

## PERIOD OF PURIFICATION AND ENLIGHTENMENT

*The water that I shall give will turn into a spring of eternal life*

- 125 The period of purification and enlightenment, which the rite of election begins, customarily coincides with Lent. In the liturgy and liturgical catechesis of Lent the reminder of baptism already received or the preparation for its reception, as well as the theme of repentance, renew the entire community along with those being prepared to celebrate the paschal mystery, in which each of the elect will share through the sacraments of initiation.<sup>1</sup> For both the elect and the local community, therefore, the Lenten season is a time for spiritual recollection in preparation for the celebration of the paschal mystery. <sup>[21, 152]</sup>
- 126 This is a period of more intense spiritual preparation, consisting more in interior reflection than in catechetical instruction, and is intended to purify the minds and hearts of the elect as they search their own consciences and do penance. This period is intended as well to enlighten the minds and hearts of the elect with a deeper knowledge of Christ the Saviour. The celebration of certain rites, particularly the scrutinies (see nos. 128-133) and the presentations (see nos. 134-136), brings about this process of purification and enlightenment and extends it over the course of the entire Lenten season. <sup>[22, 153]</sup>
- 127 Holy Saturday is the day of proximate preparation for the celebration of the sacraments of initiation and on that day the rites of preparation (see nos. 172-179) may be celebrated. <sup>[26]</sup>

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1 See Vatican Council II, Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity *Ad gentes*, no. 14.

# rites belonging to the period of purification and enlightenment

## Scrutinies

- 128 The scrutinies, which are solemnly celebrated on Sundays and are reinforced by an exorcism, are rites for self-searching and repentance and have above all a spiritual purpose. The scrutinies are meant to uncover, then heal all that is weak, defective, or sinful in the hearts of the elect; to bring out, then strengthen all that is upright, strong, and good. For the scrutinies are celebrated in order to deliver the elect from the power of sin and Satan, to protect them against temptation, and to give them strength in Christ, who is the way, the truth, and the life. These rites, therefore, should complete the conversion of the elect and deepen their resolve to hold fast to Christ and to carry out their decision to love God above all. [25, 154]
- 129 Because they are asking for the three sacraments of initiation, the elect must have the intention of achieving an intimate knowledge of Christ and his Church, and they are expected particularly to progress in genuine self-knowledge through serious examination of their lives and true repentance. [155]
- 130 In order to inspire in the elect a desire for purification and redemption by Christ, three scrutinies are celebrated. By this means, first of all, the elect are instructed gradually about the mystery of sin, from which the whole world and every person longs to be delivered and thus saved from its present and future consequences. Second, their spirit is filled with Christ the Redeemer, who is the living water (gospel of the Samaritan woman in the first scrutiny), the light of the world (gospel of the man born blind in the second scrutiny), the resurrection and the life (gospel of Lazarus in the third scrutiny). From the first to the final scrutiny the elect should progress in their perception of sin and their desire for salvation. [157]
- 131 In the rite of exorcism (nos. 141, 155, 162), which is celebrated by a priest or a deacon, the elect, who have already learned from the Church as their mother the mystery of deliverance from sin by Christ, are freed from the effects of sin and from the influence of the devil. They receive new strength in the midst of their spiritual journey and they open their hearts to receive the gifts of the Saviour. [156]
- 132 The priest or deacon who is the presiding celebrant should carry out the celebration in such a way that the faithful in the assembly will also derive benefit from the liturgy of the scrutinies and join in the intercessions for the elect. [158]
- 133 The scrutinies should take place within the ritual Masses ‘Christian Initiation: The Scrutinies,’ which are celebrated on the Third, Fourth, and Fifth Sundays of Lent; the readings with their chants are those given for these Sundays in the Lectionary for Mass, Year A. When, for pastoral reasons, these ritual Masses cannot be celebrated on their proper Sundays, they are celebrated on other Sundays of Lent or even convenient days during the week.

When, because of unusual circumstances and pastoral needs, the period of purification and enlightenment takes place outside Lent, the scrutinies are celebrated on Sundays or even on weekdays, with the usual intervals between celebrations. They are not celebrated on solemnities of the liturgical year (see no. 30).

In every case the ritual Masses ‘Christian Initiation: The Scrutinies’ are celebrated and in this sequence: for the first scrutiny the Mass with the gospel of the Samaritan woman; for the

second, the Mass with the gospel of the man born blind; for the third, the Mass with the gospel of Lazarus. [159]

## PRESENTATIONS

- 134 The presentations take place after the celebration of the scrutinies, unless, for pastoral reasons, they have been anticipated during the period of the catechumenate (see nos. 79, 103–104). Thus, with the catechumenal formation of the elect completed, the Church lovingly entrusts to them the Creed and the Lord’s Prayer, the ancient texts that have always been regarded as expressing the heart of the Church’s faith and prayer. These texts are presented in order to enlighten the elect. The Creed, as it recalls the wonderful deeds of God for the salvation of the human race, suffuses the vision of the elect with the sure light of faith. The Lord’s Prayer fills them with a deeper realization of the new spirit of adoption by which they will call God their Father, especially in the midst of the eucharistic assembly. [25, 181]
- 135 The first presentation to the elect is the presentation of the Creed, during the week following the first scrutiny. The elect are to commit the Creed to memory and they will recite it publicly (nos. 180–183) prior to professing their faith in accordance with that Creed on the day of their baptism. [183, 184]
- 136 The second presentation to the elect is the presentation of the Lord’s Prayer, during the week following the third scrutiny (but, if necessary, this presentation may be deferred for inclusion in the preparation rites of Holy Saturday; see no. 172). From antiquity the Lord’s Prayer has been the prayer proper to those who in baptism have received the spirit of adoption. When the elect have been baptised and take part in their first celebration of the eucharist, they will join the rest of the faithful in saying the Lord’s Prayer. [188, 189]

## PREPARATION RITES ON HOLY SATURDAY

- 172 In proximate preparation for the celebration of the sacraments of initiation:
1. The elect are to be advised that on Holy Saturday they should refrain from their usual activities, spend their time in prayer and reflection, and, as far as they can, observe a fast.
  2. When it is possible to bring the elect together on Holy Saturday for reflection and prayer, some or all of the following rites may be celebrated as an immediate preparation for the sacraments: the presentation of the Lord's Prayer, if it has been deferred (see nos. 136, 165-167), the 'return' or recitation of the Creed (nos. 180-183), the ephphetha rite (nos. 184-186), the choosing of a baptismal name (nos. 187-189), and the anointing with the oil of catechumens (nos. 190-194; for the rite of anointing the celebrant is a priest or deacon). [26, 193]
- 173 The choice and arrangement of these rites should be guided by what best suits the particular circumstances of the elect, but the following should be observed with regard to their celebration:
1. In cases where celebration of the presentation of the Creed was not possible, the recitation of the Creed is not celebrated.
  2. When both the recitation of the Creed and the ephphetha rite are celebrated, the ephphetha rite immediately precedes the 'Prayer before the Recitation' (no. 182).
  3. When included as a preparatory rite, the anointing with the oil of catechumens (nos. 190-194), which may be celebrated separately, may also be combined with the recitation of the Creed, either beforehand to prepare for the recitation or afterward to reinforce it. [195, 197, 206]

### MODEL FOR A CELEBRATION OF THE PREPARATION RITES

- 174 **SONG:** When the elect have gathered, the celebration begins with a suitable song.
- 175 **GREETING:** After the singing, the celebrant greets the elect and any of the faithful who are present, using one of the greetings for Mass or other suitable words.
- 176 **READING OF THE WORD OF GOD:** Where indicated in the particular rites, the reading of the word of God follows; the readings may be chosen from those suggested for each rite. If more than one reading is used, a suitable psalm or hymn may be sung between the readings.
- 177 **HOMILY:** Where indicated in the particular rites, a brief homily or an explanation of the text follows the reading of the word of God.
- 178 **CELEBRATION OF THE RITES CHOSEN:** See nos. 180-194.
- 179 **CONCLUDING RITES:** The celebration may be concluded with the prayer of blessing and dismissal given in nos. 196-197.

### RECITATION OF THE CREED

- 180 The rite of recitation of the Creed prepares the elect for the profession of faith they will make immediately before they are baptised (no. 219); the rite also instructs them in their duty to proclaim the message of the Gospel. [194]

## **EPHPHETHA RITE**

- 184 By the power of its symbolism the ephphetha rite, or rite of opening the ears and mouth, impresses on the elect their need of grace in order that they may hear the word of God and profess it for their salvation. [200]

## **CHOOSING A BAPTISMAL NAME**

- 187 The rite of choosing a baptismal name may be celebrated on Holy Saturday, unless it was included in the rite of acceptance into the order of catechumens (see no. 73). The elect may choose a new name, which is either a traditional Christian name or a name of regional usage that is not incompatible with Christian beliefs. Where it seems better suited to the circumstances and the elect are not too numerous, the naming may consist simply in an explanation of the given name of each of the elect. [203]

## **ANOINTING WITH THE OIL OF CATECHUMENS**

- 190 If the conference of bishops has not decided on its omission altogether (see no. 33,7), the anointing with the oil of catechumens that ordinarily forms part of the liturgy of baptism (no. 218) may be anticipated on Holy Saturday to save time in the celebration of the Easter Vigil. The presiding celebrant is a priest or a deacon. [206]
- 191 When this anointing is anticipated, care is to be taken that the elect who are to be baptised understand its significance. The anointing with oil symbolizes their need for God's help and strength so that, undeterred by the bonds of the past and overcoming the opposition of the devil, they will forthrightly take the step of professing their faith and will hold fast to it unfalteringly throughout their lives. [212]
- 192 The oil used for this rite is to be the oil blessed by the bishop at the chrism Mass, but for pastoral reasons a priest celebrant may bless oil for the rite immediately before the anointing. [207]

## THIRD STEP: CELEBRATION OF THE SACRAMENTS OF INITIATION

*When we were baptised we joined Jesus in death  
so that we might walk in the newness of his life*

- 198 The third step in the Christian initiation of adults is the celebration of the sacraments of baptism, confirmation, and eucharist. Through this final step the elect, receiving pardon for their sins, are admitted into the people of God. They are graced with adoption as children of God and are led by the Holy Spirit into the promised fulness of time begun in Christ<sup>1</sup> and, as they share in the eucharistic sacrifice and meal, even to a foretaste of the kingdom of God. [27]
- 199 The usual time for the celebration of the sacraments of initiation is the Easter Vigil (see no. 23), at which preferably the bishop himself presides as celebrant, at least for the initiation of those who are fourteen years old or older (see no. 12). As indicated in the Roman Missal, ‘Easter Vigil’ (no. 44), the conferral of the sacraments follows the blessing of the water. [208]
- 200 When the celebration takes place outside the usual time (see nos. 26–27), care should be taken to ensure that it has a markedly paschal character (see *Christian Initiation*, General Introduction, no. 6). Thus the texts for one of the ritual Masses ‘Christian Initiation: Baptism’ given in the Roman Missal are used, and the readings are chosen from those given in the Lectionary for Mass, ‘Celebration of the Sacraments of Initiation apart from the Easter Vigil.’ [209]

### Celebration of Baptism

- 201 The celebration of baptism has as its centre and high point the baptismal washing and the invocation of the Holy Trinity. Beforehand there are rites that have an inherent relationship to the baptismal washing: first, the blessing of water, then the renunciation of sin by the elect, their anointing with the oil of catechumens, and their profession of faith. Following the baptismal washing, the effects received through this sacrament are given expression in the explanatory rites: the anointing with chrism (when confirmation does not immediately follow baptism), the clothing with a white garment, and the presentation of a lighted candle. [28, 33]
- 202 **PRAYER OVER THE WATER:** The celebration of baptism begins with the blessing of water, even when the sacraments of initiation are received outside the Easter season. Should the sacraments be celebrated outside the Easter Vigil but during the Easter season (see no. 26), the water blessed at the Vigil is used, but a prayer of thanksgiving, having the same themes as the blessing, is included. The blessing declares the religious meaning of water as God’s creation and the sacramental use of water in the unfolding of the paschal mystery, and the blessing is also a remembrance of God’s wonderful works in the history of salvation.

