

sacraments in the life of the people can then be more easily understood as can the fearful enactments that occurred when papal authorities, et al, suspended the sacraments from whole nations as well as from particular individuals. That the term has had both a useful and distasteful meaning can be understood from our nature and in its purest form it is rooted in the Biblical expression of 1 Peter 3---where husband and wife and designated "heirs of the grace of life."

The particular sacraments grew with the tradition of the church--especially the sacred ecclesiastical tradition which only the church leaders knew. They were finally defined and defended best by Peter Lombard, the 13th century scholastic. They are seven in number:

--baptism...in which the original sin is washed away and the baptized party freed from the condemnation it brought...

--confirmation...in which a convert is made one in the church through the giving of the holy Spirit through the laying on of the hands of these in apostolic succession....

--eucharist...in which the partaking of the body and blood of Christ confirms life....

--penance...in which one receive grace through humility and confession of guilt....

--extreme unction...whereby one is granted the forgiveness that only the church can sanction at the final moment of life....

--holy orders...in which one is given a special grace for a commitment to God in life...a grace that is given in the place of the life we give God....

--marriage....in which one is given the "grace of life" and which is only properly a sacrament if performed in the good offices of the church.

Scripture support for these things became less than necessary in the light of the fact that they were matters of ecclesiastical understanding. Certainly no Scriptural warrant exists for final unction, penance, etc. and most of us in our circles agree with the reformers that there were only two participatorial acts given by Christ to the church: baptism and eucharist (communion). You may call them by such other name as may seem fit to you but these seem to be the only committed acts for the life of the church

The greatest grip on the community was held by eucharist...and after 1215 the official Roman view on this was that of transubstantiation. In this the emblems actually become the body and blood of Christ and it is the physical partaking that gives life to the soul. The magical force of this enactment gave great power to the church and the local priesthood.