

THIRD CLERGY TALK

TALK #7

MEANS OF GRACE

Overview of All Talks

The Walk to Emmaus 72-hour experience delivers one message that is communicated through the music, meals, clergy meditations, attitudes and actions of the team members, and the talks. You will deliver one of the fifteen talks. In reality, you will deliver one-fifteenth of the Emmaus talk—one message with fifteen presenters.

Prepare your talk using the outlines provided. As a good general rule, two-thirds of the talk will come from the outline and one-third would be the speaker's original insights and illustrations.

The talks are sequenced in a defined order; each builds on the next to provide pilgrims with the complete message of Emmaus. Do not try to cover more than your assigned topic. The expanded outline intends to provide a solid understanding of the material from which your talk will be developed. The abbreviated outline helps you see the progression of the main points. *Neither outline is a script*; you will need to add personal examples to give life to the content and make it real to the hearers. Use visual aids to help convey the main points.

The Holy Spirit, as well as feedback from the team after your talk preview, will provide additional guidance for your unique presentation of this talk. Once you incorporate the suggestions offered after your preview, your presentation no longer belongs just to you but to the team God is forming to deliver the Emmaus message.

This presentation is allotted a maximum of thirty-five to forty-five minutes. Please honor the time limit out of a spirit of cooperation, charity, good stewardship of time, and consideration for the hearers.

Overview for Speaker

MEANS OF GRACE is the third of the five clergy talks on the grace of God. All the grace talks focus on our relationship with God. This talk builds on the understanding of prevenient grace and justifying grace described in the first two clergy talks. A deeper exploration of hindrances to our relationship with God in the OBSTACLES TO GRACE talk will follow. The final clergy talk, SANCTIFYING GRACE, will help pilgrims understand how we grow and mature in our relationship with God. You need not review all that has been said or say all that is yet to come. Focus on going the next step in the journey of grace.

Remember that talk #4, JUSTIFYING GRACE, focused on the double acceptance at the heart of the relationship God offers. We accept the relationship, and God accepts us in the midst of our brokenness and welcomes us home. In talk #5, LIFE OF PIETY, and talk #6, GROW THROUGH

STUDY, the pilgrims received instruction about ways to develop their relationship with God in Christ through the classic spiritual disciplines and practices that nurture us in grace. This clergy talk covers some of the same disciplines from a more theological perspective and suggests additional practices that help us experience God's grace.

The MEANS OF GRACE talk raises pilgrims' awareness of God's provision for each of us to become fully mature in Christ. (See Colossians 1:21-29.) Through the means of grace, we receive strength for our daily walk with Christ. The means of grace are those practices that connect us most directly with God's life-transforming love.

As you develop the main points of the talk, personalize the content by sharing your own experience of God in and through these means of grace. **This talk is twice as long as any other talk**; therefore, a break occurs midway through. Taking this break is crucial; otherwise, the need for a restroom break will disrupt the transition to the Dying Moments Communion. At the end of the talk, encourage the group to move to the chapel in silence for a guided meditation, which will be followed immediately by the Communion service. Lunch comes after this service, so honor the schedule.

Question-and-Answer Session after This Talk

MEANS OF GRACE is the only clergy talk that allows pilgrims to ask questions of the speaker. Pilgrims may submit questions in writing on the MEANS OF GRACE talk on 3 by 5 cards to the Lay Director, Assistant Lay Directors, or Spiritual Director(s). After lunch, a long break occurs, followed by a fifteen-minute period in the conference room when the Spiritual Director or Directors respond to the questions deemed most valuable to the learning. *Do not invite spontaneous questions from the floor.* Spiritual Directors are available throughout the weekend to answer pilgrims' personal questions. The questions addressed in the conference room will relate directly to the MEANS OF GRACE talk; limit them to ones most necessary for the entire group to hear discussed.

