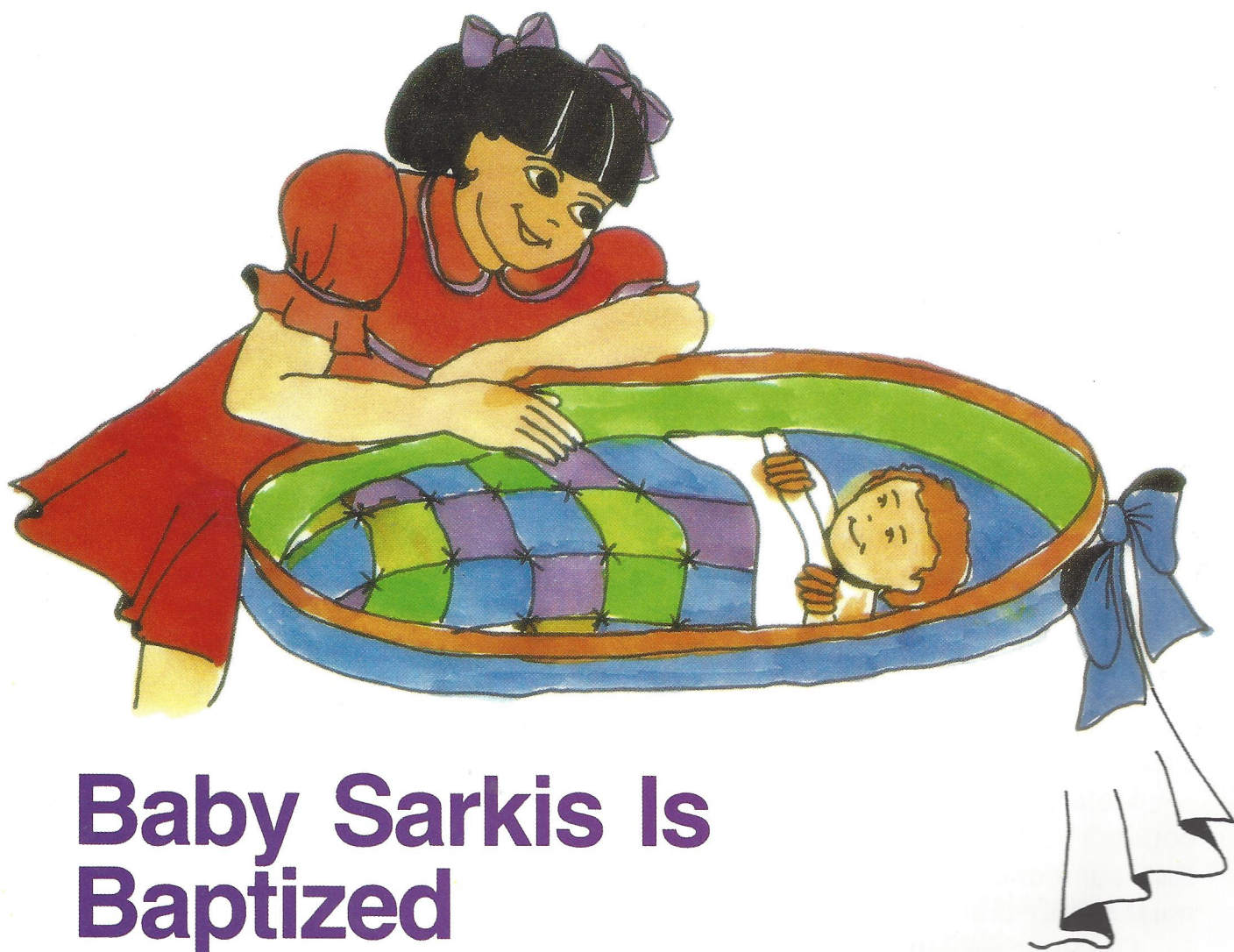


BAPTISM



Baby Sarkis Is Baptized

Once there was a little girl named Melanie. She lived with her family in a house in a big city. She had a mother and father, and a grandmother, but no brothers or sisters. She had friends and playmates who lived near her. She missed not having any brothers or sisters. She would ask her mother, "Why do other children have a sister or brother? Why can't I have one?" And her mother would only

say, "Someday, Melanie, you'll have one too."

