

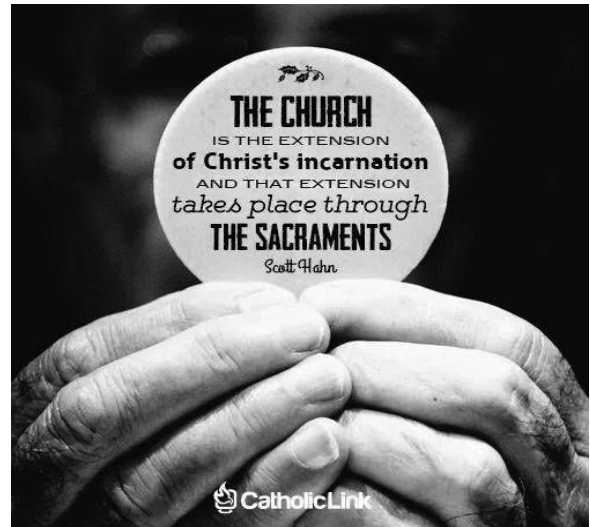
## *The Sacramental Season*

The Easter Season is regarded by the Church to be the most proper time to celebrate the Sacraments of Initiation; Baptism, Communion and Confirmation. The reason for this is that the Resurrection of Jesus facilitates the distribution of his life and graces through the ministry of the Church in these signs.

Recall “The Great Commission” from the end of Matthew’s Gospel wherein the Risen Lord commands the Apostles “Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit,” (Mt. 28:19). Here is a clear connection between the Resurrection and the Sacrament of Baptism. It is, however, preceded in this same Gospel by a general principle which Jesus pronounces over these same men: He says to them, “Whoever receives you receives me,” (Mt. 10:40). And then, of course, six chapters later there is the bestowal of the powers of the forgiveness of sins upon St. Peter, (Mt. 16:19).

It is clear from these, and many other Gospel texts, that Jesus intended to establish a Church which would be the continuation of his own ministry on Earth, mediated through human agents commissioned for such ministry. Through the Resurrection, Jesus becomes unbound from the strictures of space and time and, therefore, unlimited in his availability to the world. And so it is that we believe it is Christ who is present to do the washing in Baptism. And it is Christ who is present under the signs of Bread and Wine to provide us the nourishment of his own life. And it is Christ who is present in the laying-on-of-hands and the anointing of Confirmation to bestow the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Hence, though we celebrate the Sacraments of our Faith year-round, the Easter Season holds pride of place for the Sacraments of Initiation and this connection reinforces the truth that Sacraments are “Resurrection realities.”



Of course, there is a stumbling block for all of us in this assertion: Generally speaking we don’t experience the Sacraments as spectacularly ecstatic experiences such as those experienced by the eyewitnesses in the Gospels. It would surely be much more convincing to receive some sort of jolt or charge out of receiving Holy Communion. I, for one, would liked to have been there to witness the Lord’s Ascension into Heaven in all of its wondrous glory!

But, it seems that time was a different “season.” The age of the Church, in which we are now living, is the Season of the Sacraments and the Season of Faith. I think that this is the “season” anticipated by that most familiar Gospel of Doubting Thomas which is always featured on this Second Sunday of Easter. Jesus seems to deliberately steer future believers away from expectations of spectacular things toward the disposition of pure faith as he proclaims, “Blest are those who have not seen and have believed,” (John 20:30)