Here are some notes that may help you answer pilgrims' questions about healing:

- **The Christian tradition makes it clear that Christ heals in three ways:** (1) through instantaneous miracle, (2) through progressive restoration, and (3) through death and resurrection.
- We never forget that **every person Jesus healed or raised from the dead during his earthly ministry ultimately died**—for example, Lazarus (John 11:1-44) and Jairus's daughter (Mark 5:22-43). Christian healing serves for a limited time and purpose. Ultimate healing comes through death and resurrection.
- **Forgiveness is a crucial part of healing.** Forgiveness means letting go of bitterness, anger, guilt, and resentment. It involves unlocking the door of the prison and releasing those held bound in negative attitudes and relationships. Jesus gives us the power to forgive (see Colossians 3:13 and Ephesians 4:32) just as he forgave from the cross (see Luke 23:34). If we do not forgive, anger and bitterness will act as a cancer to our spirits. When

bitterness takes root in our lives, it can destroy other people, and it can destroy us. (See Matthew 6:7-15; 18:15-18.)

Videos and recorded songs should not be part of the talk. Any projection during the talk should be kept simple.

This talk is thirty-five to forty-five minutes long (not counting the question-and-answer period after lunch). It is scheduled for Saturday at 10:15 a.m.

EXPANDED OUTLINE

MEANS OF GRACE

Lead the Prayer to the Holy Spirit

Please turn to page 48 in your Worship Booklet, and join me in the Prayer to the Holy Spirit.

[Part 1 of this talk consists of 20 to 25 minutes.]

Introduction (1–2 minutes)

Choose a brief, personal story or experience that relates to the main point of this talk. If you cannot think of an appropriate introduction, consult the Lay Director or Spiritual Director for assistance. A good introduction will engage the hearts, minds, and attention of pilgrims and move them into the theme of this talk. For example, you might do the following:

Option 1: Share a personal story or experience of the rituals and practices that have sustained you in a meaningful relationship over the years or on a long journey.

Option 2: Giftwrap a large box with Christmas wrapping paper, and use it as a visual aid. The box needs to hold the following items: pitcher and bowl; loaf of bread and cluster of grapes or a cup and plate; small kneeling cushion or confirmation book; certificates of baptism and membership; clerical stole; ring; Bible; towel; basin (plastic dishpan); small bottle of oil. Explain that the means of grace are those places and practices through which God presents the gift of grace to us.

My name is _____, and the title of this talk is MEANS OF GRACE.

I. The means of grace are sacred moments where Christ is re-presented or becomes present to us anew. (5 minutes)

- A. Sacraments are sacred moments that Jesus gave us by clear instruction and example in the scripture. Sacraments involve our physical senses through outward and visible signs; in addition, they involve our spiritual senses through an inward and spiritual work of grace.
- B. The number of sacraments celebrated within the church varies according to the particular tradition or denomination.

1. Most Christians acknowledge two sacraments: baptism and the Lord's Supper or Holy Communion.
 - a. Jesus said "Go . . . make disciples, . . . baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matt 28:19).
 - b. Jesus told his disciples, "This [bread] is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me" (Luke 22:19). "Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he gave it to them, saying, 'Drink from it, all of you'" (Matt. 26:27).

Some churches consider other rites or practices to be sacraments as well. Since the Council of Trent (1545–63), the Roman Catholic Church has celebrated seven sacraments. In addition to baptism and the Lord's Supper, these include penance, marriage, holy orders (ordination), confirmation, and healing (also known as extreme unction, the last rites, or anointing of the sick or dying).

- C. Christians adopt an attitude of love and humility toward the differing practices of various traditions. John Wesley said, "We may not all believe alike, but we can all love alike." We may disagree on certain matters like Christian baptism. However, we still find the foundation for our fellowship with one another and treat one another with genuine respect—as members of the body of Christ. (See 1 Corinthians 12:1–14:40.)

II. The two sacraments observed by most Christians (15 minutes)

- A. Baptism is an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual work of grace.

[Option 2: Remove the pitcher and bowl from the gift box.]