The blessing thus introduces an invocation of the Trinity at the very outset of the celebration of baptism. For it calls to mind the mystery of God’s love from the beginning of the world and the creation of the human race; by invoking the Holy Spirit and proclaiming Christ’s death and resurrection, it impresses on the mind the newness of Christian baptism, by which we share in his own death and resurrection and receive the holiness of God himself. [29, 210]

203 **RENUNCIATION OF SIN AND PROFESSION OF FAITH:** In their renunciation of sin and profession of faith those to be baptised express their explicit faith in the paschal mystery that has already been recalled in the blessing of water and that will be connoted by the words of the sacrament soon to be spoken by the baptising minister. Adults are not saved unless they come forward of their own accord and with the will to accept God's gift through their own belief. The faith of those to be baptised is not simply the faith of the Church, but the personal faith of each one of them and each one of them is expected to keep it a living faith.

Therefore the renunciation of sin and the profession of faith are an apt prelude to baptism, the sacrament of that faith by which the elect hold fast to God and receive new birth from him. Because of the renunciation of sin and the profession of faith, which form the one rite, the elect will not be baptised merely passively but will receive this great sacrament with the active resolve to renounce error and to hold fast to God. By their own personal act in the rite of renouncing sin and professing their faith, the elect, as was prefigured in the first covenant with the patriarchs, renounce sin and Satan in order to commit themselves for ever to the promise of the Saviour and to the mystery of the Trinity. By professing their faith before the celebrant and the entire community, the elect express the intention, developed to maturity during the preceding periods of initiation, to enter into a new covenant with Christ. Thus these adults embrace the faith that through divine help the Church has handed down, and are baptised in that faith. <sup>[30,211]</sup>

204 **ANOINTING WITH THE OIL OF CATECHUMENS:** The anointing with the oil of catechumens takes place between the renunciation and the profession of faith, unless this anointing has been anticipated in the preparation rites of Holy Saturday (see no. 190) or the conference of bishops has decreed its omission from the baptismal rites (see no. 33,7). This anointing symbolizes the need of the elect for God's help and strength so that, undeterred by the bonds of the past and overcoming the opposition of the devil, they will forthrightly take the step of professing their faith and will hold fast to it unfalteringly throughout their lives. <sup>[212]</sup>

205 **BAPTISM:** Immediately after their profession of living faith in Christ's paschal mystery, the elect come forward and receive that mystery as expressed in the washing with water; thus once the elect have professed faith in the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, invoked by the celebrant, the divine persons act so that those they have chosen receive divine adoption and become members of the people of God. <sup>[31]</sup>

206 Therefore in the celebration of baptism the washing with water should take on its full importance as the sign of that mystical sharing in Christ's death and resurrection through which those who believe in his name die to sin and rise to eternal life. Either immersion or the pouring of water should be chosen for the rite, whichever will serve in individual cases and in the various traditions and circumstances to ensure the clear understanding that this washing is not a mere purification rite but the sacrament of being joined to Christ. <sup>[32]</sup>

207 **EXPLANATORY RITES:** The baptismal washing is followed by rites that give expression to the effects of the sacrament just received. The anointing with chrism is a sign of the royal priesthood of the baptised and that they are now numbered in the company of the people of God. The clothing with the baptismal garment signifies the new dignity they have received. The presentation of a lighted candle shows that they are called to walk as befits the children of the light. <sup>[33]</sup>

## **Celebration of Confirmation**

208 In accord with the ancient practise followed in the Roman liturgy, adults are not to be baptised without receiving confirmation immediately afterward, unless some serious reason stands in the way. The conjunction of the two celebrations signifies the unity of the paschal mystery, the close link between the mission of the Son and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and the connection between the two sacraments through which the Son and the Holy Spirit come with the Father to those who are baptised. <sup>[34]</sup>

209 Accordingly, confirmation is conferred after the explanatory rites of baptism, the anointing after baptism (no. 222) being omitted. <sup>[35]</sup>

## **The Neophytes' First Sharing in the Celebration of the Eucharist**

210 Finally in the celebration of the eucharist, as they take part for the first time and with full right, the newly baptised reach the culminating point in their Christian initiation. In this eucharist the neophytes, now raised to the ranks of the royal priesthood, have an active part in both the general intercessions and, to the extent possible, in bringing the gifts to the altar. With the entire community they share in the offering of the sacrifice and say the Lord's Prayer, giving expression to the spirit of adoption as God's children that they have received in baptism. When in communion they receive the body that was given for us and the blood that was shed, the neophytes are strengthened in the gifts they have already received and are given a foretaste of the eternal banquet. <sup>[36]</sup>

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1 Vatican Council II. Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen gentium*, no. 48; also Ephesians 1:10.



## PERIOD OF POSTBAPTISMAL CATECHESIS OR MYSTAGOGY

*You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy people; praise God  
who called you out of darkness and into his marvellous light*

- 234 The third step of Christian initiation, the celebration of the sacraments, is followed by the final period, the period of postbaptismal catechesis or mystagogy. This is a time for the community and the neophytes together to grow in deepening their grasp of the paschal mystery and in making it part of their lives through meditation on the Gospel, sharing in the eucharist, and doing the works of charity. To strengthen the neophytes as they begin to walk in newness of life, the community of the faithful, their godparents, and their parish priests (pastors) should give them thoughtful and friendly help. <sup>[37]</sup>
- 235 The neophytes are, as the term ‘mystagogy’ suggests, introduced into a fuller and more effective understanding of mysteries through the Gospel message they have learned and above all through their experience of the sacraments they have received. For they have truly been renewed in mind, tasted more deeply the sweetness of God’s word, received the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, and grown to know the goodness of the Lord. Out of this experience, which belongs to Christians and increases as it is lived, they derive a new perception of the faith, of the Church, and of the world. <sup>[38]</sup>
- 236 Just as their new participation in the sacraments enlightens the neophytes’ understanding of the Scriptures, so too it increases their contact with the rest of the faithful and has an impact on the experience of the community. As a result, interaction between the neophytes and the faithful is made easier and more beneficial. The period of postbaptismal catechesis is of great significance for both the neophytes and the rest of the faithful. Through it the neophytes, with the help of their godparents, should experience a full and joyful welcome into the community and enter into closer ties with the other faithful. The faithful, in turn, should derive from it a renewal of inspiration and of outlook. <sup>[39, 235]</sup>
- 237 Since the distinctive spirit and power of the period of postbaptismal catechesis or mystagogy derive from the new, personal experience of the sacraments and of the community, its main setting is the so-called Masses for neophytes, that is, the Sunday Masses of the Easter season. Besides being occasions for the newly baptised to gather with the community and share in the mysteries, these celebrations include particularly suitable readings from the Lectionary, especially the readings for Year A. Even when Christian initiation has been celebrated outside the usual times, the texts for these Sunday Masses of the Easter season may be used. <sup>[40]</sup>
- 238 All the neophytes and their godparents should make an effort to take part in the Masses for the neophytes and the entire local community should be invited to participate with them. Special places in the congregation are to be reserved for the neophytes and their godparents. The homily and, as circumstances suggest, the general intercessions should take into account the presence and needs of the neophytes. <sup>[236]</sup>
- 239 To close the period of postbaptismal catechesis, some sort of celebration should be held at the end of the Easter season near Pentecost Sunday; festivities in keeping with local custom may accompany the occasion. <sup>[237]</sup>

- 240 On the anniversary of their baptism the neophytes should be brought together in order to give thanks to God, to share with one another their spiritual experiences, and to renew their commitment. [238]
- 241 To show his pastoral concern for these new members of the Church, the bishop, particularly if he was unable to preside at the sacraments of initiation himself, should arrange, if possible, to meet the recently baptised at least once in the year and to preside at a celebration of the eucharist with them. At this Mass they may receive holy communion under both kinds. [239]



# Catechesis in Purification and Enlightenment: Preparing to Receive the Life of God

## CATECHETICAL THEMES FOR PURIFICATION AND ENLIGHTENMENT

The guidelines for this period (which normally coincides with Lent) as well as the Rites associated with it, enable catechists to shift the focus of teaching from an exposition of the Deposit of Faith to reflection and meditation.

Before they receive the sacraments of initiation:

“...the elect must have the intention of achieving an **intimate knowledge of Christ and his Church**, and they are expected particularly to progress in **genuine self-knowledge through serious examination of their lives and true repentance.**” (RCIA 142)

Below are themes appropriate to this period, taken directly from the RCIA guidelines and Rites:

### 1. The Mystery of Sin

- ✝ The power of sin (RCIA 141, 143)
- ✝ Acknowledgement of sin and failing (RCIA 153)
- ✝ Forgiveness of sin and freedom from the effects of sin (RCIA 144, 154, 469)

### 2. The Power of Darkness

- ✝ Satan and his minions (RCIA 141)
- ✝ Freedom from the effects of the devil (RCIA 144)
- ✝ Protection against temptation (RCIA 141)

### 3. Purification of Heart and Mind

- ✝ Searching the conscience (RCIA 139)
- ✝ Renunciation of self and penance (RCIA 139, 469)
- ✝ Conversion and change of heart (RCIA 153, 469)

### 4. The Healing Effect of Mercy

- ✝ Revelation and the healing of weakness (RCIA 469)
- ✝ Freedom from falsehoods concerning God (RCIA 470)
- ✝ Christ, the Lord of Mercy, in Baptism and Reconciliation (RCIA 167, 299)

