

# Adult Confirmation Study Pentecost 2020

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## **Week 12**

**Aug. 16 – 22**

### Introduction to the Sacraments

A “Sacrament” is a holy act of the church. While the Roman Catholic Church holds that there are seven sacraments, Luther disagreed. He believed that a sacrament had to: 1. Be instituted by Jesus, 2. Offer a transformation or new life and 3. Contain an earthly element. The Lutheran church believes in two sacraments – Holy Eucharist and Holy Baptism. There are some writings of Luther’s that support his belief that “penance” or holy absolution were a third sacrament. Lutherans see this as part of the eucharist and since there is not earthly element, merge absolution with communion.

Once again, I remind you that Martin Luther lived in the dark ages. He saw great poverty, plague and ignorance. He also fought the gross manipulation of the powers of the church. Luther saw the sacraments as gift and requirement. While he reformed so much, he stayed fairly mainline and traditional with his theology of the sacraments, but not completely.

Participating in the sacraments was pure gift and not a work. He wrote a great deal about infant baptism and rejected the notion of “transubstantiation”.

In his time, there was a movement for what we still call “believers’ baptism” meaning that the one to be baptized had to be able to believe in God before the rite. Luther saw baptism as an act of God upon the person and not a rite that we could control or be prepared for, thus infant baptism was justified.

“Transubstantiation” means the change of substance. In the 12<sup>th</sup> Century the Roman Catholic church began teaching that the bread and wine actually changed substance to Christ’s body and blood. Luther held that Christ was truly present in the bread and wine, but that the substance remained actual bread and wine.

These sacred rites of the church should unite us. Yet, even today denominations disagree vehemently concerning the sacraments. In fact, even in our own fractured Lutheran family we cannot come to the table together. As we study these sacraments, we pray for God to give us insight and understanding.

**Questions:**

1. Do you see a difference between a ritual and a holy rite?
2. Do you think the high infant mortality rate in Luther's time might have affected his belief on infant baptism?
3. Sometimes sacraments are joyful and at other times somber. Which do you experience the most?

**Prayer:**

Lord God let our lights so shine that others see our good works and glorify you. Amen.

- Luther accompanied his words with pictures, biblical woodcuts.



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