Melanie was very excited when her mother surprised her with the news, "Melanie, we're going to have a new baby in a few months." How happy she was! That was good news to hear. She told her teacher and classmates in school the very next day.

The weeks passed slowly, but Melanie tried to be patient. She tried not to ask her mother too often, "When will the baby come?" Finally, one night her mother woke her and said, "Melanie, daddy and I are going to the hospital now, grandma will help you get up in the morning and get ready for school." When Melanie woke up the next morning, she rushed downstairs. Grandma told her the big news. "You have a baby brother, Melanie. And his name is Sarkis."

Sarkis was a noisy baby at first. He seemed to cry all the time. And mommy and daddy paid so much attention to this noisy little boy that Melanie was sorry she had wanted a baby. Sarkis was so little, too. Melanie didn't think he would ever be much fun. But one day he learned to smile, and Melanie enjoyed that. Melanie liked making Baby Sarkis laugh, and her mother was happy that Melanie was so helpful.

One day mother told Melanie, "This Sunday we will have Baby Sarkis baptized at church. After the service we will all come home and have a party. "What is 'baptized?' " asked Melanie. "It means that we will bring Sarkis to church and make him part of God's family," said mother. "Did you have one for me? And a party too?" "Oh yes," said mother. "In fact, your godparents, Aunt Virginia and Uncle Michael, came from Boston for the occasion. They will be Sarkis' godparents too. It was such a special day. You looked so nice in your baptismal dress. And you didn't even cry very much when Father Gregory put you in the water."

Melanie tried to imagine what Sarkis' baptism would be like. She couldn't remember anything from her own. But it was nice to think that someone would come all the way from Boston for the day. It must mean that it was pretty important.

On Sunday, Melanie and her parents got up early and got ready for church. Melanie wore her new red dress. Then mother got Sarkis ready. "What will he wear for the baptism?" asked Melanie. "Aunt Virginia will bring a new white suit for him," answered mother.

When they got to church, all the relatives were already there. Melanie hugged and kissed her grandparents and godparents and cousins. Der Nersess, the priest, met them at the door. Soon the service began. Melanie didn't understand very much but she saw



how happy everyone looked. Der Hayr took Sarkis from Aunt Virginia's arms and put him in the water. Sarkis screamed. Melanie heard Der Nersess call Sarkis by his whole name, Sarkis Peter. Sarkis cried even louder. Then Der Hayr handed the crying baby to Uncle Michael.

He put something on Sarkis' head and hands and feet. Melanie couldn't see everything that was happening, but she could see smiles on everyone's faces. Finally it was time for Aunt Virginia and mother to dress Sarkis in his new clothes. They gave him to Uncle Michael to hold. Der Hayr put Holy Communion in his mouth.

Soon the service was over. Der Nersess leaned over and kissed Sarkis on the forehead while Uncle Michael held him. Mother and daddy kissed Sarkis and it was Melanie's turn.

It was so nice to see all of her cousins and relatives. Melanie

was happy that so many people had come. She had a good time playing with her cousins and friends. It was a good party for Sarkis' baptism.

