal, her sins not allowed to accumulate, her soul regularly cleansed and strengthened, her growth in holiness supported by the grace of the sacrament, so that regular Reconciliation is one of the most important practices of a serious interior life. The woman who understands why regular confession matters makes it a regular practice, keeping her soul cleansed and renewed and supporting her growth in holiness. Why regular confession matters is that Reconciliation restores and renews a woman so deeply that regular use of it keeps her cleansed, renewed, and growing, so that it is not an optional extra for the especially devout but a vital practice for any woman serious about her life with God.

CHAPTER FIVE

Vocation and Grace

Matrimony and Holy Orders

Two of the seven sacraments, Matrimony and Holy Orders, are sacraments of vocation, consecrating a person for a particular state of life and giving the grace to live it, so that they are not only moments but lifelong sources of grace for the vocations they establish. These two sacraments configure a person for service and mission in a particular way, Matrimony for the vocation of marriage and family, Holy Orders for the priesthood that makes the other sacraments possible, so that understanding them reveals how the sacramental life extends into the whole of a person's vocation.

The two shall become one flesh. This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. — Ephesians 5:31-32

Matrimony as a Source of Grace

For a woman called to marriage, Matrimony is not merely a wedding but a sacrament, a lifelong source of grace that consecrates the union and gives the spouses the grace to love and to live their vocation, so that marriage is a channel of grace and not only a commitment. The sacrament of Matrimony makes the union of husband and wife a holy thing, an image of Christ's love for the Church, and gives the spouses a lasting source of grace for their marriage, the grace to love each other faithfully, to bear the burdens of married life, to raise children, to grow in holiness together, so that marriage is a continual source of grace and a path to holiness. This means that for a woman called to it, marriage is not merely a human arrangement but a sacrament, a vocation consecrated by God and supplied with the grace to live it, a path of holiness and a channel through which grace flows into her life and her family. The woman called to marriage who understands Matrimony as a source of grace lives her marriage as a sacrament, drawing on its grace to love and to grow in holiness. Matrimony as a source of grace means that for a woman called to marriage, the sacrament is not merely a wedding but a lifelong channel of grace that consecrates the union and gives the spouses the grace to love and live their vocation, a path of holiness and not only a commitment.

The Priesthood That Serves

Holy Orders consecrates men as priests to serve the Church, and though a woman is not called to this sacrament, it is vital to her sacramental life, for it is the priesthood that makes the other sacraments possible, the ministry through which Christ gives her the

Eucharist and absolution. The sacrament of Holy Orders configures a man to Christ the priest to serve the Church, and this priestly service is not remote from a woman's life but essential to it, for it is through the priesthood that she receives the Eucharist, that her sins are absolved, that the sacraments are made available to her, so that the priesthood serves and sustains her sacramental life. This means a woman can understand Holy Orders not as something distant from her but as the ministry that serves her, the priesthood through which Christ reaches her in the sacraments, so that she can honor and support the priesthood as the channel through which so much grace comes to her. The woman who understands the priesthood that serves receives it with gratitude as the ministry that makes her own sacramental life possible, the channel of so much grace to her. The priesthood that serves is what Holy Orders establishes, consecrating men to serve the Church, and though a woman is not called to this sacrament, it is vital to her, for it is the priesthood that makes the Eucharist and absolution possible, the ministry through which Christ reaches her in the sacraments.

Grace for a Whole Life

The vocational sacraments show that sacramental grace is meant to supply a whole life, not merely isolated moments, consecrating a person's state of life and supplying the grace to live it faithfully over the long years of a vocation. Matrimony and Holy Orders are not momentary blessings but lifelong sources of grace, consecrating a vocation and supplying grace for the whole of it, so that they reveal the sacramental principle that grace is meant to sustain a woman through her whole life and vocation, not merely to touch her at scattered moments. This means a woman can understand her vocation, whatever it is, as supplied with grace, consecrated by God and sustained by His help, so that she does not live her vocation on her own strength but is given the grace to live it, a grace that accompanies her through the whole of it. The woman who understands grace for a whole life lives her vocation trusting the grace that consecrates and sustains it, supplied by God for the long faithfulness her calling requires. Grace for a whole life is what the vocational sacraments reveal, that sacramental grace consecrates a person's state of life and supplies the grace to live it faithfully over the long years of a vocation, so that a woman lives her calling sustained by grace rather than on her own strength.

