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# Adsum

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*A Blessed and Grace-filled Christmas to all of you!*



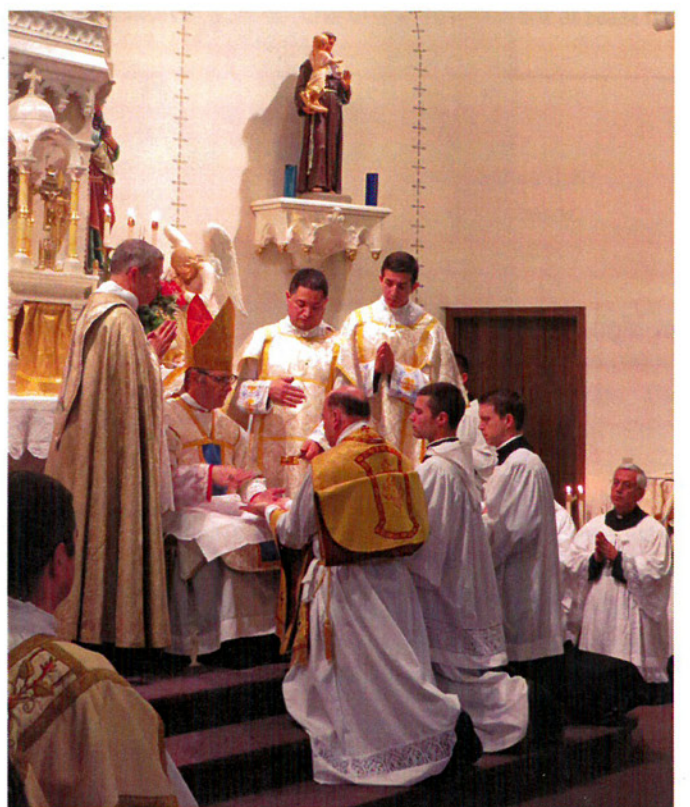
*That Thou wouldst vouchsafe to bless,  
sanctify, and consecrate*



*Frater Francis Crawford, CMRI  
receives the subdiaconate*



*Rev. Fr. Robert Letourneau receives the  
imposition of hands—the matter  
of the Sacrament*



*The anointing of hands of the  
newly ordained priest*



*The newly ordained priest concelebrates with the Bishop during the Pontifical High Mass*



*Among the priests assisting at the ordination ceremony: Fr. Gerard McKee CMRI, Fr. Alexander Kryssov, Fr. Gabriel Lavery CMRI, Fr. John Trough, Fr. Christopher Gronenthal, Fray Leon OFM, Fr. Benedict Hughes CMRI, Fr. Gregory Drahrman CMRI, Fr. Michael Anaya, Fr. Carlos Borja, Fr. Brendan Hughes CMRI, and Fr. Luis Jurado*

# *Father Connell Answers Moral Questions*

by Very Rev. Francis J. Connell, C.S.S.R., S.T.D., LL.D., L.H.D.

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## *VIATICUM TO A CHILD*

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**Question:** May a child in danger of death be given the Viaticum, even though he has not attained the use of reason?

**Answer:** A categorical answer to this question could be given only if the meaning of the phrase “use of reason” were clearly defined—which is not the case. As this expression is commonly used in the Code of Canon Law it evidently means that degree of intellectual maturity which renders one capable of moral judgments even to the extent of grasping the notion of grave sin (cf. Cappello, *De sacramentis* [Rome, 1938], I, n. 462). The use of reason in this sense is presumed to be attained at the age of seven (Can. 88 § 3). When a child has reached this stage of mental development he is bound by the precept of paschal communion (Can. 859, § 1).

However, when there is question of the administration of the Viaticum the Code requires only that the child have sufficient intellectual development and instruction to be able to distinguish the Body of Christ from common food and to adore It reverently (Can. 854, § 2). Evidently, this is something different from the “use of reason” as defined above. It does, indeed, imply some understanding of what the Holy Eucharist is, but it does not necessarily postulate the ability to understand and to commit grave sin. Indeed, the Code does not demand that the child perceive even those mysteries of faith which must be believed by necessity of means for salvation, and which must be known by the child who receives his first communion outside the danger of death (Can. 854, § 3).

The child of five years, or perhaps even four, who has received proper religious training from his parents might well fulfil the conditions for the reception of the Viaticum. And it should be noted that the Code not only permits but even commands that the Holy Eucharist be administered in such a case (Can. 852, § 2).

It is possible, therefore, that a child may be sufficiently intelligent and instructed to receive the Viaticum, yet could not be given Penance and Extreme Unction, for these sacraments demand the attainment of the use of reason in the sense of sufficient maturity to understand and to commit sin. However, it would seem that in practice, usually when a child is judged capable of receiving the Viaticum, he can be given enough instruction in a short time to dispose him for at least the conditional administration of Penance and Extreme Unction also.

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## *PERMISSION TO USE CONFESSORIAL KNOWLEDGE*

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**Question:** If a penitent has confessed a certain sin, and subsequently another person approaches the confessor and states that the penitent has given him permission to discuss the matter with the confessor, may this latter speak with the third party about the subject brought up in confession, with the assurance that he is not violating the grave obligation of the sacramental seal?

**Answer:** A person who has confessed a sin in the sacred tribunal of Penance may give the confessor the right to discuss this matter outside of confession, either with the penitent himself or with a third party. The extent of this discussion is limited to those topics which the penitent freely permits to be the subject of the conversation (CF. Cappello, *De Sacramentis* [Rome, 1938], II, n. 924). There is no intrinsic reason why this permission, relative to the discussion of the matter of confession with a third party, should not be communicated to the confessor from the penitent through this third party. Ordinarily, however, it would not be safe for a confessor to act on the statement of a third party to the effect that the penitent has given permission to him to discuss confessional matter with the priest. Before this could be done the confessor would have to be sure that the permission was given freely; he would have to be certain of the extent to which he may proceed in the discussion of the sin or sins in question. Rarely could he have such certainty. The proper course for the priest to follow under ordinary circumstance when a third party informs him that a permission of this kind has been granted by a penitent is to state that the matter will not be discussed unless the penitent personally tells the confessor that he may speak and declares definitely with what topics the conversation may be concerned.

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