### 5. The Incredible Sacrament: Baptism

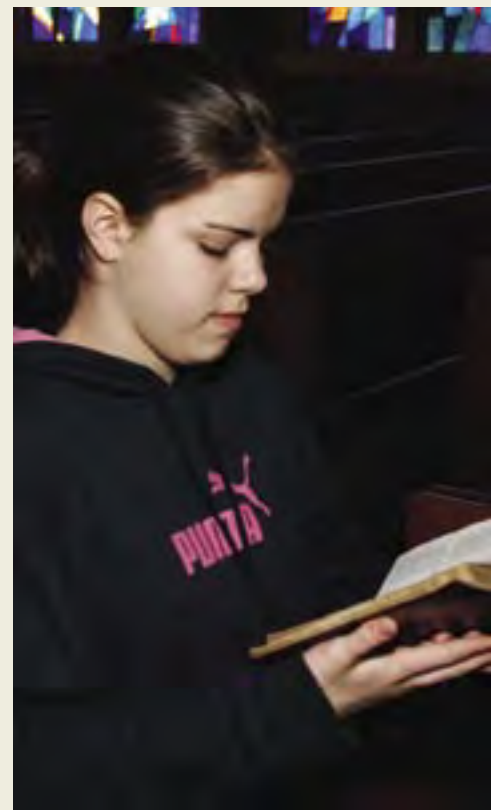
- ✝ Reflection on their Baptism (or their coming Baptism) (RCIA 452, 556)
- ✝ Ransomed by Christ, being baptized into his death and resurrection (RCIA 168, 174)
- ✝ Members of his body, brothers and sisters in God’s family (RCIA 134, 452, 465)

### 6. A Deeper Knowledge of Christ, the Savior

- ✝ Recognition of Christ’s presence in daily life (RCIA 470)
- ✝ Obedience to him (RCIA 131, 556)
- ✝ Being conformed to Christ’s suffering (RCIA 456)

### 7. Prayer

- ✝ Spiritual recollection (RCIA 138)
- ✝ Interior reflection (RCIA 139)
- ✝ The help of the Holy Spirit (RCIA 153)



## THE LITURGICAL HIGHLIGHTS OF THIS PERIOD

Catechesis in the period of purification and enlightenment should be significantly informed by the Rites that inaugurate and permeate these weeks of preparation for the sacraments of initiation.

### Rite of Sending to the Bishop (for Election and for Recognition)

- ✠ “found strength in God’s grace” (RCIA 537)
- ✠ “support in community’s prayers and example” (RCIA 537, 540)
- ✠ “prayers in spiritual formation” (RCIA 537, 540)
- ✠ “listened to the Word of Christ” (RCIA 541)
- ✠ “in the weeks ahead” (RCIA 544)
  - ✠ Strengthened in their call
  - ✠ Built into the kingdom of Christ
  - ✠ Sealed with the promise of the Holy Spirit

### RITE OF ELECTION AND CALL TO CONTINUING CONVERSION

#### *Unbaptized*

- ✠ Be faithful to God in return for his faithfulness (RCIA 554)
- ✠ Strive to reach the fullness of truth (RCIA 554)

#### *Baptized*

- ✠ Join in a Lenten spirit of repentance (RCIA 558)
- ✠ Hear the Lord’s call to continuing conversion (RCIA 557)
- ✠ Be faithful to the baptismal covenant (RCIA 557)

### Penitential Rite (*baptized*)

- ✠ 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Lent—Year A, B, C (Transfiguration of Christ from one of the synoptic Gospels)
  - ✠ “help to prepare to celebrate the sacrament of Penance” (RCIA 461)
  - ✠ Seek forgiveness of sins and healing of weaknesses (RCIA 469, 470)
  - ✠ Seek readiness for sealing by the Holy Spirit (RCIA 469)
  - ✠ Seek readiness for being fed at the Lord’s Table (RCIA 469)

### Scrutinies (*unbaptized*)

- ✠ 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Lent—living water (John 4:5–42 ~ the Samaritan woman at the well)
- ✠ 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Lent—light of the world (John 9:1–41 ~ the man born blind)
- ✠ 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Lent—resurrection and life (John 11:1–45 ~ the raising of Lazarus)

### Presentations (*unbaptized*)

- ✠ Creed—“the wonderful deeds of God” and “the great mysteries” (RCIA 147)
- ✠ Lord’s Prayer—“a new spirit of adoption” (RCIA 147)

### Deepening an inner adherence to the Church (RCIA 477) (*baptized*)

- ✠ Reflection on the mystery of their Baptism (RCIA 556)
- ✠ Reflection on their heritage: the tradition of the Church (RCIA 556)

### Sacrament of Penance (RCIA 482) (*baptized*)

- ✠ Healing the wounds of sin and strength for the way of holiness (RCIA 470)
- ✠ Trust in God’s mercy (RCIA 469)

### Preparation Rites (RCIA 185)

- ✠ Recitation of the Creed (RCIA 193)
- ✠ Ephephtha Rite (RCIA 197)
- ✠ Choosing a baptismal/Confirmation name (RCIA 200)





### Good Questions

In considering my spiritual walk as the masterwork of my life . . .

How well do I know Jesus from the Gospels?

Who will be my guides, my deep companions in my daily walk?

To whom am I accountable in my spiritual life?

What does it look like for me to listen in earnest?

What sins do I most lament and struggle with – those that steal my peace?

What sins do I least lament and struggle with – those I have made peace with, wrongheartedly?

What do I bring to my confessor about my prayer life?

Does God the Father desire to hide Himself from me?

How does God the Father desire to show me His life, my call, and our shared eternity?

What could I leave to follow Him?

What could I gain by following Him?

What would I consider two positive habits I have successfully and intentionally formed in recent years?

What is the best time of day for me to give time to God regularly?

What could a chosen prayer environment at home look like for me?

What does my Sunday look like; it is His day?

What do I do with my soul at bedtime?



*The school of holiness is always familial.*



*Jesus My Jesus, show me what is not yours in my life.*

How has my childhood fathering and mothering impacted me as a praying adult?

How has my awareness of your call as a father or mother impacted me as a praying adult?

How does God father me?

How does the Church mother me?

In God's plan, why do I need a Mother?

What do I need from God in terms of intimacy?

In what ways might prayer offer that intimacy to me?

What do I need from God in terms of toughening?

In what ways might prayer offer that toughening to me?



### Good Questions

In considering my spiritual walk as the masterwork of my life . . .

What is a saint?

What are my most persistent human fears?

What are my greatest fears in considering the idea to explicitly seek to be a saint?

What does it mean to be devout?

What currently is my greatest spiritual weakness; doing God's will . . .

Quickly? Carefully? Constancy?

Can I sit with the Lord through a few holy hours (constancy), in the near future (quickly) and journal with all these questions in earnest (carefully)?

# Catechesis in Mystagogy: Deepening in the Graces Received

*(Teaching from the Rites: see RCIA, 229, 230, 244)*

The time between Easter and Pentecost is spent in deepening the understanding and appreciation for the sacramental life. As well, the deepest meaning of discipleship must be examined, including the responsibility of all the baptized to give personal witness to the power of the Gospel, and to bring the light of Christian revelation to every corner of the world. Catechesis during this period should be driven by the Lectionary. The Church intends that the Lectionary readings for the Sundays and the Feast of the Ascension form the basis for the teaching given during this period.

## MYSTAGOGY READINGS FOR YEAR A

### **Second Sunday of Easter**

Acts 2:42-47

Psalm 118

1 Peter 1:3-9

John 20:19-31

*Sacrament of Penance ~ Apostolicity*

### **Third Sunday of Easter**

Acts 2:14, 22-33

Psalm 16

1 Peter 1:17-21

Luke 24:13-35

*Emmaus Event ~ Paradigm for the Mass*

### **Fourth Sunday of Easter**

Acts 2:14a, 36-41

Psalm 23

1 Peter 2:20b-25

John 10:1-10

*The Sheepfold = The Church ~ Relationship with Jesus*

### **Fifth Sunday of Easter**

Acts 6:1-7

Psalm 33

1 Peter 2:4-9

John 14:1-12

*Heaven ~ Relationship with the Father through Jesus*

### **Sixth Sunday of Easter**

Acts 8:5-8, 14-17

Psalm 66

1 Peter 3:15-18

John 14:15-20

*Relationship with the Spirit through Jesus ~ "do whatever He tells you"*

### **Ascension**

Acts 1:1-11

Psalm 47

Ephesians 1:17-23

Matthew 28:16-20

*The Great Commission ~ Evangelism/Witness ~ Necessity of Baptism*

### **Seventh Sunday of Easter**

Acts 1:12-14

Psalm 27

1 Peter 4:13-16

John 17:1-11a

*Prayer for Unity and Glorification of the Church ~ Apostolicity*

*The distinctive spirit and power of the period of postbaptismal catechesis or mystagogy derive from the new, personal experience of the sacraments and of the community. (RCIA 247)*

# Ideas for Post-Baptismal Catechetical Sessions, and the Neophyte Year

Ask neophytes to share their experiences of the sacraments, and provide an opportunity to reflect on the Vigil.

Help neophytes see the sacraments in light of Scriptural images (called “typology”). For example...

## **Baptism**

- ✦ Creation
- ✦ The Crossing of the Red Sea
- ✦ Living Water and the Samaritan Woman
- ✦ Water from Jesus’ Side

## **Eucharist**

- ✦ Manna in the Desert
- ✦ Multiplication of Loaves and Fishes
- ✦ Last Supper: Commandment of Love
- ✦ The Road to Emmaus

Tell the Story of the “wonderful works” of God again, this time highlighting the sacramental life, foretold in the Old Testament and now available to them in the New Testament.

Proclaim and reflect on Scripture for the post-baptismal catechesis—especially the Sunday readings of Year A of the Easter season.

Sing songs to celebrate the Easter season. Repeat songs from throughout the initiation process and the Easter Vigil.

## **Pray together:**

- ✦ Eucharistic Adoration
- ✦ Liturgy of the Hours
- ✦ Rosary
- ✦ Extemporaneous Prayer
- ✦ Guided Meditation
- ✦ Other Catholic Devotions

Tell stories of saints, such as those who were baptized or received into the Church as adults (St. Augustine, St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, etc). Discuss the Universal Call to Holiness.

Make presentations on new topics or topics discussed earlier, keeping in mind the additional grace now at work in the lives of the neophytes.

Discuss current moral/social issues in the light of the Church’s teaching to help neophytes gain a “Catholic worldview.”

Set aside time for silent reflection or sharing between neophytes, team, and sponsors.

Encourage neophytes to continue asking questions as they come up. Answer them.

Make a pilgrimage to a local shrine, the Cathedral, etc.

Attend a Mass for new Catholics with the bishop.

Have a potluck with the pastor every six weeks or so.

Keep in touch!—Maintain a mailing list of neophytes; send a newsletter; create a website.

Insist that sponsors maintain regular contact with neophytes.

Help neophytes begin a Bible study or join a small faith-sharing group in the parish.

Discuss what it means to share in the Church’s mission of evangelization—spread the Good News!

Share opportunities for involvement in social outreach activities in the parish.

Have a retreat for neophytes in Lent and a celebration on the anniversary of their initiation.

Ask neophytes to assist with the next RCIA group, perhaps as a team member.



# Portrait of a New Catholic

**F**OR THE NEW CATHOLICS, the sacraments of initiation mark the beginning of “newness of life” as fully initiated members of the Body of Christ. The new Catholics now have access to the fullness of sacramental grace. Having celebrated the sacraments of initiation, the neophytes have been “renewed in mind, tasted more deeply the sweetness of God’s Word, received the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, and grown to know the goodness of the Lord” (RCIA 245). Mystagogy, or post-baptismal catechesis, is the time when they are “introduced into a fuller and more effective understanding of mysteries through the Gospel message they have learned and above all through their experience of the sacraments they have received” (RCIA 245; note that RCIA 410 directs that newly-received Catholics and newly-baptized Catholics are to go through mystagogy together).