1. Baptism marked the beginning of Jesus' public ministry. (See Matthew 3:13-17; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:21-22.)
2. John the baptizer made it clear, "I baptize you with water for repentance; but one who is more powerful than I is coming. . . . He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire" (Matt. 3:11; parallel passages: Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; John 1:26, 33).
3. Jesus entrusted the ministry of baptism to his disciples. (See Matthew 28:19-20.) At Pentecost, the promised baptism of the Holy Spirit and fire gave birth to the church. (See Acts 2.) The promise of baptism "is for you, for your children, and for all who are far away, everyone who the Lord our God calls to him" (Acts 2:38-39).
4. Christian baptism marks our new identity in Christ.
 - a. Baptism marks each person as a member of the body of Christ.
 - b. The congregation echoes God's acceptance by promising its support for the newly baptized person on his or her spiritual journey.
 - c. In the history of the Christian church, baptism has been experienced in different modes and at different ages, depending on the denominational understanding.

5. The modes of baptism include the following:
 - a. *Immersion* (put under the water)—symbolizes being buried with Jesus and raised with Christ to walk in newness of life. (See Romans 6:3-4.)
 - b. *Pouring* (where large bodies of water were not available)—another form of anointing; see Exodus 29:7 and Psalm 133:2. Third-century Christian art shows John the Baptist pouring water over Jesus.
 - c. *Sprinkling* (washing by sprinkling water)—“I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean” (Ezek. 36:25). “You were washed” (1 Cor. 6:11).
 6. The age for baptism varies among Christian traditions:
 - a. When adults experience baptism, we celebrate both God’s love and justifying grace together in one act. They accept God’s offer of a relationship; persons are cleansed and incorporated into Christ’s body.
 - b. In the baptism of infants and children, congregations celebrate God’s unconditional love and promise for children’s lives.
 1. Jesus said, “Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it” (Mark 10:14-15).
 2. The commitment of parents or guardians and the congregation acknowledges God’s love, and the action begun in the baptism of children comes to completion in confirmation.
- B. Holy Communion

[Option 2: Remove from the box the symbols you have selected, such as a loaf of bread and cluster of grapes, or a cup and a plate.]

1. Read 1 Corinthians 11:23-26.
2. Various Christian traditions refer to this sacrament by different names, including Holy Communion, the Lord’s Table, the Lord’s Supper, the Eucharist (which means “grateful”), the Divine Liturgy (Eastern Orthodox), or the Mass (Roman Catholic and some Lutherans).
3. Jesus instituted the sacrament of Holy Communion during his last supper with his disciples, and he commanded them to continue sharing the bread and cup of the new covenant in remembrance of him. (See Luke 22:19-20.)
4. In the first supper after the Resurrection, Christ shared a meal with the travelers on the road to Emmaus. When he broke the bread, their eyes were opened, and they recognized him. (See Luke 24:13-35.)
5. Since the time of the earliest Christians, disciples have shared in this sacramental meal that re-presents the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ to all who come to receive in faith. (See Acts 2:42; 1 Corinthians 10:16; 11:23-26).

6. When we come to the Lord's Table, we come to God's banquet table.
 - a. We experience the inward and spiritual grace conveyed to us through these outward and visible elements of bread and juice/wine.
 - b. At this table all are welcome, and all are fed.
 - c. At this table we glimpse the way God intends the world to be: all of God's children sharing the bread of life and the cup of salvation together in a spirit of gratitude and love for God and for one another.

TAKE THE BREAK NOW.

[Part 2 of this talk consists of 15 to 20 minutes.]

[After the break begin with these words or something similar to mark the transition in the talk.]

Before the break we considered the two sacraments that most Christians agree are means of grace; in other words, ways that God meets our deepest human needs. While every sacrament is a sacred moment, we cannot call every sacred moment a sacrament.