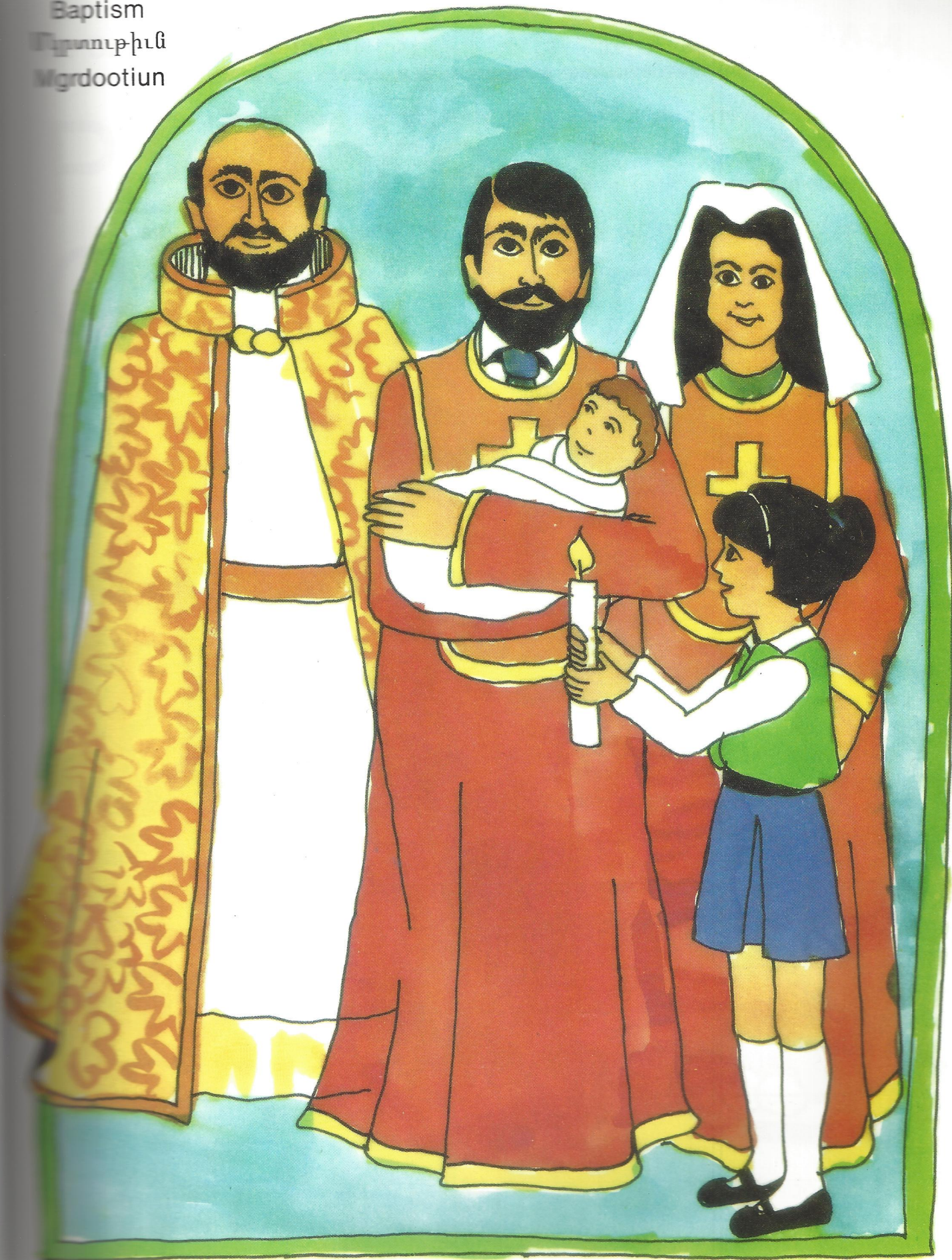
Later, she asked her grandfather about the service. "Why was it held, grandpa? And why did so many of our relatives come?" Grandpa answered, "All of us, beginning with your parents, wanted Sarkis to be part of God's family. Today Der Hayr made him a member of this family. All of us are part of God's family, and we ask God to include Sarkis too. Your parents and godparents promised to help Sarkis grow up loving God. And all of our friends and relatives wanted to celebrate this occasion. All of us in God's family love him and want to do good things for him."

"I'm glad we brought Sarkis into God's family, grandpa. Now can I have another piece of cake?"

Symbols of Baptism



Baptism
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NAMING

Perhaps you were only a baby when your parents took you to church to be baptized.

In baptism, you became a member of God's family.

At baptism, your parents promised to help you to love and serve God.