Mystagogy is essential to help the neophytes “grow in deepening their grasp of the Paschal mystery and in making it a part of their lives” (RCIA 244). Just as Lent provides an opportunity to enter into the desert to be purified and so become more like Christ, so the Easter season is an opportunity for the neophytes to rejoice in the risen Lord and, in that joy, to begin to practice their Catholic faith in its fullness. The RCIA ritual book explains that this will take place through “meditation on the Gospel, sharing in the Eucharist, and doing the works of charity” (RCIA 244).

## MEDITATION ON THE GOSPEL

The ritual book explains that the Sundays of the Easter season contain “particularly suitable readings from the Lectionary, especially the readings for Year A”

(RCIA 247) to aid the neophytes in grasping the mystery of what has taken place in the Easter sacraments. For example, the Fourth Sunday of Easter always contains readings taken from the tenth chapter of the Gospel of John focusing on Jesus as the Good Shepherd, reminding the neophytes that they are now “the sheep of his flock” and that he will always care for them.



The neophytes who were baptized at the Easter Vigil now begin to stay for the entire Mass on Sundays, and no longer participate in Reflection on the Word sessions. It may be beneficial for the RCIA leader to offer

ways that they might continue to have this experience (for example, joining a general parish Bible study that is lectionary-based, meeting after Mass or during the week as a group with their godparents, or discussing the Scripture readings at home with their families). Several Catholic publishing companies offer materials to use for this purpose.

It is important that the neophytes continue to listen to the Gospel message not only through the Scriptures that are proclaimed and homilies preached at Mass, but also through their own prayerful reading of Scripture. By meditating on the Gospel and by seeking to make it a part of their lives, neophytes grow in their personal identity as Catholics and in their relationship with God. If the neophytes had the opportunity to reflect on the first two gateway Rites, as suggested in Chapter 6, “The Major Rites of the Catechumenal Process,” and if Reflection on the Word sessions were a regular part of the catechumenal process, the neophytes will already have the tools and the habits to engage readily in post-baptismal mystagogy.





The task of systematic catechesis does not end with the reception of the sacraments of initiation. The period of mystagogy, and beyond Pentecost through the remainder of the neophyte year, can be used to establish a habit of ongoing deepening in the new Catholics' understanding of doctrine. Beyond mystagogy, the United States bishops recommend that the neophytes meet at least monthly "for their deeper Christian formation and incorporation into the full life of the Christian community" (NS 24). Monthly gatherings with the pastor or another member of the parish clergy, the RCIA leader, or a team member "just to chat" can be beneficial for them to ask questions about Catholic teaching or practices, clarifying aspects of their practice of the faith, and providing ongoing spiritual formation for the group. A monthly neophyte newsletter (or even a section of the parish's website) is another way to continue catechetical formation beyond regular meetings. Occasional retreat days during the first year also give opportunities for further systematic instruction in the faith and deepening of the life of prayer. Other ideas for keeping in touch with neophytes include regular emails or newsletters to inform them about events in the parish and the diocese. If fellowship was strong among participants before Easter, then they will seek to continue it in one form or another.

Neophytes should also be introduced to the vast and dazzling array of Catholic media explaining Scripture, the Christian life, and doctrine; telling the lives of the saints, Church history, and stories of conversion; and providing guidance in the life of Christian prayer, charity, and evangelization. Books, periodicals, newspapers, video and audio media, and the internet are available to a greater or lesser extent, depending on the financial resources of the parish and each neophyte. The RCIA team should use the neophyte year to give new Catholics a thorough introduction to Catholic media, helping them to learn where to look to find information, such as Catholic bookstores, subscribing to Catholic periodicals, finding good Catholic websites, and discovering additional opportunities for reading, listening, and viewing materials without cost, especially through a parish library if one exists.

### SHARING IN THE EUCHARIST

While meditation on the Gospel strengthens the neophytes in their personal life of faith, the surpass-

ing means for grasping the Paschal mystery has always been the Eucharist, the Church's great sign of unity (see CCC 1396, 1398), and is the source and sustainer of *communio*. Sharing in the Eucharist binds the neophytes more closely with other Catholics and helps the entire community to grow in its relationship with God through liturgical worship.

There are several ways to make the "Masses for the neophytes" (RCIA 248) during the neophyte year more effective in drawing the community closer together. Special places should be reserved for the neophytes, their godparents, and members of the RCIA team during this year (see RCIA 248). This shows the neophytes the importance that the community places on their presence, reminds the rest of the faithful to live their own Baptismal apostolate which these individuals have recently taken on, and helps the community to remember to keep the neophytes in their prayers.

Both the Sunday homilies and the intercessions should "take into account the presence and needs of the neophytes" (see RCIA 248). The homilies that are offered throughout the Easter season should, for example, help keep the focus on Baptism and the other sacraments of initiation, and should remind both the neophytes and the rest of the faithful of the need to live out their Baptismal apostolate in both word and deed. Offering one of the Prayers of the Faithful after the Easter season (for example, one weekend each month) for the neophytes is another way to keep them on the minds and in the hearts of the community once the Easter season has passed (see Appendix VI of this *Manual*, "Prayers of the Faithful by the Calendar").

The pastor and RCIA leader should maintain especially close contact with the neophytes. The most recent study of new Catholics, completed several years ago by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, noted with concern that not even two-thirds of U. S. neophytes regularly attended Mass on Sundays (or the vigil Mass on Saturday evening) (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Journey to the Fullness of Life: A Report on the Implementation of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults in the United States*, October 2000). It is not much comfort to realize that this is twice the percentage of all U. S. Catholics who go to Mass every week.





## DOING THE WORKS OF CHARITY

While the neophytes and the entire community must grow in their personal identity as Catholics (meditating on the Gospel) and in their corporate identity as the Body of Christ (sharing in the Eucharist), the reason Catholics do these things is not only personal but also communal—to turn to the service of others. From the time the Rites of Acceptance and Welcoming were celebrated, various forms of parish service should be made known to the participants, and they should have been invited to begin engaging in service to the community. Now they are full-fledged members of the parish, and live the “law of love”: *“By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But if any one has the world’s goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God’s love abide in him? Little children, let us not love in word or speech but in deed and in truth. By this we shall know that we are of the truth, and reassure our hearts before him”* (1 Jn 3:16–19).

Aided by the grace of the sacraments, the new Catholics are able to put the Gospel message which they have heard throughout their formation into practice in a more complete way. They are able to respond more and more as a disciple of Christ would when they encounter situations at home, at work, and elsewhere. Their access to sacramental graces enables them to act differently from the way the world would have them act. A dying to self leads to a rising to the new life of self-gift, a desire to respond to however God calls the neophyte to work for others. The fifty days of the Easter season can be an opportune time to encourage the new Catholics to rethink their choices and, to the extent that their health, obligations to family and employment, and availability of means of transportation permit, intensify their existing commitments to service (including changing commitments to other forms of service as appropriate).

During their first year as Catholics, neophytes should be securely established in the life of the parish. The difficulties of this year can be great. Even though the regular formation experienced during the catechumenal process is completed, the neophytes must be supported and strengthened to grow in faith, hope, and charity as they continue to live the moral life, the

sacramental life, and the liturgical life. A Bible study with new friends in the parish, a charitable work to join, and opportunities to contribute special skills to the work of the parish should all be aspects of this year. Throughout the year, care should be taken to make sure that the neophytes are always specifically invited to parish missions, presentations by visiting speakers, and other adult education events. They also can be helped to join an existing small Christian community, or to establish a new community with their fellow neophytes. The entire community of the faithful should endeavor to give their loving and friendly help to the neophytes; in so doing, they themselves, together with the neophytes, enter ever more deeply into the mystery of Christ (see GDC 168).

When the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops looked at the incorporation of neophytes into parish life, they found that “among the most appreciated parts of the RCIA process cited by the survey participants is incorporation into parish life. The RCIA is viewed as a helpful instrument for enabling participants to become more fully integrated into the community’s life and mission. This element is rated as important to the participants as growing closer to God, experiencing conversion, and learning about the Catholic faith” (USCCB, *Journey to the Fullness of Life: A Report on the Implementation of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults in the United States*, October 2000).

While acknowledging that there are many ways that parish communities can become better, the USCCB report commented that neophytes who were surveyed expressed “particular appreciation for the wide range of activities available to them in their parishes, the strong sense of community that they experienced, and the quality of the clergy who are assigned to them.” Nevertheless, there is a long way to go to fully incorporate neophytes into the life of the parish. Only half of survey respondents actually participated actively in “parish ministries and committees” (USCCB, *Journey to the Fullness of Life*).

## THE MISSION TO EVANGELIZE

Over the course of the neophyte year, the new Catholics will continue to grow in their faith. They will find joy in the celebration of the sacraments and





in the welcome they receive into the parish community. As they celebrate the seasons and feasts of the liturgical year, they experience the mystery of Christ as presented in the Mass and other prayers of the Church, in the joys and sorrows of their own lives, and in the life of the parish, the diocese, and the universal Church. Some will rejoice that they now share the faith of their spouse, or of a Catholic family into which they had married. Others will find that their parish has given them new purpose and new friendships. Some may also experience sorrow as they lose contact with friends who do not agree with their decision to become Catholic or who have a way of life which they find does not support them in living as a Christian. Some may suffer the loss of closeness with parents who did not want a son or daughter to become a Catholic. They are called to accept their suffering for the sake of making their Beloved more loved.

Neophytes should experience a filling up with God's zeal to unmake the world's work in others' souls. Neophytes should share the joy that they have found in the Catholic faith with their families, friends, and co-workers. The witness of individuals who have made a decision to become Catholic and who live the fullness of the Christian life with joy and enthusiasm is a powerful force to draw others to the Church. However, they should also remember that, while some might see their joy and ask about becoming Catholic themselves, not everyone will share their excitement and some people might even be cynical or rude. As neophytes live out their Baptismal apostolate to bring Christ to the world, it is essential for them to find ways to witness to their new-found faith outside of the parish, despite indifference and rejection. They must come to understand that they will always be a minority, but nonetheless always look for opportunities to work in the "mission field" wherever they live and whom-ever they encounter (see GDC 86).

In restoring the catechumenate, the Second Vatican Council reminded the Church of her call to evangelize and her responsibility to provide formation for the men and women who approach the Church seeking the sacraments of initiation so that they may be "introduced into the life of faith, liturgy and charity of the People of God by successive sacred rites" (AG

14). The Church succeeds in accomplishing her mission every time an individual begins the Christian initiation process, is initiated, and embarks upon the Christian life in the company of his or her brothers and sisters in the faith. The paths taken by the men and women who have entered into the mystery of Christ through the adult Christian initiation process vary greatly after initiation. Many raise families who are strong in the faith. Some are called to priesthood, religious life, or the permanent diaconate (see GDC 86). Others respond to God's call through a life entirely committed to generous service to others. All are called to spread the Good News of God's love and salvation which he offers to all through the Church. If those who have taken on the name of Christian live out their Baptismal apostolate, then the world will be transformed.