III. In addition to the sacraments (however your congregation defines sacraments), we can describe many other means of grace as sacred moments. (10 minutes)

- A. **Some sacred moments come as a surprise.** God may come to us in a variety of ways, such as through the birth of a child, the beauty of a sunset, or a timely visit from a Christian friend. Each means of grace connects us to the living God and provides the grace we need.
- B. **Other sacred moments may come by divine appointment.** God has given the church special ways to remember and experience Jesus Christ. These sacred moments within the life of the church are called rites, ordinances, and ceremonies—for example, worship, morning and evening prayer, giving money to the poor, visiting the sick and imprisoned.
- C. In the sacred moment of **confirmation**, the church celebrates the spiritual growth and conscious choice of the confirmand. Confirmation marks the confirmand's decision to accept the relationship offered by God—begun in baptism and affirmed now in a public profession of faith in Jesus Christ—and the commitment to take responsibility for living as a disciple.

[Option 2: Remove the kneeling cushion or confirmation book from the box.]

1. In infant baptism, God and the Christian community said, "You are marked as a beloved child of God. You belong to this family, and you are loved." In confirmation the confirmand says, "You are my God. I love you, and I want to live my life in relationship with you and this family of faith."

2. Confirmation signals a transition to a new level of responsibility for personal faith. It marks the transition from spiritual childhood to the personal acceptance of responsibility for living as a disciple of Jesus Christ. (See Ephesians 4:1-16.)
 3. Various Christian traditions view confirmation differently.
 - a. Traditions that practice infant baptism—United Methodists, Lutherans, Presbyterians, Episcopalians, and Roman Catholics—understand confirmation as the time when the young person accepts for himself or herself the gift of salvation.
 - b. For Baptists, the Church of Christ, and others within the Anabaptist tradition, the individual's profession of faith, confirmation, and baptism happen at approximately the same time.
- D. Baptism, call, membership, and ordination
1. In the PRIESTHOOD OF ALL BELIEVERS talk, you learned that in baptism, every Christian is called to a life of ministry.
 - a. Every Christian has spiritual gifts that equip him or her for ministry. (See Ephesians 4:11-13.)
[Option 2: Remove the baptism and membership certificates from the gift box.]
 - b. Every Christian has a calling and a ministry that are essential to the health and well-being of the body of Christ.
 - c. Every Christian has a spiritual gift, and every gift is needed. (See 1 Corinthians 12:12-27.)
 2. Every Christian is called to be a disciple and a member of the body of Christ, the church.
 3. However, not every Christian is called to ordination.
 4. The church can celebrate and confirm a person's call to ministry in a variety of ways.
 - a. Anointing with oil
 - b. Services of installation
 - c. Laying on of hands and blessing
 - d. Consecration
 5. Ordination marks the transition of those called to pastoral leadership or some other form of specialized ministry within the body of Christ. (See Joshua 24:15; Matthew 4:18-22; 28:19; Luke 2:41-52; John 6:66-68; Acts 6:1-6; Romans 12:1-2).
[Option 2: Remove the stole from the gift box.]
 6. The stole worn by ordained persons symbolizes the yoke of Christ.
 - a. Ordination affirms and challenges those called by God to use their unique gift(s) to equip others for ministry. (Acts 13:1-3).

- b. Ordination confirms those called to be set apart for the specialized ministry of preaching and teaching the Word; administering the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper; and caring for the worship, order, and nurture of the church.
- E. Marriage and singleness—The grace of God empowers us to live a loving and productive life, both in our marriage and, for some, in singleness.

[Option 2: Remove the ring from the gift box]

- 1. Every Christian is called to a life of ministry, and every Christian is called to meaningful and loving relationships.
 - a. We are all members of the body of Christ.
 - b. We find our true selves as we share our lives with one another in the Christian community.
- 2. Persons called to singleness can experience abundant grace and joy.
 - a. The single person can find in Christ all that is needed for complete holiness and happiness.
 - b. Every Christian is called to live his or her life in covenant relationship to God and to other Christians.
- 3. Persons called to marriage can also experience abundant grace and joy.
 - a. Christian marriage joins two lives in the presence of God (Matt. 19:4-6).
 - b. Mutuality, love, and the intimate knowledge that comes from a shared life characterizes Christian marriage. (See Ephesians 5:21-31.)
 - c. God intends for marriage to be a means of grace for the children, the extended families, and the whole society. Each spouse re-presents Christ to his or her mate, family, and community.
 - d. Henri J. M. Nouwen wrote, "Marriage is not a lifelong attraction of two individuals to each other but a call for two people to witness together to God's love" [Henri Nouwen, *Clowning in Rome: Reflections on Solitude, Celibacy, Prayer, and Contemplation* (Garden City, N.Y.: Image Books, 1979), 46].