Ask your parents to tell you about your baptism by finishing these sentences:

I was born on _____

I was baptized on _____

at _____ church

in _____

My Godparents are _____

Other people at my baptism were _____

I was baptized because _____

Allow children time to think a bit; they may come up with some answers; otherwise, help them by suggesting the chalice, *nushkhar*, cross, etc. The children will probably not suggest the sacraments as ways we have of recognizing God's presence; tell them that the sacraments, too, like baptism and Holy Communion, are also ways that we feel and know God's presence. (10 min.)

3. Light the charcoal, and place it in its appropriate container (burner). Then place a small piece or two of incense on it. As it burns, ask the children what it is, and what it makes them think of (we hope the answer will be that it makes them think of God and his Church). Explain that incense is another thing that helps to remind us that God is present even when we cannot see him. Add that incense is always used in the Armenian Church and is one of the things that makes her special. (5 min.)

4. Do "What's Special about the Armenian Church" activity from the student packet. Have children color the symbols before cutting them out and pasting them onto a piece of construction paper. Then help children paste the correct name of each symbol under the picture. As the children are coloring and cutting, name each of the symbols and have the children repeat the names. They will recognize and/or know some from last week's lesson. (10 min.)

5. As children are finishing up the activity, tell them the Armenian word for sacrament, *khorhoort*. Have them repeat it several times. Then play the Candlestick Game. Lay out the flash cards on the floor in a straight line. Place the candlestick at the head of the line. Have each child say each word, then jump over it. The child continues until she/he jumps over the candlestick. (10 min.)

6. Read story on pages 50-51 with the children. After story has ended, ask: "What things did Tom and Anna notice in the First United Church? What things were different from their own church? What was the minister called? What was different about Baby Kimberly's baptism?" And so on. (15 min.)

7. Review, clean-up, snack, closing prayer, "We Believe."

Note: A picture of each child's godparents will be required next week (see "Materials Needed" for the next session).

Session 2—Baptism

Key Concepts

1. We receive God's blessing at our baptism, and are welcomed into his family, our second family, and into his Church, our second home.

2. Our life in the Church as members of God's family begins at baptism and is given a special relationship with him.

3. The priest and our godparents welcome us into God's family and promise to help us grow.

Objectives

Students will

1. Recall their own baptism.
2. Make a mobile of the visible things present at a baptism—water, dove, baby, font, priest, godparents, white garment, etc. (student activity packet)
3. Explain the purpose of baptism (from story).

Background for Teacher

Baptism is the beginning of our life in the Church. It is a sign, a sacrament, which binds us to our Lord, and opens the door for further growth in the Christian life. Through this sacrament, the individual believer is grafted onto the Body of Christ, and begins the process of salvation.

Baptism is the first and most important of the sacraments. We profess our belief in *one baptism* each time we recite the Nicene Creed. Like all the ancient churches, the Armenian Church practices infant baptism. Because we recognize the importance of the believing community, the Church, Armenian Christians wish their children to grow within that community into mature, responsible Christians.

To get a full understanding of baptism, it is necessary to read St. Paul's teachings about it, especially Romans 6:1-4 and Galatians 3:27-28.

Also read chapter on baptism and chrismation in *The Sacraments: The Symbols of Our Faith*.

Baptism is performed by three-fold immersion into the font, signifying our Lord's burial for three days. Only a priest can baptize, and the baptism is immediately followed by chrismation, or anointing with holy chrism (oil). The infant's godparents request faith, hope, love (the three Christian virtues), and baptism for the child, and promise to help the child grow in the faith. Chrismation is the completion of baptism, and is the "sealing" of the new Christian with the gift of the Holy Spirit. The child is anointed on nine parts of her/his body with holy muron (chrism), and receives spiritual strength and becomes ready to do God's work, or be a vehicle for God's work, in the world. After the chrismation, the child is dressed in new white clothes, symbolizing the "new life" she/he has received, and receives her/his first holy communion.