#### THE CATHOLIC WORLDVIEW

What is the Catholic worldview? It is the way that Catholics perceive, think, and act in light of the authentic realities and transcendent truths that God has revealed through the Church. It is seeing and understanding the world *as Christ and his Church see it*. Becoming Catholic is not simply like joining a club; it is a change of attitude, perception, and intent in life, to differing degrees, depending on the spiritual place where an individual was when he or she first began the Christian initiation process.

Developing a Catholic worldview takes time, usually several years. Many new Catholics find themselves saying, "In *my* church..." not meaning the Catholic Church but the ecclesial community they last attended or in which they had grown up. Eventually, they begin to correct themselves: "Well, I really mean *my old* church." They may discover with surprise that they look at an issue in a different way, or they may discover that new issues arise that they had never dealt with before, and they desire to understand them from a Catholic perspective. These are signs that they are beginning to identify themselves as Catholics and to form a Catholic worldview.

In their new identity, some neophytes may face decisions about habits or ways of thinking which they discover are not consistent with their new life in





Christ. Some may have a radical new perspective on how they relate to their families and friends, how they engage in their jobs, and how they see the world at large. Others will have less dramatic transformations but will find that they are “different” somehow from the person they were when they began the Christian initiation process. More and more, they see things and events through new eyes: those of a Catholic Christian.

Every person has a worldview, whether or not he or she consciously thinks about it. A worldview is the way of thinking and feeling through which an individual understands the people and events of his or her culture, and through which decisions are made as to his or her beliefs and actions. It is formed by the culture in which people live, and the circumstance and events of their own and others’ lives. What kind of lifestyle choices are made, what one looks for in a spouse, decisions about the number of children to have, where to live, what kind of employment to seek, what goals to seek in life—all are formed by one’s worldview. Attitudes about public issues such as crime and punishment and war, the legality of abortion and euthanasia, the government’s role in helping the poor and the sick and immigrants, are colored by one’s worldview; even whether to view public issues in a moral light is affected by one’s worldview. Participation in the popular culture affects a person’s worldview, and a person’s worldview affects how much he or she chooses to participate in, or disengage from, the popular culture.

Since beginning the Christian initiation process, the neophytes’ worldview has been changing, thanks to prayer, the witness of other Catholics, learning the Church’s teachings, and the graces they have received from the Rites of the Christian initiation process and the sacraments of initiation. The reception of the sacraments brings sacramental grace and light to their minds and hearts to aid them in developing their Catholic worldview. As their minds and hearts continue to be fed on Scripture, the liturgy, reception of the Eucharist and the sacrament of Reconciliation, prayer, and continued study of the Church’s doctrines, the fullness of Catholic truth begins to permeate all areas of their thinking. They may find themselves more sensitive to issues concerning life, human dignity, the value of suffering, the importance of family, the dignity

of labor, and stewardship of the natural world—in short, every aspect of human life and society. They may find that their own lifestyles are too shallow and extravagant. Their goals in raising their children may begin to focus less on the “right” college and career, and more on preparing them for eternity.

## CATHOLIC PRINCIPLES

By the time participants have received the sacraments of initiation, the RCIA leader should have ensured that they have heard, understood, and been formed by principles that define for them a Catholic worldview. Taken together, the following nine points comprise one way of describing the principles of a Catholic worldview:

### *Who God is Always Informs Us About What God Does*

“*God is love*” (1 Jn 4:8). This is who God is; his essence is love. This central truth sheds light on all others in the Deposit of Faith, and informs his followers of the essential purpose of all of God’s actions—from the first act of creation, through the long drama of salvation history, down to the final act of just estrangement of a damned soul and the final act of merciful espousal of a saved soul. God’s power is not wielded in an arbitrary way (see CCC 271, 373), and he wishes us to know this by revealing his “innermost secret” (CCC 221, citing 1 Jn 4:8, 16). God is a family of Persons whose life is love, an eternal exchange of complete self-gift (see CCC 221). The fact of the Blessed Trinity, one of the two core tenets of the Christian faith (see GDC 100), illuminates all the other mysteries of the faith, and the mystery of humankind itself, made in the image of the Trinitarian God. Trinitarian love is our source—God’s love outpoured in the act of creation, of which humanity is the crown. Trinitarian love is the Divine charity that is infused into every Christian soul at Baptism. Trinitarian love is the point of being Christian at all, for through our redemption our deformed and defaced human nature is restored to God’s original purpose, the loving gift of self, the death to self that gives eternal life for which each of us was created. Who God is—love—informs us why he made us free beings—love demands that the beloved have





authentic freedom to respond. Free will is necessary because we must be able to *choose* to love God, not be *compelled* to love him; we must be able to *choose* to give ourselves to others, not be *compelled* to self-gift. Yet the necessity of free will opened the possibility of abusing that freedom. In this way love also necessitates taking the risk that the beloved would say “no.” Hence the potential for that which is evil to come into existence in a creation wholly authored by he who is All Holy. Thus are the questions of free will and evil (and all aspects of Catholic life and doctrine) enlightened by the logic of God’s loving identity—God’s essential nature informing us, sometimes dimly, sometimes with burning clarity, of the reasons for God’s actions.

### ***The Content of the Faith Reflects the Character of God***

Our God is one God, not three, and the Catholic faith given to us is one as well. All of the truths of the faith begin with the central doctrines of the Trinity and the Incarnation, and flow from these core doctrines organically. St. Paul, in writing of the Mystical Body of Christ, used the analogy of the human body in its organic wholeness: *“The eye cannot say to the hand, ‘I have no need of you,’ nor again the head to the feet, ‘I have no need of you.’ On the contrary, the parts of the body which seem to be weaker are indispensable”* (1 Cor 12:21–22). As with the Mystical Body of Christ, so with the doctrines of the faith. Each doctrine is arranged in its proper relation to the others (called the “hierarchy of truths”) and each is essential to the whole, so that the entire Deposit of Faith would fail to hold together logically if even one doctrine—one part of that organic truth—was removed.

God’s attributes are truth, goodness, and beauty, and all three are attributes of the faith as well. The intellect seeks to know truth, and the will seeks the good. In the Catholic worldview, doctrinal and moral absolutes are the source of human freedom and the standard by which all situations are judged and the true basis of human freedom. Morality flows from recognizing the truths of our human nature, the original harmonies of body and soul that were destroyed by the sin of our first parents. God has revealed who and what we are in Jesus Christ our Lord, who “fully reveals man to himself and brings to light his most

high calling” (GS 22). Human freedom is God’s gift to enable his beloved creatures to seek the good; that is, to seek Goodness Itself. Morality, therefore, is not rule-following; it is the pursuit of happiness.


Finally, the Catholic faith is beautiful, and everything that is Catholic should be beautiful. Beauty, one of God’s attributes, is reflected in the beauty created for his glory, especially the art and architecture and music that houses, adorns, and accompanies worship.

### ***God Has the Plan***

A Catholic worldview is imbued with a sense of transcendence—the majesty of God in relation to his creatures: *“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, says the Lord. For as the Heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts”* (Is 55:8–9). Yet from the beginning God intended intimacy with his human creatures, and thus the Catholic is equally imbued with the immanence of God who, as Jesus told his disciples, is always near: *“I will pray the Father, and he will give you another Counselor, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth... you know him, for he dwells with you, and will be in you. I will not leave you desolate; I will come to you”* (Jn 14:16–18).

Even while humans have, again and again, failed to keep the covenantal promises, God has remained faithful to the covenant (see Heb 10:23). God invites us to life in the covenant according to our nature as beings who exist in time. He accommodates the revelation of himself to our nature, gradually and incrementally bringing us to knowledge and love of him. He has made our relationship with Jesus Christ, the Second Person of the Trinity who took our human nature and became truly man while remaining truly God, the center of being Catholic. At its height, this relationship takes the form of spousal love (see Lk 5:34–35) and, in each human life, God’s justice and mercy are offered efficaciously as a husband cares for and loves his wife, not as a judge would mete out justice to a condemned criminal. Christ humbled himself to share in our humanity so that he might lift us up to share in his Divinity (see CCC 460, 526). A Catholic worldview is founded on the Blessed Trinity and the recognition of God’s plan and of Jesus Christ as the Lord of history and of each individual life:





*He destined us in love to be his sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace which he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. . . . For he has made known to us in all wisdom and insight the mystery of his will, according to his purpose which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in Heaven and things on earth. In him, according to the purpose of him who accomplishes all things according to the counsel of his will, we who first hoped in Christ have been destined and appointed to live for the praise of his glory (Eph 1:5-6, 9-12).*

### **What God Enters into, He Redeems**

This is the core of the distinctively Catholic sacramental principle. In God's plan, the visible creation becomes a channel for that which is invisible. The Catholic understands in his very being that the Incarnation is the key to understanding how God works. God uses human nature, the ensouled body and embodied soul, to accomplish his purposes. Jesus entered the womb of Mary, and made motherhood holy in a way that it had never been understood in any prior culture. He chose to live in poverty, and thus made poverty a powerful means of drawing nearer to God that uncounted millions would vow themselves to in centuries to follow. He entered suffering and death, the greatest consequences of sin, and thereby made suffering necessary for our sanctification (see Rom 8:17) and an efficacious means of helping others (see below). This is the paradox that the "way of perfection passes by way of the Cross" (CCC 2015), that "*whoever would save his life will lose it; and whoever loses his life for [Jesus'] sake and the gospel's will save it*" (Mk 8:35). By his death, Jesus redeemed death itself. Instead of death being the worst curse of sin, believers now know that Jesus has transformed it into the only route to eternal blessedness (see 1 Cor 15:54-55). God can bring good from evil (see Rom 8:28; Gen 50:20), for God wastes nothing, and anything human can be used to glorify God. The redemption of the material world (see Rom 8:19-22) is the reason that God uses the sacraments as the continued history of Christ on earth. In every time and in every age, God uses the material world

to pour out his grace, most superlatively through the sacraments of his Church.

### **Jesus Did Not Come to Take Away Suffering, But to Give It Meaning**


The world has such a horror of suffering that it often uses deeply immoral ways to avoid it. In dramatic confrontation with the popular culture, which fears suffering above all else and will use any means, moral or immoral, to evade it, the Catholic worldview sees that suffering is not valueless. Jesus' purpose was to redeem fallen humanity; he came to deal with the greatest evil, which is not suffering, but sin.

The cross of Jesus has redeemed suffering itself. Jesus has told us that "*[i]f any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me*" (Mk 8:34). Furthermore, human suffering has value to God; he has given it redemptive power (see Col 1:24). Sanctified by Christ in his Paschal mystery, human suffering has been endowed with redemptive value in light of Christ's sacrifice. Not only is holiness attained only through suffering, but also the Christian is able to suffer for others, and thereby impart grace to other souls. We can take confidence from the fact that God will not test us beyond what we can bear (see 1 Cor 10:13).

