

The Seven Sacraments of the Church

Written by Debreselam on Sunday, 25 March 2007

The Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church serves the faithful through the seven sacraments. These sacraments are called mysteries because the invisible grace of the Holy Spirit is granted through them. The seven sacraments are:

1. Baptism
2. Confirmation
3. Holy Communion
4. Ordination
5. Holy Matrimony
6. Mystery of Penance
7. Unction of the Sick

The Ethiopian Orthodox Church Tewahedo Church, taking the example of pillars as has been said in the Proverbs of Solomon as a starting point, teaches that there are seven sacraments (Proverbs 9:1). Of the seven, the six sacraments can be performed by a bishop and a priest. Ordination is conferred by a bishop only.

1. **Baptism:** - Of the seven sacraments, Baptism is the first. Baptism is the sacrament through which we are reborn and enter the Kingdom of God (John 3:5). Baptism has a Biblical basis (Mathew 28:19-20). Through Baptism sin is forgiven (Acts 2:8). Cleansing and blessing is attained through Baptism (1 Peter 3:21; Titus 3:5-6)
2. **Confirmation:** - It is the holy ointment which one is anointed after Baptism. Confirmation like Baptism is performed once and cannot be repeated. Through the sacrament of confirmation, the believer is granted the gift of the Holy Spirit. In the Apostolic time the baptized person was granted the Holy Spirit by the laying of the hands (Acts 20: 14-17).
3. **Holy Communion:** - Holy Communion is the culmination of all sacraments of the Church. Holy Communion means offering of sacrifice. This is not an offering of man to God but the offering of God for man. The sheep and goats were offered as sacrifices in the altars during the Old Testament times. However, these were preceding examples of the offering of the flesh and blood of Christ during the New

Testament. The offering of bread and cup of grace which Melchizedek offered to Abraham (Genesis 14:18) and the sacrifices which the Israelites offered during the day of their liberation exemplify Christ our Pascal lamb. Holy Communion has Biblical foundation (Mathew 26:26; 1 Corinthians 11:23-25). When the priest puts the bread on the paten and the wine in the chalice and conducts liturgical prayer, the bread is changed into the body of the Son of God and the wine into the blood of the Son of God. What is thus given in our Church is the body and blood of the Son of God.

4. **Ordination:** - This is the sacrament through which the clergy are entitled to perform the various services of the Church. This sacrament has Biblical basis (Mathew 28:19-20; Ephesians 4:11; Acts 26:20). There are three hierarchical ranks of Ordination. These are deacon, priest, and bishop.
5. **Holy Matrimony:** - Christian marriage is one of the seven sacraments which is performed in a church by means of which the grace of the Holy Spirit is obtained. Holy Matrimony is based on the Bible (Genesis 1:27-28, 2:18; Mathew 19:4-6).
6. **Mystery of Penance:** - Penance means to feel remorse, repent and cleanse oneself from sin. Although Christians are reborn through Baptism, men are liable to commit sins. Therefore: Every Christian should have a father confessor (soul-father). Everyone should go to the father-confessor and confess his/her sins (Leviticus 14:31, Mathew 8:4; Epiphanies Faith of Fathers Hai. Ab. 59:20). Those who confess their sins and return to God receive the grace of God and by receiving the Holy Communion they will enter to their former place of honor.
7. **Unction of the Sick:** - It is one of the Seven Sacraments of the Church. It is an anointment administered to the sick. It has Biblical origin and is administered by bishops and priests (Mark 6:13; Jas 5:13-15).

The Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church., Faith, Order of Worship and Ecumenical Relations. Second edition. (2004). Addis Ababa: Tensae Publishing House. Pp 35-44.