

Understanding the Nature of Mystagogy

By

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Introduction

The term mystagogy comes from the Greek which means insertion/instruction into the mysteries of the sacramental life. Within the context of the OCIA the purpose of the Mystagogy is to guide the neophyte toward an active insertion into the mysteries of Christ as revealed through the sacramental life. It is an unfolding of the mysteries of Christ through Sacred Scripture and the articulation/instruction of the mysteries via the Creed.

A Primary Aim

A primary aim of mystagogy is to assist the neophyte in his understanding and application of sacred worship as a daily part of his life with Christ.

- ✦ Now, the newly initiated have been received into the Kingdom of Heaven and thus possess the grace received at the Easter Vigil to nourish and strengthen their intellect and will, faith, and reason that serves as the basis of their maturation in the life of the Church.

- ✦ The notion that the newly elect should be inserted into the Church as an usher, extraordinary minister of the Eucharist, or a prayer group misses the point completely. The response now is to assist the neophyte in actively entering into the mysteries of Jesus Christ in the Holy Eucharist.

The Love that Never Ends (The Application of Body, Heart, and Mind)

Instruction in the mystagogical stage of the catechumenate begins as the period of inquiry the moment the person begins to investigate Jesus Christ and His Church. From the very beginning, our responsibility is to patiently and prudently invite the catechumen/candidate to enter a conversation about the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

1. The Role of the Body

- ✦ The human being learns first through the use of their body and senses. Introduction, explanation, and application of Catholic language and vocabulary e.g., doctrine, liturgy and sacraments, moral life, and prayer.
- ✦ Expression of Liturgical Rituals-Liturgy of the Word, proclamation of the Gospel.
- ✦ Human witnesses-conversion stories, personal witness of the faith as a disciple of Jesus Christ.

Christian liturgy not only recalls the events that saved us but actualizes them, and makes them present. The Paschal mystery of Christ is celebrated, not repeated. It is the celebrations that are repeated, and in each celebration, there is an outpouring of the Holy Spirit that makes the unique mystery present.¹

Note: Mystagogy is progressive, it doesn't stop after the Easter Vigil, it is forever.

2. The Role of the Heart

- ✦ Catechesis is always oriented toward a relationship with Jesus Christ.
- ✦ Jesus Christ serves as the Mediator and thus takes direct aim at our heart.
- ✦ Our hearts turn toward a love for Jesus Christ, we offer the opportunity for the catechumen and candidate to call in love with Jesus Christ and His Church.
- ✦ Examples are Intercessory Prayer, examples of the Lives of the Saints, spiritual and corporal works of mercy, introduction to the beatitudes and their relation to the Ten Commandments.
- ✦ Christian witness

3. The Role of the Mind

- ✦ Express the relationship between Sacred Scripture, Sacred Tradition, and the Liturgy.
- ✦ Answer questions, and provide concise answers.
- ✦ Break open the Word of God.
- ✦ Teach Catholic doctrine (Catechism of the Catholic Church).
- ✦ Daily examination of conscience and reception of the Holy Eucharist.
- ✦ Teach a Catholic worldview
- ✦ Introduce more specific Catholic language, vocabulary, Catholic customs, and traditions.
- ✦ Study Sacred Scripture, pray with Sacred Scripture-Lectio Divina.
- ✦ Active liturgical participation.

The distinctive spirit and power of the period of post-baptismal catechesis or mystagogy derive from the new, personal experience of the sacraments and of the community.

RCIA, 247

¹ CCC 1104