### **We are Saved as a Family, Not Just as Individuals**

Catholicism is not a "me and Jesus" faith in which all that matters is repentance for sins and acceptance of Jesus as one's Lord and Savior. God's relationship with human beings has always, from the beginning of our creation, operated through familial covenants, an exchange of persons in which promises are made. God has always worked with his people this way, both with Israel and with the New Israel, the Catholic Church (see Lk 22:20). On the first Pentecost, when St. Peter finished speaking to the crowd, "*they were cut to the heart*" and asked St. Peter and the apostles what they should do (see Acts 2:37). St. Peter instructed them to repent of their sins and to be baptized (see Acts 2:38), which incorporated them into the Body of Christ (see 1 Cor 12:13). God has fashioned our redemption to be interdependent, declaring that to love neighbor is to love God: "*Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me*" (Mt 25:31-46).





Fellowship is necessary to the practice of Catholicism; love of the brethren teaches charity and forgiveness (see GDC 86). A superb “first thought” upon arising in the morning is “Who has God given me to love today?”

### ***God Normally Works Through the Normal***

While God has never failed to suspend the physical laws of the universe to demonstrate his power and show his glory, the faithful Catholic does not expect that this is the only or the most often way God will work in his or her life. Most Christians with terminal cancer will not be healed miraculously, but will find that the blessings God intends are not in their case to be in the nature of a miracle, but in the nature of the normal act of dying—the lessons of dependency upon the Lord in times of fear and pain, and the paradox of surrendering to the normal ways in which God calls most of us home, and by which he purifies souls very powerfully. God normally interacts with each person within the confines of the physical laws that he has ordained, and has saved us in such a way that those physical laws can be used in his plan, not always subordinated. Otherwise, our faith would not be based on trust in God, whom we cannot see—which is an act of acknowledging and responding to *love*, but more so on miraculous events that we can see—which is an act of acknowledging and responding to *power*. God desires us to be attracted not primarily to his power, but to his love, which is in part why Jesus so fully laid down the trappings of Divine power to live in normalcy and to carry out the great saving act of love by a death that would attract by the very paradox of its powerlessness. Jesus told St. Thomas and, through him, us that we are the more blessed for believing without seeing evidence of miracles (see Jn 20:24–29). The usual interaction of God with the material world is through our spiritual souls, and from this fact flows the importance of prayer.

### ***Truth Demands a Witness***

The Gospel of John tells the story of Jesus speaking with a Samaritan woman near Jacob’s Well. Eventually, the woman goes back to the city and tells everyone, “Come, see a man who told me all that I ever did. Can this be

*the Christ?”* (Jn 4:29). Jesus frequently speaks of bearing witness to himself in the Gospel of John (see, for example, Jn 1:7–8, 5:36, 15:26–27), and the Acts of the Apostles emphasizes the importance of witnesses to Jesus and to his Resurrection (see Acts 3:15, 10:39). The entire New Testament bears witness to Jesus (see DV 17–20).

Sacred Scripture is seen as the Word of God written under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, who is its chief Author (see DV 11) and who guides the Church in distinguishing Divine revelation from other writings, even those most edifying and faithful. The Holy Spirit is the Inspirator of sacred Scripture, Animator of sacred Tradition, and Guarantor of the magisterium, and the true Catholic acknowledges the Church’s Divine mandate and authority to preach, teach, and sanctify. The life of the faithful Catholic is animated by the Holy Spirit, who animates the Body of Christ.

Faith is passed on to each generation by the witness of the family (see CCC 2205). Beginning with the self-gift of husband and wife to each other, the family is a school of faith, hope, charity, and self-gift. Husband and wife sanctify each other, and transmit the faith by the witness of holy lives.

Achieving a Catholic worldview means that everywhere, the world offers opportunities to love. Every day, a Catholic is to see life from the perspective of who God has given him or her to love. This might be spouse and children, or a dying parent, or an aged relative or neighbor who needs help and support. It might be the homeless man or family that one never meets, or the sick in a hospital or nursing home where one volunteers, or the co-workers burdened by depression. It might be a child with a bloated stomach and stick-like arms and legs from starvation, or a child in need of foster care. It might be a member of the parish who can no longer drive to shop or to see a doctor, or a parish in a desperately poor part of the world that cannot afford liturgical books or catechetical materials. It might be a person who cannot read, or a person who cannot hear. It might be a person who has never heard the Good News, or who has been hurt or angered by the bad witness of “good Catholics.” Seeing opportunities to love is the same as having a heart eager to love with the love of Christ, a heart giving witness to the truth.



### ***The Only Reason to be Catholic is to Become a Saint***

Trinitarian love is our hope, our goal, our end, and the reward we, with St. Paul, await: *“I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that Day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing”* (2 Tm 4:7-8).

For a Catholic with a truly converted heart, everything in life is oriented to the end of life, where Christ himself will be the measure of all that each person has experienced and accomplished. Everyone’s life will be judged, as St. John of the Cross wrote, “on our love,” and those who lived in God’s friendship will be saved and those who spurned God’s offer of love by putting other things ahead of love of God and neighbor—power, wealth, pleasure, fame—will be damned (see Mt 25:31-46). The Catholic’s life is focused not on the goods of this world, but on the “pearl of great price” (see Mt 13:45-46), eternal happiness with God in Heaven. At the same time, the worldview of a Catholic abounds in hope and a realistic assessment of death as the door to eternal life, not something to be ignored, denied, or escaped. The holy death of a loved one, even a beloved son or daughter, is a source of joy as well as of mourning, and even the death of one obviously not prepared to meet God does not destroy hope, for God’s mercy extends beyond the grave (see CCC 1030).

Holiness is not mere goodness, for many people have been superlatively good but not holy. Holiness is “Godness,” desiring *“what God has prepared for those who love him”* (1 Cor 2:9), when we shall see God, in all his glory, beauty, and love, *“as he is”* (1 Jn 3:2). The Church exists *solely* for the purpose of making sinners into saints (see CCC 760, 776).

### **CONCLUSION**

The result of conversion to Christ is peace of soul and zeal of heart. These new Catholics join the rest of the Christian faithful in a life of ongoing conversion in which, by cooperating with God’s grace, they turn away from things that are not of God and towards those that are. They become *“strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might”* (Eph 6:10) as they strive to live up to their call to a life of holiness, contending *“against the world rulers of this present darkness [and] against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the Heavenly places”* (Eph 6:12). They do not fear the hour of their death, for they have decided to engage in spiritual warfare until their last breath. Founded in grace—the power of God’s very life—then they can say, more and more each day, *“it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me”* (Gal 2:19-20) until they achieve the goal that Jesus set before the crowds on the mountain in Galilee: *“You, therefore, must be perfect, as your Heavenly Father is perfect”* (Mt 5:48).





# The Incarnation

## CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING STATEMENT

God has truly become one of us. Jesus came to save us, reveal to us the depth of the Father's love, and to show us how to be holy. He enables us to partake in God's own nature.

Keeping the above statement in mind, read and meditate on the following passages:

## SCRIPTURE (IN ORDER BY BOOK)

Gn 3:15	God promises a savior, born of "the woman," who will conquer Satan
Ex 3:1-15	At the burning bush, God tells Moses his name: "I AM"
Is 7:10-14	God will give a sign to the king: the virgin birth of a child called Immanuel
Mi 5:2	Israel's future ruler, the Ancient of Days, will be born in Bethlehem
Mt 1:18-25	Jesus is conceived of Mary by the Holy Spirit and will save all from their sins
Mt 2:1-12	Jesus is born in Bethlehem and is worshipped by the wise men
Lk 1:26-38	Jesus is conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit within a virgin, Mary
Lk 9:23-24	Following Jesus means being transformed in him, bearing suffering, and giving him our lives
Jn 1:1-14	God the Son, the Word of God from the beginning, became man
Jn 3:16-17	Out of love, God sent his Son to save the world and give us eternal life
Jn 8:12-59	Jesus proclaims his mission from his Father and claims the name of God: "I AM"
Jn 10:30	Jesus states his identity with the Father
Jn 14:6	Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, and is our only path to the Father
Jn 20:26-29	The risen Jesus confronts Thomas, and Thomas worships him as God
Rom 5:8	God's love for us was so great that his Son died for us while we were still sinners
2 Cor 5:18-19, 21	Christ reconciled us to God and took on our sin so that we might become holy
Gal 4:4-5	The Son, born of a woman, was sent that we might be God's adopted children
Phil 2:5-11	Jesus, although God, humbly took our human form and is to be worshipped
Col 2:9	In Jesus is the fullness of divinity
Heb 4:14-15	Jesus, our high priest, is like us in every way but sin
2 Pt 1:3-4	God has called us to everlasting life and to partake of his own nature

## CATECHISM (IN ORDER BY PARAGRAPH NUMBER)

422-424	The Son of God has come to us, has taken our nature, and died for us
430-450	Jesus is savior, Christ, the Son of God, and Lord of all
456-460	The four reasons for the Incarnation
461-477	The Son of God took on our human nature; he is truly God and truly man
478	The Sacred Heart of Jesus is the chief sign of his love for us
512	All Jesus did and taught is seen in light of the Incarnation and Paschal mystery
606-607	Jesus came to die for us; the Paschal mystery is the reason for the Incarnation

## KEY TERMS

<i>Incarnation:</i>	The Son of God assumed a human nature by his conception in a virgin, Mary, by the power of the Holy Spirit; as Jesus Christ, he is truly and completely both God and man
<i>Mystery:</i>	1) A truth of faith that we could not know unless God revealed it; once it is known, it is understandable and reasonable, but is never fully comprehensible; 2) truths that surpass reason's powers and can only be shown to be non-contradictory
<i>Nature:</i>	The essence of a being considered as the source of activities
<i>Person:</i>	Who a being is (divine, angelic, or human); a rational nature that is responsible for actions
<i>Sacred Heart:</i>	The human heart of Jesus, the primary symbol of the love of Jesus for us

## SUGGESTED HYMNS AND SONGS FOR CATECHETICAL SESSION

The Angel Gabriel  
 Creator of the Stars of Night  
 Holy Virgin, By God's Decree  
 How Lovely on the Mountains Are the Feet of Him  
 Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence  
 Of the Father's Love Begotten  
 Once in Royal David's City  
 The God Whom Earth and Sea and Sky  
 Worthy Is the Lamb (Who Was Slain)

# The Incarnation

## PREPARATION – LITURGY OF THE WORD

If beginning with a hymn or song, see previous page for suggestions

First Reading: Gal 4:4-7

Response: Phil 2:5-11 (Philippians 2 in *Participant's Book*)

Gospel: Jn 1:1-18

## PROCLAMATION

**God has truly become one of us. Jesus came to save us, reveal to us the depth of the Father's love, and to show us how to be holy. He enables us to partake in God's own nature.**

## EXPLANATION

**God the Father's plan** (see Gn 3:15)

- ✦ Following the sin of our first parents, God promises a savior who will be born of a woman
- ✦ God prepared his Chosen People for the coming of a savior, his Anointed One, the Messiah
- ✦ Prophets foretold how the savior would be recognized
- ✦ Many expected a political savior; no one expected that God himself would come as savior in the way that he did

