

essential ordinances and practices (*see* GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT; ORGANIZATION; TEMPLES). Catholics affirm that grace centers in God's free gift offered through Christ in the sacraments and is infused to the soul. Baptism is essential for salvation. All sacraments are the necessary means of the grace needed for salvation. Mormon rites or ordinances are processes of spiritual rebirth in which the powers of godliness are manifest. They are received by all and all the ordinances are essential to salvation, from baptism to the higher ordinances of the temple. Their efficacy requires proper forms, ordained priesthood authority, and the faith and repentance of the person. There are degrees of salvation and the fulness of salvation or exaltation requires the fulness of the ordinances (*see* BAPTISM; CONFIRMATION; ENDOWMENT; TEMPLE ORDINANCES).

**EUCCHARIST.** For both Catholic traditions, the Eucharist is a sacrament in which the true body and blood of Jesus is physically present, that is, the actual saving reality of the Lord. The liturgical act of consecration is a true sacrifice in which, through transubstantiation, the elements of bread and wine become the body and blood of Christ. The Orthodox associates the act of the priest in this liturgy with veneration for icons, which represent their prototype who is Christ. Latter-day Saints understand the sacrament as a remembrance of the body and blood of Christ. Sanctification is from the Spirit and takes place in the recipients who bring a broken heart and contrite spirit to the prayer and the partaking (*see* SACRAMENTS).

**MARRIAGE AND FAMILY.** Although Catholicism and Orthodoxy understand celibacy to be a spiritual ideal, marriage is a grace-giving sacrament that symbolizes the bond between Christ and the Church. Catholics hold that this is a life-long contract and do not permit divorce. Latter-day Saints teach that the eternal glorification of the family, and of the community of families within the Church, is the highest spiritual possibility. As the high priest who officiated in the ancient temple was married; and as the apostles were married, so today marriage is a high ordinance, to which others are preparatory. The nurture and love of the family of man, which is ultimately the family of God, is the proper work and glory of the saintly life. When sealed and sanctified by the authority of the priesthood, the covenants and relationships and duties of parenthood continue into the next world (*see* CELIBACY; MARRIAGE: ETERNAL).

While honoring Mary, Latter-day Saints have no equivalent of the doctrines of the immaculate conception, perpetual virginity, and bodily assumption of Mary, nor of the Orthodox veneration of icons. Other LDS teachings differ significantly from traditional Catholic teaching: modification of classical readings of the omnipotence and omnipresence of God; the premortal existence of the spirits of all mankind; the affirmation that spirit is refined matter; the Fall as planned, voluntary, and essential to the growth of the soul amid contrast and opposition; the denial of original sin and of pedobaptism; the inclusive nature of the Abrahamic covenant; and the replacement of heaven-hell distinction with the teaching of degrees of glory in the resurrection.

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ALFRED BENNEY  
ROGER R. KELLER

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## CELEBRATIONS

Through their religious and community celebrations, members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints express some of their spiritual and social values and expectations. Although events and traditions in families and localities are celebrated often by members throughout the Church, the major celebrations help to define and express the unique religious identity and heritage of Latter-day Saints.

The mortal life cycle of individual Church members is typically marked by the performance of a series of formal PRIESTHOOD ORDINANCES. The most prominent are naming and BLESSING children, BAPTISM and CONFIRMATION, ENDOWMENT, and SEALING (temple MARRIAGE). These ceremonies, usually witnessed or participated in by the person's family and friends, consist of mak-

ing sacred COVENANTS, and receiving PRIESTHOOD BLESSINGS, and inspired counsel that provide guidance through mortality and prepare the recipient for eternity. These ordinances are often marked by informal celebrations with family and friends.

The family as a unit of both religious worship and eternal association is celebrated by many Latter-day Saints in daily activities and weekly FAMILY HOME EVENINGS. The daily activities may consist of scripture study, gospel discussion, prayers, or singing activities held usually at the beginning or ending of the day. Family home evening generally occupies one night a week. It is designed to strengthen the bonds of family members through a wide variety of spiritual, social, educational, and recreational activities, and thus it augments involvement in traditional holidays such as Christmas, Easter, Thanksgiving, and Mother's Day. Extended LDS families often participate on a larger scale with periodic family reunions.

The identity of Latter-day Saints as "modern Israel" finds its most exuberant expression in PIONEER DAY. This annual celebration commemorates the entrance of the first LDS PIONEERS into the Salt Lake Valley on July 24, 1847. For Latter-day Saints, this commemoration has come to symbolize the establishment of a divinely ordained "promised land" in the American West.

Since 1849, Pioneer Day has given Latter-day Saints an excellent opportunity to express their identity as a covenant people. In the context of devotionals, parades, dances, sporting events, banquets, and a host of other activities, Mormons review the manifestation of God's hand in the course of their history, the creation and sustaining of their mode of life, and the religious dimension of their continuing associations. Although the focus of Pioneer Day is Salt Lake City and the Mormon West, Latter-day Saints throughout the Church memorialize their religious heritage on July 24 with celebrations appropriate to their particular settings and circumstances.

The LDS identification of the Church as the living KINGDOM OF GOD ON EARTH finds its greatest cultural and religious expression at general conferences. These semiannual gatherings in April and October have been observed by Church leaders and members alike almost since the ORGANIZATION OF THE CHURCH ON APRIL 6, 1830. The conferences are currently held on the first Sunday of April and October, plus the preceding

Saturday. The months symbolically mark the changing of the seasons between winter and summer, and April is also usually the month when Easter comes, commemorating the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

General conference unites the divine authority, organization, doctrine, and spiritual resources of the Church. The salient symbols include the architecture of TEMPLE SQUARE; the hierarchical seating of Church leadership from the FIRST PRESIDENCY through the QUORUM OF THE TWELVE APOSTLES, the quorums of the SEVENTY, and the leading men and women of the AUXILIARY ORGANIZATIONS; the use of the scriptures and revelation in the addresses given; the expression of both diversity and solidarity by the gathered Church membership representing many nations in their sustaining the leadership; and reports heralding significant growth in the rapidly expanding Church membership.

The general conferences also serve as major occasions of personal pilgrimages for thousands of Latter-day Saints to travel to Salt Lake City in April or October. It is likewise an occasion of vicarious involvement for millions of others who follow the conference sessions through various telecommunications media. In addition, the conference proceedings are later printed and distributed. As a result, the general conferences have become an extremely important collective spiritual experience for Latter-day Saints throughout the world.

Through general conferences, and on a smaller scale through the weekly congregational worship services of individual WARDS and STAKES, Latter-day Saints renew and celebrate their membership in the organization that they recognize as the kingdom of God on earth.

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STEVEN L. OLSEN

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## CELESTIAL KINGDOM

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints teaches of three degrees of glory in the AFTERLIFE—the celestial, terrestrial, and teles-