IV. Sacred moments are divine appointments with God.

- A. Sacred moments can be found in the **daily practices** that help connect us to God.

[Option 2: Remove the Bible, towel, and basin from the gift box.] Speakers have mentioned many of these items in the previous two talks. Let me review them briefly and add two more.

- 1. Prayer
 - a. Jesus invested time daily with God in prayer, providing a significant spiritual model for us. (See Luke 6:12; 9:18; 11:1; Mark 1:35; 6:46.)
 - b. Prayer involves living each moment with our hearts open to God.

- c. Like Paul, we are called to pray for others. (See Ephesians 3:14-19; Philippians 4:6-7.)

[Call attention to the 72-Hour Prayer Vigil chart and to pages in the Worship Booklet for additional help with prayer and meditation.]

- 2. Scripture study—spending time each day reading the Bible, hearing it expounded, meditating on it, and applying its truths to daily life. (See 2 Timothy 3:16-17; Psalm 119:103-105; Matthew 4:1-11; John 8:31-32.)
- 3. Worship
 - a. “I was glad when they said to me, ‘Let us go to the see!’” (Ps. 122:1).
 - b. If we do not center our lives in the worship of God (Deuteronomy 5:6-14; Hebrews 10:19-25), we will begin to worship false gods.
- 4. Spiritual friends and active participation in the body of Christ
 - a. Jesus invested time with his disciples. Mutual accountability in a small group is an essential aspect of Christian discipleship. (See John 13:34-35; Acts 2:42-47.)
 - b. Regular participation in the Christian community is an essential means of grace. It provides spiritual nurture and support. (See Hebrews 10:25.)
- 5. Fasting is a means of grace that connects us to God.
 - a. Both the Old and New Testaments teach fasting. (See Isaiah 58:5-7; Matthew 4:2-11; 6:16-18.) We understand this discipline as **fasting from the things of earth** to allow time for **feasting on the things of the Spirit**.
 - b. A pastor or spiritual director needs to provide guidance for the spiritual practice of fasting.
 - c. Fasting can include refraining from activities that hinder our relationship with God. We can fast from television, from complaining, or from any activity that keeps us from God.
- 6. Generosity
 - a. Jesus invested time and energy in serving and helping others. He willingly sacrificed all power and position in heaven in order to take the lowest position of service (Phil. 2:5-11).
 - b. Before he gave himself for us on the cross, Christ took the most humble role of a servant to teach his disciples the importance of serving others with humility and grace (John 13:1-20).
 - c. Jesus had much to say about giving money. The way a person spends his/her money reveals his/her heart (Luke 12:32-34; Matt. 25:14-29).
- B. Sacred moments occur in the shared experiences of **confession, forgiveness, healing, and reconciliation**. These means of grace restore us to physical and spiritual health, true freedom, and Christian community.

[Option 2: Remove the bottle of healing oil from the gift box.]

1. The Greek word for *healing* in the Gospels is the same word used for *salvation*: *sozo*. (See Luke 7:50; 9:24.)
2. We all require healing and wholeness of some sort: spiritual, physical, emotional, mental, or relational. God wants to make us whole. (See Luke 7:18-23; Matthew 12:15-21.)
3. Healing played an essential role in the ministry of Jesus and the disciples. (See Matthew 9:18-34; Luke 9:1-6; Acts 4:9.)
4. Confession and forgiveness relate to spiritual healing within the body of Christ. “Confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, so that you may be healed” (James 5:16).
5. The ministry of healing belongs to the church as an expression of God’s love, power, and glory. (See James 5:13-15.)
6. In every authentic healing ministry, Jesus Christ is clearly present and acknowledged as the healer. In fact, Christ re-presented is the only authentic and authoritative means of grace for the forgiveness of sin, physical healing, or inner spiritual healing and human wholeness. (See Matthew 9:2-8.)
7. Reconciliation comes as the restoration of relationship; this is the will of God and the mission of God in the world. (See 2 Corinthians 5:18-19.)