Materials Needed

- For each child, two 12" to 15" dowels; pre-cut symbols of baptism, i.e., dove, baby, pitcher or "waves" to symbolize water, font, priest, pictures of child's godparents (to be obtained previously from children's

parents), 9" to 10" lengths of string, one piece for each symbol on the mobile. (Enlist help of a parent for baptism mobile.)

- Blackboard, chalk, scissors (one for each child), crayons or markers
- Pictures of an Armenian Church baptism

Procedure

1. Greet class enthusiastically! Open with prayer, "I Believe," from *Prayers for Armenian Children*, page 15.
2. Review last week's activities. (5 min.)
3. Introduce lesson. Say: "Today we are going to learn about something that happened to each of us when we were very little. It is the special way we welcome people, even very little people, children, into God's family." Ask: "Does anyone know who God's family is?" If children know that we, the Church, are God's family, you're already two steps ahead of the game. If their answers are unsatisfactory, then say something like, "Let's learn about God's family and how we become members of it by listening to this story."
4. Read story on pages 53-55. Ask questions to elicit responses about their own baptisms, or ones they've witnessed recently. Emphasize joy in being part of a new family, the new life we experience in the Church. Stress importance of child's own family gathering for her/his baptism. Note that Melanie thought it extremely important that relatives would travel great distances for baptism. Children can be made to realize the joy and enthusiasm the birth of a new baby creates in a family, so also with the spiritual birth into God's family at baptism. (15 min.)
5. Look at the illustration of a baptism on page 55. Discuss what children see happening in picture. Make a list on the blackboard of things children observe. (10 min.)
6. Make a baptism mobile. Help children color and attach their symbols to the twine and then to the dowels. You'll have to drive a small nail to criss-cross dowels so children can work with them. Depending upon the children's motor control, you may have to do some of the tying to the dowels. As they work, ask more questions about their mobiles and what baptism means. (25 min.)
7. If time permits, do one or two other enrichment activities. Perform a "mock baptism" with children, allowing them the opportunity to change roles or take a trip into church to see the priest, and experience the vessels of baptism firsthand. Children can touch the font, see how water is turned on, learn where dove is kept, etc.
8. Closing prayer. Homework assignment is to explain all the symbols of baptism to their parents, and bring in a picture of their own baptism. Have parents fill in "Naming" questionnaire on page 58. (5 min.)

Session 3—Penance/Communion

Key Concepts

1. We receive God's blessing through Holy Communion, and share in the special meal of his family.
2. When we offend members of his family, we repent and ask God's forgiveness in the sacrament of penance.
3. The sacraments of penance and Holy Communion help us to grow into more loving members of God's family.

Objectives

Students will

1. Receive penance and Holy Communion, and will recognize these two sacraments as ones we receive regularly.
2. Read the rebus of the Prodigal Son, and be able to retell it.
3. Recognize that God is ready to forgive us if we are sorry for doing what we know is wrong.

Background for Teacher

The sacraments of penance and Holy Communion are the two sacraments Christians should receive most often. These two sacraments are the means by which we return to wholeness in our relationship with God and our fellow humans. They are also "spiritual vitamins" which help strengthen us to resist sin and temptation, and grow closer to God. Just as our physical bodies need nourishment and sustenance to stay healthy, so our spiritual selves need the nourishment of meeting our Lord in these two sacraments. In these sacraments, Jesus helps us to grow stronger and more like him.

To be able to fully receive the sacrament of penance, we too must be willing and able to forgive, as we are forgiven. As we are forgiven through the sacrament, so we long to become one with our Lord and his Body, through reception of Holy Communion.

Also see chapters on penance in *The Sacraments: The Symbols of Our Faith*.

Holy Eucharist: This is the great sacrament and through its administration Jesus Christ, in the form of Bread and Wine, gives himself to us for our salvation.

Christ becomes the spiritual food and is continually given to the faithful, which is basic in Christian faith.

The sacrament was instituted by Christ at the Last Supper on the eve of his crucifixion. Here the man Jesus, before his actual death, gave to his disciples and all those who would follow them, a new commandment to re-experience his own sacrifice. In this sacrament, while man is giving himself up to God, God on the other hand sends his grace upon the