

the senses, that by them He might admonish, instruct, and make us sure that what we see performed in a visible manner, externally, is effected internally in us by the power of God.'

'In this way the Sacraments are, in respect to us, signs confirming our faith in the promise of the Gospel; in respect to God, they are organs or instruments, through which God in the Word presents, applies, seals, confirms, increases, and preserves the grace of the Gospel promise in believers. The grace tendered in the Word is not different from that tendered in the Sacraments nor is the promise in the Gospel different from that in the Sacraments; but the grace is the same and the Word one and the same, except that in the Sacraments the Word is rendered visible, as it were, on account of our infirmity, by signs divinely appointed.' "

-- Heinrich Schmid, *The Doctrinal Theology of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* pp. 532-535.

d. The Roman Catholic View

The Baltimore Catechism No 3 makes the following statements:

"304. What is a sacrament:

A sacrament is an outward sign instituted by Christ to give grace. . . (c) When the sign is applied to the one who receives the sacrament, it signifies inward grace and has the power of producing it in the soul. The external action performed by the minister of the sacrament is called a sign of the inward grace because it signifies and represents outwardly what is produced inwardly and invisibly in the soul. The sacramental signs actually effect what they represent. In Baptism, for example, the application of the water and the pronouncing of the words are a sign which both represents the cleansing of the soul from sin and actually effects that cleansing. . .

307. Do the sacraments give sanctifying grace?

The sacraments do give sanctifying grace.

309. Do the sacraments always give grace?

The sacraments always give grace if we receive them with the right dispositions.

(a) The sacraments, validly administered, always give grace to those who receive them with the right dispositions, because the power of the sacraments does not depend on anything human but solely on the will of God as expressed by Christ when He instituted them. The right dispositions do not produce the grace; they merely remove the obstacles which would present the reception of grace. The right dispositions, or the acts and habits required as conditions in order that the sacraments have their effect, vary with different sacraments.

(b) It is important to prepare fervently for the reception of the sacraments, because ordinarily they confer grace in proportion to our dispositions."