V. God calls us to open ourselves to divine grace in many ways.

- A. In human relationships—in situations like the birth of a child, the return of a loved one, the surprise of a random act of kindness.
- B. In nature—the beauty of a flower or a sunset, the grandeur of a mountain peak or the mystery of a valley stream, the birth of a kitten, the playfulness of a newborn colt.

VI. Conclusion

To make room for the new life in Christ, something old has to die. John 15:1-2 makes clear that God prunes away the dead branches and the unproductive parts of our life in order make us more fruitful and productive. Now we will move to the chapel/sanctuary for a special service of Holy Communion—to share in this sacramental meal where the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ will be re-presented to us. Just like the first disciples, we go to the Lord’s table in all our human weakness and brokenness.

Please go in silence and sit with your table group. The assistants will direct us.

De Colores!

ABBREVIATED OUTLINE

MEANS OF GRACE

Lead the Prayer to the Holy Spirit

Please turn to page 48 in your Worship Booklet and join me in the Prayer to the Holy Spirit.

Introduction (1–2 minutes)

My name is _____, and the title of this talk is MEANS OF GRACE.

I. The means of grace are sacred moments where Christ is re-presented or becomes present to us anew. (5 minutes)

- A. Sacraments are sacred moments that Jesus gave us by clear instruction and example in the scripture.
- B. The number of sacraments celebrated within the church varies according to the particular tradition or denomination.
- C. Christians adopt an attitude of love and humility toward the differing practices of various traditions.

II. The two sacraments observed by most Christians (15 minutes)

A. Baptism

[Option 2: Remove the pitcher and bowl from the gift box.]

- 1. Baptism marked the beginning of Jesus' public ministry (Matt. 3:13-17; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:21-22).
- 2. John the baptizer made it clear, "I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit" (Mark 1:8; parallel passages: Matt. 3:11; Luke 3:16; John 1:26, 33).
 - a. Jesus entrusted the ministry of baptism to his disciples (Matt. 28:19-20).
 - b. Christian baptism marks our new identity in Christ.
 - c. In the history of the Christian church, baptism has been experienced in different modes and at different ages.
- 3. The modes of baptism include:
 - a. *Immersion* (put under the water)—symbolizes being buried with Christ and raised with Christ to walk in newness of life (Rom. 6:3-4).
 - b. *Pouring* (where large bodies of water were not available)—This is another form of anointing; see Exodus 29:7 and Psalm 133:2. Third-century Christian art shows John the Baptist pouring water over Jesus.

- c. *Sprinkling* (washing by sprinkling water)—“I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean” (Ezek. 36:25). “You were washed. . . .” (1 Cor. 6:11).
 - d. The age for baptism varies among Christian traditions:
 - e. In the baptism of adults, we celebrate God’s love and justifying grace together in one act. God’s offer of a relationship is accepted, and the person being baptized is cleansed and incorporated into Christ’s body.
 - f. In the baptism of infants and children, we celebrate God’s unconditional love and promise for their lives.
4. Holy Communion
- [Option 2: Remove from the gift box the symbols you have selected, such as a loaf of bread and cluster of grapes, or a cup and a plate.]*
- a. Read 1 Corinthians 11:23-26.
 - b. Various Christian traditions refer to this sacrament by different names, including: Holy Communion, the Lord’s Table, the Lord’s Supper, the Eucharist (which means “grateful”), the Divine Liturgy (Eastern Orthodox), or the Mass (Roman Catholic and some Lutherans).
 - c. Jesus instituted the sacrament of Holy Communion during his last supper with his disciples. He commanded them to continue sharing the bread and the cup of the new covenant in remembrance of him (Luke 22:19-20).
 - d. In the first supper after the Resurrection, Jesus shared a meal with the travelers on the road to Emmaus—and their eyes were opened (Luke 24:13-35).
 - e. Since the time of the earliest Christians, disciples have shared in this sacramental meal where the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ is re-presented to all who come to receive in faith (Acts 2:42; 1 Cor. 10:16; 11:23-26).
 - f. When we come to the Lord’s Table, we come to the banquet table of God.

