In Caring Science literature, one can discern an increasing use of the concept known as “act”, with the term being attributed various meanings and significance. As to date, concept determination has not occurred regarding the “act” concept.

The purpose of this study is to better Caring Science’s body of knowledge by increasing understanding of the meaning of “act”. The study’s main research question is: What is the meaning of the concept “act”? With the help of the following sub-questions, answers to the main research question are sought: What is the meaning content of the concept “act”? What is the essence of the concept “act”? Based on the study’s purpose and main research question, the study’s search for knowledge can be considered fundamental research.

The study emanates from the Caring Science perspective that has been developed by the Department of Caring Science, Åbo Akademi University, and its hermeneutic approach is inspired by Gadamer (1997). Eriksson’s model of concept determination (1997) comprises the study’s method and is applied to the study’s ontological determination. In the study’s essence determination, which is part of the ontological determination, hermeneutic interpretation is used. The material used in the study is comprised of Swedish-language dictionaries published between 1870–2002, three main texts from Katolsk Katekes för det apostoliska vikariatet i Sverige (the Catholic Catechism for the Apostolic Deputyship in Sweden), as well as articles taken from Tidskriften Biblicum (the Biblicum periodical).

The ontological determination of the concept “act” resulted in the holy act, which consists of holy action that includes reconciliation, giving, and receiving. Universal reconciliation, offering, and sacrifice comprise the substance of the holy act, as well as communion which unites and makes the holy act what it is. Holy actions and ceremonies characterize the essence of the holy act. The holy act possesses movement, driving force, direction, and place.

When the meaning of “act” is reflected against the study’s theoretical perspective, new understanding of the concept occurs. The holy act increases the meaning of reconciliation, the process of becoming reconciled, and the struggle for reconciliation in the caring act. The holy act contributes to holy actions and ceremonies’ meaning for the ethical and caring acts.