**The Incarnation of the Son** (see Lk 1:26-38)

- ✦ God the Father brings his plan to fruition by sending an angel to ask a virgin, Mary, to become the Mother of God
- ✦ The Holy Spirit overshadows Mary and the Son of God takes on human flesh as Jesus
- ✦ The Son of God, the Word of God, has been sent to keep the Father's promise

**The four reasons for the Incarnation**

- ✦ The Son of God became man to reconcile us to God by dying for our sins (see Jn 3:16-17)
  - ⊗ We, as finite creatures, could not make sufficient reparation to God for our sins
  - ⊗ Jesus, the God-man, became the perfect offering for our sins
  - ⊗ Only Jesus could restore us to friendship with God
  - ⊗ Jesus remains present to us in his Church, especially in the Eucharist, to heal each willing soul of sin
- ✦ The Son of God became man to show us the depth of God's love for us (see Rom 5:8)
- ✦ The Son of God became man to show us how to be holy (see Mt 11:29-30 and Jn 14:6)
- ✦ The Son of God became man so that we might become God's adopted children and participate in his own divine nature (see Gal 4:4-5 and 2 Pt 1:3-4)

**Theology of the Incarnation** (see Phil 2:5-7 and Heb 2:14-18)

- ✦ Jesus is one divine Person with two natures, divine and human, and is fully God and fully Man
- ✦ The Son of God assumed a human nature, including a human body, a human soul with intellect and will, true human knowledge; he was completely human in every way but sinless
- ✦ All Jesus' actions were done by his divine Person; everything he did was done by God and so it is correct to say that God, in his humanity, died on the cross

**The Incarnation and the Sacred Heart of Jesus** (see Jn 19:34 and Jn 20:27)

- ✦ At his Death, Jesus' human heart was pierced for our sins
- ✦ The Sacred Heart of Jesus is the primary symbol of Jesus' love for the Father and for all of us
- ✦ Devotion to the Sacred Heart is a work of the Holy Spirit in the Church, molding us in the image of the pierced one

## APPLICATION – SUGGESTED QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. How is the Incarnation one of the two basic mysteries of Christianity?
2. How does the Incarnation make it possible for us to be perfect like the Father is perfect?
3. What does it mean when we say that our faith is incarnational? How can we live the Incarnation in our own lives?
4. When people ask us what we believe, what do we mean when we say that we believe in a Person, not merely a set of tenets?
5. How does the fact that Jesus is human and divine help us in our difficulties and suffering?
6. Jesus loved us with a human heart. How should we respond to this great love?

## CELEBRATION – SUGGESTIONS FOR CLOSING PRAYER

1. Ask Jesus to draw us nearer to him in love and gratitude for all that he has done for love of us.
2. Hymn or song (see previous page for suggestions)
3. Pray together Litany of the Most Holy Name of Jesus or Litany of the Sacred Heart (see *Participant's Book*)

# The Eucharist (Lesson 1 of 2)

## CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING STATEMENT

The Eucharist is truly the Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity, of Jesus, the Father's ultimate gift of love. We must eat his flesh and drink his blood if we are to live forever.

Keeping the above statement in mind, read and meditate on the following passages:

## SCRIPTURE (IN ORDER BY BOOK)

Gn 1:1-31	God in his almighty power creates everything that exists by his command
Gn 14:18-20	Melchizedek, priest-king of Salem, offers bread and wine as thanksgiving
Ex 12:1-20	God prescribes the Passover ritual, centered on killing and eating a perfect lamb
Ex 16:2-16	God miraculously feeds the Israelites in the desert with manna and quail
Ex 25:23-30	The Bread of the Presence is to be always in the sanctuary area as a sacrificial offering
Mt 28:20	Jesus will remain with the Church always
Lk 22:14-20	Jesus changes bread and wine into his Body and Blood as the New Covenant between God and his people, and commands that his apostles celebrate the Eucharist in remembrance of him
Jn 2:1-11	Jesus changes water to wine at the wedding feast at Cana
Jn 6:1-14	Jesus feeds the multitude
Jn 6:16-21	Jesus walks on water
Jn 6:25-58	Jesus' Bread of Life discourse
Jn 6:66-69	Many of Jesus' disciples leave, unable to accept what he has said about eating his flesh and drinking his blood; Peter speaks for the apostles in declaring his faith
1 Cor 10:16-17	The consecrated wine and bread are our participation in Jesus' Blood and Body
Heb 9:1-15	Christ's bloody sacrifice fulfills all the liturgies of the Old Testament

## CATECHISM (IN ORDER BY PARAGRAPH NUMBER)

1323	Jesus instituted the Eucharist as a perpetual gift to his Church
1333-1334	Bread and wine are Old Testament prefigurements of the Eucharist
1335	Jesus' feeding of the multitude and changing water into wine at the wedding feast of Cana are prefigurements of the superabundance of the Eucharist
1336	The Eucharist either scandalizes us or demands our faith
1337-1341	Jesus institutes the Eucharist, gives the Passover its true meaning, and commands that the apostles celebrate the Eucharist until he comes again
1373-1377	Jesus becomes truly and substantially present in the Eucharist through the power of the Holy Spirit when the priest consecrates the bread and wine

## KEY TERMS

<i>Accidents:</i>	The appearance or physical properties of a given substance such as its color, texture, odor, taste, quantity, or quality, whose nature it is to exist in another; some accidents may not be essential to the very being of the substance, nor would some accidents ordinarily have existence independent of the substance; the possibility of such separation depends solely on the supernatural intervention of God, as in the Real Presence of the Body and Blood of Christ
<i>Consecrate:</i>	1) To make holy or set apart for God; 2) through a priest praying the words Jesus said at the Last Supper and the power of the Holy Spirit, to change bread and wine into Jesus' Body and Blood
<i>In persona Christi:</i>	A priest acts only by the power of Christ acting through him when the priest is celebrating the sacraments
<i>Mystery:</i>	1) A truth of faith that we could not know unless God revealed it; once it is known, it is understandable and reasonable, but is never fully comprehensible; 2) truths that surpass reason's powers and can only be shown to be non-contradictory
<i>Sacrament:</i>	An efficacious sign of grace instituted by Christ and administered by the Church that, through the power of the Holy Spirit, imparts divine life
<i>Substance:</i>	The nature of a given thing, whose essence requires existence in itself, which is not reducible to physical appearance or properties, and without which no second acts or accidental acts can ordinarily have any reality at all; the possibility of such separation between substance and accidents depends solely on the supernatural intervention of God, as in the Real Presence of the Body and Blood of Christ
<i>Transubstantiation:</i>	A change in the underlying nature of a thing, without a change in its accidents

## SUGGESTED HYMNS AND SONGS FOR CATECHETICAL SESSION

God with Hidden Majesty ( <i>Adore Te Devote</i> )	I Am the Bread of Life	The Supper of the Lord
Humbly, Lord, We Worship You ( <i>Adore Te Devote</i> )	One Bread, One Body	We Bring the Sacrifice of Praise
Humbly We Adore You ( <i>Adore Te Devote</i> )	Pan de Vida	You Satisfy the Hungry Heart

# The Eucharist (Lesson 1 of 2)

## PREPARATION – LITURGY OF THE WORD

If beginning with a hymn or song, see previous page for suggestions

First Reading: Ex 16:2-16

Response: Ps 78:1-2b, 3, 5, 7a,b, 13-20, 23-25, 27-29 (Ps 78A in *Participant's Book*)

Gospel: Jn 6:48-58

## PROCLAMATION

**The Eucharist is truly the Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity, of Jesus, the Father's ultimate gift of love. We must eat his flesh and drink his blood if we are to live forever.**

## EXPLANATION

**The Father's plan** (see Gn 3:15)

- ✦ In his never-ending love, God the Father always intended to save us through Jesus Christ
- ✦ The Old Testament prefigures and prepares the way for the Eucharist, the fullest gift of God's life to us
  - ⊗ The Passover lamb (see Ex 12:1-20)
  - ⊗ Feeding the Israelites with manna from Heaven in the desert (see Ex 16:2-16)

**The institution of the Eucharist, the true Flesh and Blood of Jesus** (see Jn 6:25-58)

- ✦ Jesus taught that we must eat his flesh and drink his blood if we are to have everlasting life
- ✦ Jesus' hearers clearly understood that he was speaking literally, not figuratively (see Jn 6:60-69)
- ✦ Jesus instituted the Eucharist at the Last Supper
  - ⊗ Jesus, who as God is not subject to time and space, did this in advance of his Death
  - ⊗ He commanded that his apostles celebrate the Eucharist as a memorial to him
- ✦ Scripture records the early community's belief in Jesus' true presence in the Eucharist (see 1 Cor 11:23-27)

**How it is possible** (see 1 Cor 10:16-17)

- ✦ Nothing is impossible to God (see Ps 115:3; Lk 1:37)
- ✦ A thing can remain the same substance even though the accidents change completely, for example, water remains water even if it becomes steam or ice, so accidents do not define a substance's nature
- ✦ In the Eucharist, the substance of the bread and wine changes, but the accidents do not change
  - ⊗ The consecrated bread and wine look, smell, and taste the same as before
  - ⊗ "Transubstantiation" is the name the Church gives to this change in substance
- ✦ The eyes see bread and wine; the eyes of faith see the reality: Jesus' Body and Blood

**How it happens** (see Lk 22:14-20)

- ✦ The priest calls upon the power of the Holy Spirit in the Eucharistic Prayer
- ✦ The priest is not acting from his own power, but *in persona Christi*
- ✦ The priest says the words of consecration: "This is my body" and "This is my blood"
- ✦ Jesus is entirely present —
  - ⊗ In both the consecrated bread and consecrated wine
  - ⊗ In each fragment of the consecrated bread and in each drop of the consecrated wine
- ✦ The Eucharist remains so long as the consecrated bread and wine are intact
- ✦ Receiving the Eucharist provides to each believer the greatest means of grace for growth in holiness

## APPLICATION – SUGGESTED QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. How is Jesus present in the Eucharist? By what power is Jesus' Real Presence made possible?
2. How is the Eucharist essential to the Father's plan to give us the gift of hope?
3. How does the Eucharist show the love of the Father and of Christ?
4. Why is the Eucharist more than a mental recollection of Christ's Passover? How does this bear on the way we attend Mass?
5. How can we prepare to receive so great a gift?

## CELEBRATION – SUGGESTIONS FOR CLOSING PRAYER

1. Pray for the faith to believe in the Real Presence of our Lord Jesus Christ in the Eucharist.
2. Hymn or song (see previous page for suggestions)
3. Pray together *Adoro Te Devote* (see handout on Well-Known Catholic Prayers in the *Participant's Book*)

## The Eucharist (Lesson 2 of 2)

### CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING STATEMENT

The Eucharist is the source and summit of the Christian life and our faith. It is our true spiritual food and drink. The risen Jesus is adored in the Eucharist.