TAKE THE BREAK NOW.

[Part 2 of this talk consists of 15 to 20 minutes.]

[After the break begin with these words or something similar to mark the transition in the talk.]

Before the break we considered the two sacraments that most Christians agree are means of grace; in other words, ways that God meets our deepest human needs. While every sacrament is a sacred moment, we cannot call every sacred moment a sacrament.

III. In addition to the sacraments (however your congregation defines sacraments), we can describe many other means of grace as sacred moments. (10 minutes)

- A. Some sacred moments come as a surprise.

- B. Other sacred moments may come by divine appointment
- C. In the sacred moment of confirmation, the church celebrates the spiritual growth and conscious choice of the confirmand. Confirmation marks the confirmand's decision to accept the relationship offered by God.

[Option 2: Remove the kneeling cushion or confirmation book from the box.]

- D. Baptism, Call, Membership, and Ordination
- E. Marriage and singleness—The grace of God empowers us to live a loving and productive life, both in marriage and, for some, in our singleness.

[Option 2: Remove the ring from the gift box]

- F. Every Christian is called to a life of ministry, and every Christian is called to meaningful and loving relationships.
- G. Persons called to singleness can experience abundant grace and joy.
- H. Persons called to marriage can also experience abundant grace and joy.

IV. Sacred moments are divine appointments with God.

- A. Sacred moments can be found in the daily practices that help connect us to God.
 - 1. Prayer
 - 2. Scripture study
 - 3. Worship
 - 4. Spiritual friends and active participation in the body of Christ
 - 5. Fasting
 - 6. Generosity
- B. Sacred moments occur in the shared experiences of confession, forgiveness, healing, and reconciliation. These means of grace restore us to physical and spiritual health, true freedom, and Christian community.

[Option 2: Remove the bottle of healing oil and the handcuffs or rope from the gift box.]

- C. The Greek word for *healing* in the Gospels is the same word used for *salvation*: *sozo*. (See Luke 7:50; 9:24.)
- D. We all require healing and wholeness of some sort: spiritual, physical, emotional, mental, or relational. God wants to make us whole. (See Luke 7:18-23; Matthew 12:15-21.)
- E. Healing played an essential role in the ministry of Jesus and the disciples. (See Matthew 9:18-34; Luke 9:1-6; Acts 4:9.)
- F. Confession and forgiveness relate to spiritual healing within the body of Christ. "Confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, so that you may be healed" (James 5:16).

- G. The ministry of healing belongs to the church as an expression of God's love, power, and glory. (See James 5:13-15.)
- H. In every authentic healing ministry, Jesus Christ is clearly present and acknowledged as the healer. In fact, Christ re-presented is the only authentic and authoritative means of grace for the forgiveness of sin, physical healing, or inner spiritual healing and human wholeness. (See Matthew 9:2-8.)
- I. Reconciliation comes as the restoration of relationship; this is the will of God and the mission of God in the world. (See 2 Corinthians 5:18-19.)

V. God calls us to open ourselves to divine grace in many ways.

- A. In human relationships—in situations like the birth of a child, the return of a loved one, the surprise of a random act of kindness.
- B. In nature—the beauty of a flower or a sunset, the grandeur of a mountain peak or the mystery of a valley stream, the birth of a kitten, the playfulness of a newborn colt.

VI. Conclusion

To make room for the new life in Christ, something old has to die. John 15:1-2 makes clear that God prunes away the dead branches and the unproductive parts of our life in order make us more fruitful and productive. Now we will move to the chapel/sanctuary for a special service of Holy Communion—to share in this sacramental meal where the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ will be re-presented to us. Just like the first disciples, we go to the Lord's table in all our human weakness and brokenness.

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