CHAPTER SIX

Grace at the Edges of Life

The Anointing of the Sick

The seventh sacrament, the Anointing of the Sick, brings grace to a woman in serious illness and at the approach of death, meeting her at the hardest edges of life with the strength, comfort, and healing of Christ, so that even suffering and dying are met with sacramental grace. Far from being only the last rites administered at the very end, the Anointing of the Sick is the sacrament of Christ's healing presence in serious illness and in the face of death, so that understanding it reveals how the sacramental life accompanies a woman even into her suffering and her dying.

Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil. — James 5:14-15

Christ Present in Sickness

The Anointing of the Sick brings Christ's grace and presence to a woman in serious illness, so that she does not suffer alone but is met by Christ in her sickness, strengthened and accompanied by Him through the sacrament. When a woman faces serious illness, the Anointing of the Sick brings her the grace of Christ, uniting her to Him, strengthening her soul, bringing peace and courage to bear the illness, and sometimes healing of the body, so that she is not left alone in her suffering but met by Christ, who comes to her in the sacrament. This presence of Christ in sickness is a great gift, for serious illness is a time of weakness and fear, and the Anointing brings the Lord Himself to a woman in that weakness, strengthening and accompanying her, so that she faces her illness not alone but with Christ. The woman who understands Christ present in sickness receives the Anointing as a meeting with the Lord in her suffering, strengthened and accompanied by Him. Christ present in sickness is the gift of the Anointing of the Sick, bringing Christ's grace and presence to a woman in serious illness so that she does not suffer alone but is met, strengthened, and accompanied by Him, and sometimes healed, through the sacrament.

Grace for Suffering and Dying

The Anointing gives a woman grace to bear her suffering and, when the time comes, to face death, uniting her sufferings to Christ's and preparing her for the passage to eternal life, so that even her dying is met with grace. Suffering and death are the hardest things a woman faces, and the Anointing meets her there, giving grace to bear suffering patiently and even fruitfully by uniting it to the cross of Christ, and when death approaches, strengthening and preparing her for the final passage, so that she faces her dying not in abandonment but in grace. This means the sacramental life does not leave a woman at the edges of life but accompanies her into her suffering and her dying, giving her grace for the hardest passages, uniting her to Christ in them, and preparing her for eternal life,

so that even death is met with the strength of the sacrament. The woman who understands grace for suffering and dying faces these hardest things not alone but supplied with the grace of the Anointing, united to Christ and prepared for eternal life. Grace for suffering and dying is the gift of the Anointing, giving a woman grace to bear her suffering by uniting it to Christ's and to face death prepared for the passage to eternal life, so that even her dying is met with grace rather than abandonment.

The Sacraments Accompany the Whole of Life

The Anointing of the Sick completes the picture of a sacramental life that accompanies a woman through the whole of her existence, from birth to death, so that there is no season of her life, not even her suffering and dying, that grace does not reach. Taken together, the sacraments accompany a woman through every stage of life, Baptism at its beginning, the Eucharist and Reconciliation through its course, the vocational sacraments consecrating her state, and the Anointing meeting her in sickness and death, so that the whole of her life, from start to finish, is accompanied by sacramental grace. This means a woman is never outside the reach of grace, for the sacraments meet her at every stage, in every season, even the hardest, so that her whole life is enfolded in the grace of Christ, who accompanies her through the sacraments from her birth to her death and into eternal life. The woman who sees that the sacraments accompany the whole of life knows that no season of her existence is beyond the reach of grace, which meets her at every stage through the sacraments. The sacraments accompany the whole of life, from Baptism at its beginning to the Anointing at its end, so that there is no season of a woman's existence, not even her suffering and dying, that grace does not reach, her whole life enfolded in the grace of Christ.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Receiving as If You Believe

From Routine to Encounter

Knowing what the sacraments are leads to the real question of this book, whether a woman receives them as if she actually believes what they are, for the same sacrament can be received as empty routine or as living encounter, and the difference lies in the disposition with which she comes. To receive the sacraments as if she believes what they are is to come to them with faith, attention, and the expectation of meeting God, transforming them from rituals performed to encounters lived, so that the grace they always offer is received with the openness that lets it work.

Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. — 1 Corinthians 11:28

The Same Sacrament, Received Differently

The same sacrament can be received as a routine gotten through or as a living encounter with God, and the difference lies not in the sacrament, which always offers its grace, but in the disposition of the woman who receives it. A woman can receive the Eucharist distractedly, as a familiar ritual performed without thought, or she can receive it as what it is, Christ Himself given to her, and the sacrament is the same in both cases, offering the same grace, but what she receives of that grace depends on the faith and openness with which she comes. This means the disposition of the receiver matters enormously, for while the sacrament always offers its grace, the woman who comes with faith and openness receives it fully, while the woman who comes distractedly, by routine, receives far less of what is offered, so that her disposition shapes what the sacrament becomes for her. The woman who understands that the same sacrament is received differently attends to her own disposition, coming with the faith and openness that receive fully what the sacrament offers. The same sacrament, received differently, can be empty routine or living encounter, the difference lying not in the sacrament, which always offers its grace, but in the disposition of the receiver, so that the woman who comes with faith and openness receives fully what the distracted receiver largely misses.

Coming With Faith and Attention

To receive the sacraments as if she believes what they are, a woman comes to them with faith and attention, consciously believing what the sacrament is, attending to what is happening, and opening herself to the grace and the encounter it offers. Receiving a sacrament well means coming to it deliberately, with faith in what it is, with attention to the sacred action rather than distraction, with the expectation of meeting God and receiving His grace, and with the openness of heart that lets the grace work, so that a woman examines and prepares herself, as the Scripture counsels, to receive worthily and well. This coming with faith and attention transforms the sacrament from a routine into an encounter, for the woman who comes believing and attentive meets God in the sacrament and receives His grace fully, rather than letting the moment pass in distraction, so that her faith and attention open the sacrament's full gift. The woman who comes with faith and attention receives the sacraments as encounters with God, prepared and open to the grace they offer. Coming with faith and attention is how a woman receives the sacraments as if she believes what they are, deliberately believing, attending to the sacred action, and opening herself to the grace and encounter offered, so that her faith and attention transform the sacrament from routine into a real meeting with God.

The Woman You Are Becoming

Received with faith over a lifetime, the sacraments form a woman into the person she is becoming, working their grace into her soul year after year until she is gradually transformed into the likeness of Christ, so that her sacramental life is the very means of her becoming holy. The sacraments are not isolated moments but a lifelong means of transformation, each one working its grace into a woman's soul, so that over the years of a faithful sacramental life she is gradually formed, cleansed, strengthened, and conformed to Christ, becoming through the sacraments the holy woman God is making her. This means a woman's sacramental life is the story of her transformation, the grace of the sacraments working in her over a lifetime to make her into the person she is becoming, the daughter of God and the saint she was made in Baptism to be. The woman who understands the sacraments as forming the person she is becoming receives them as the means of her transformation, letting their grace make her, over a lifetime, into the likeness of Christ. The woman you are becoming is formed by the sacraments received with faith over a lifetime, their grace working into her soul year after year until she is gradually transformed into the likeness of Christ, so that her sacramental life is the very means of her becoming the holy woman God is making her.

CONCLUSION

Come and Receive

The woman who received the sacraments as routine now knows them for what they are, more than she thought they were. We have seen that a sacrament is a real channel of grace, not a symbol, an encounter with Christ who acts in it; that Baptism and Confirmation make her a daughter of God and a commissioned bearer of the faith; that the Eucharist is the source and summit, Christ Himself truly present; that Reconciliation really forgives and restores her to God and to herself; that Matrimony and Holy Orders consecrate vocations and supply grace for a whole life; that the Anointing of the Sick meets her in suffering and death; and that the difference between routine and encounter lies in receiving them as if she believes what they are.

Through all of it runs a single invitation: come and receive. The sacraments are the great channels through which Christ pours His grace into a woman's life, encounters with the Lord Himself, given to form her over a lifetime into the person she is becoming. They are not rituals to be gotten through but gifts to be received, and the woman who comes to them believing what they are, with faith and attention and the expectation of meeting God, finds in them not empty routine but the living grace of Christ, poured into her soul.

So come, and receive. Approach each sacrament as the real channel of grace it is, an encounter with Christ who acts in it. Live your baptismal identity as a daughter of God and your confirmation as a commission to bear the faith. Center your life on the Eucharist, the source and summit, where Christ Himself is given. Return often to Reconciliation, to be forgiven and restored and made whole. Receive the grace of your vocation, and honor the priesthood that serves you. Trust the Anointing to meet you in your suffering and at the end. And receive them all as if you believe what they are, with faith and attention, so that they become for you not routine but living encounter. For through the sacraments Christ gives you His own grace, grace upon grace, to make you over a lifetime into the woman He is calling and configuring you to be. Come, and receive.

✦ ✦ ✦

Called and Configured is part of The Daily Bread Library.

The Everyday Apostle · everydayapostle.com