Keeping the above statement in mind, read and meditate on the following passages:

### SCRIPTURE (IN ORDER BY BOOK)

Mt 22:2-24	The parable of the marriage feast for the king's son
Lk 22:14-20	Jesus institutes the Eucharist and commands his apostles to celebrate it in remembrance of him
Lk 24:13-35	Two disciples recognize the resurrected Jesus in the breaking of the bread
Jn 1:29	John the Baptist points to Jesus as the Lamb of God who takes the world's sin away
Jn 6:56	Those who eat Jesus' flesh and drink his blood live in him and he lives in them
Jn 15:4-5	Jesus is the true vine and we are the branches; we must abide in him to bear fruit
Acts 2:42	The growing body of Christians celebrated the Eucharist together
Acts 20:7	Paul and his companions celebrate the Eucharist on the first day of the week
1 Cor 10:16-17	The consecrated wine and bread are our participation in Jesus' Blood and Body
1 Cor 11: 23-29	The institution and meaning of the Eucharist; the gravity of unworthy reception
Heb 10:10	We have been made holy by the once-for-all sacrifice of Jesus
1 Jn 2:2	Jesus Christ is the expiation for the sins of everyone
Rv 5:1-14	Jesus, the true and final sacrifice, is ever present as a slain lamb before the throne of the Father
Rv 19:9	In Heaven, we are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb

### CATECHISM (IN ORDER BY PARAGRAPH NUMBER)

1322	The Eucharist is the completion of our initiation as Christians
1324-1327	The Eucharist contains Christ, is the sign and cause of the Church's union with him, and is our foretaste of the Heavenly liturgy and life there with God
1328-1332	The various names of the Eucharist that identify its various aspects
1342-1355	The Church has always celebrated the Eucharist in the liturgy of the Mass
1356-1372	The Eucharist as sacrificial memorial, thanksgiving, and praise
1378-1381	The Eucharist is to be worshipped as truly Jesus
1382-1390	As the Paschal Banquet, the Eucharist is to be received worthily by the faithful
1391-1405	The fruits of the Eucharist and its expression of Christian unity

### KEY TERMS

<i>Ex opere operato:</i>	A sacrament's effects depend on the valid administration of the sacrament itself, not on who administers it
<i>Form:</i>	The essential words and actions of a sacrament (this use of the term is analogous only, since the primary meaning of the term is as a constituent of material substance, together with matter)
<i>Matter:</i>	1) one of the intrinsic elements of creation, which, together with form make material substances; 2) in an analogous use of the term, regarding the essential material substances used in administering a sacrament (such as water or oil) or, in the broad sense of the concept of matter, it also is an action, such as the manifestation of contrition in the sacrament of Reconciliation
<i>Sacrifice of the Mass:</i>	The re-presentation of the once-for-all sacrifice of Jesus
<i>Sacrilege:</i>	The profaning or irreverence toward God or a sacred person or thing

### SUGGESTED HYMNS AND SONGS FOR CATECHETICAL SESSION

Alleluia! Sing to Jesus	Jesus, My Lord, My God, My All
At the Lamb's High Feast	O Lord, I Am Not Worthy
Be Still and Know That I Am God	O Sacrament Most Holy
Come Adore ( <i>Tantum Ergo</i> )	O Saving Victim ( <i>O Salutaris Hostia</i> )
Down in Adoration Falling ( <i>Tantum Ergo</i> )	One in Body, Heart and Mind
Draw Near and Take the Body of Your Lord	Panis Angelicus (Holy and Living Bread)
Father, We Adore You	Shepherd of Our Hearts
Fill My House Unto the Fullest	Sing, My Tongue, the Savior's Glory ( <i>Pange Lingua Gloriosi</i> )
Hail Our Savior's Glorious Body ( <i>Pange Lingua Gloriosi</i> )	(tune: Chant, Mode III)
(tune: Chant, Mode III)	Soul of My Savior ( <i>Anima Christi</i> )
Holy and Living Bread ( <i>Panis Angelicus</i> )	This Is Jesus
I Received the Living God	

# The Eucharist (Lesson 2 of 2)

## PREPARATION – LITURGY OF THE WORD

If beginning with a hymn or song, see previous page for suggestions

First Reading: 1 Cor 11:23-29

Response: Ps 34:1-5, 8-9, 11-18, 21-22

Gospel: Jn 6:26-35

## PROCLAMATION

**The Eucharist is the source and summit of the Christian life and our faith. It is our true spiritual food and drink. The risen Lord Jesus is adored in the Eucharist.**

## EXPLANATION

**The meaning of the Eucharist** (see 1 Cor 11:23-29)

- ✦ The Scriptural sense of “remembrance” is a re-presentation, not just a memorial
- ✦ The Eucharist is the same Jesus who gave his Body and Blood on the cross, ever present to the Father as the perfect lamb of sacrifice slain for our sins, made present at each Mass (see Rv 5:1-14)
- ✦ Christ is not sacrificed again at the Mass; we participate in the one single sacrifice of Calvary, ever-present in eternity, made present to us in time through the priesthood by the power of the Holy Spirit
- ✦ The Eucharist is God’s sacrament of love: what was bread and wine becomes the living Christ
- ✦ The Eucharist is the highest form of sacrifice, praise, and thanksgiving to the Father
- ✦ The Eucharist is our Paschal Banquet and a foretaste of the Heavenly Banquet (see Rv 19:9)
- ✦ The Eucharist is to be worshipped

**The Eucharist as the source and summit of Christian life**

- ✦ It is both a sign and a cause of our communion in God’s divine life and of our Christian unity
- ✦ It is the climax of God’s plan to make the world holy through his Son
- ✦ It is the center and highest point in Christian life and worship
- ✦ It is the reality of Jesus’ continual life on earth and remaining with us always (see Jn 14:18-19)
- ✦ The Eucharist is Christ abiding in us and we in him in the fullest sense (see Jn 15:4-5)
- ✦ The Eucharist is a sign of hope, and a pledge of his love and our future life with him in Heaven

**Holy Communion: united to God on earth**

- ✦ Holy Communion is the sacramental eating of Jesus’ flesh and drinking his blood (see Jn 6:53)
- ✦ To avoid sacrilege, we must be in a state of grace (free from serious sin) and repent of any venial sins (see 1 Cor 11:27-29)
- ✦ Reception must be preceded by a one-hour fast from food and drink
- ✦ Before receiving, prepare with humility and a desire for a pure heart
- ✦ When receiving, make an act of reverence and respond to the minister with “Amen” — an act of faith in the Real Presence
- ✦ After receiving, make a thanksgiving to your Savior who now abides intimately in you

**Sanctifying effects of the Eucharist** (see Jn 6:56-57)

- ✦ We become more closely united to Jesus and his Church, and are being transformed in him by receiving him
- ✦ Grace within us is increased, that is, the Eucharist is our spiritual nourishment
- ✦ Our venial sins are forgiven and we are helped to avoid future sin
- ✦ Our love of God and others is strengthened, and we are more strongly committed to those in need

## APPLICATION – SUGGESTED QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Why does the Church teach that the Eucharist is the source and summit of the Christian life and our faith?
2. How is the Eucharist the “sacrificial memorial” of Christ? How is the Eucharist a foretaste of the Heavenly Banquet?
3. What does it mean to say that the Eucharist should be received worthily by the faithful?
4. How can we participate fully in the Mass?
5. The word “Mass” is derived from the closing words “Ite, missa est” (“go, you are sent”). What are we sent to do?

## CELEBRATION – SUGGESTIONS FOR CLOSING PRAYER

1. Pray for a fervent desire to receive the Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity of Jesus in the Holy Eucharist.
2. Hymn or song (see previous page for suggestions)
3. Pray together *Anima Christi* (Soul of Christ) (see handout on Well-Known Catholic Prayers in the *Participant’s Book*)

# The Mass

## CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING STATEMENT

The Mass is our central act of worship, a foretaste of Heaven. In the Mass, Jesus' Paschal mystery is again made present. With Christ, we offer ourselves as a gift of love to the Father.

Keeping the above statement in mind, read and meditate on the following passages:

## SCRIPTURE (IN ORDER BY BOOK)

Gn 14:18-20	Melchizedek, priest-king of Salem, offers bread and wine as thanksgiving
Lv 2:1-16, 6:14-18	God makes prescriptions for making a cereal offering of unleavened bread and for its consumption by the Aaronic priests
Dt 8:3	The word of God is necessary as our spiritual food, just as bread is necessary as physical food
Lk 22:14-20	Jesus institutes the Eucharist and commands his apostles to do the same in remembrance of him
Lk 24:13-35	The first Liturgy of the Word and Liturgy of the Eucharist
Jn 6:25-58	Jesus' Bread of Life discourse: he is bread from Heaven, and whoever eats his flesh and drinks his blood will live forever
Acts 2:42	The growing body of Christians celebrated the Eucharist together
Acts 20:7	Paul and his companions celebrate the Eucharist on the first day of the week
1 Cor 10:16-17	The consecrated wine and bread are our participation in Jesus' Blood and Body
1 Cor 11:23-29	Holy Communion is an everlasting proclamation of Jesus' Death, and receiving the Body and Blood of Christ unworthily is profaning him
Rom 6:10	Jesus' Death occurred once for all time
Heb 10:19-29	Through Jesus' Paschal mystery, we enter the sanctuary, and must not avoid worship for this is spurning and profaning Jesus and outraging the Holy Spirit
Rv 19:9	In Heaven, we are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb

## CATECHISM (IN ORDER BY PARAGRAPH NUMBER)

1085	Christ's Paschal mystery is made present in the Church's liturgy
1104	The once-for-all Paschal mystery is made present again at each celebration
1140-1144	The entire assembly as the Body of Christ participates in the liturgy although not all have the same functions
1322-1405	The Eucharist: its centrality, its names, its role in the economy of salvation, how it is celebrated, its meanings, Holy Communion, its anticipation of the Heavenly Banquet

## KEY TERMS

<i>Consecrate:</i>	1) To make holy or set apart for God; 2) through a priest praying the words Jesus said at the Last Supper and the power of the Holy Spirit, to change bread and wine into Jesus' Body and Blood
<i>Liturgy:</i>	1) The public participation of the members of the Church in the work of God, most specifically in the Paschal mystery of Christ; 2) Christ's continuation of his redemptive work through his Church
<i>Mystery:</i>	1) A truth of faith that we could not know unless God revealed it; once it is known, it is understandable and reasonable, but is never fully comprehensible; 2) truths that surpass reason's powers and can only be shown to be non-contradictory
<i>Paschal mystery:</i>	The central events of Christ's redemptive work, specifically his Passion, Death, Resurrection, and Ascension

## SUGGESTED HYMNS AND SONGS FOR CATECHETICAL SESSION

Be Still for the Presence of the Lord	O Bread of Heaven, Beneath This Veil
Church of God	O Sacrament Most Holy
Fill My House Unto the Fullest	O, the Word of My Lord
God Is Here! As We His People	On This Day, the First of Days
Holy Ground	Receive Our Praise
Jesus Shall Reign	See Us Lord, About Thine Altar
I Come with Joy to Meet My Lord	Sent Forth by God's Blessing
Into Thy Presence	Standing on Holy Ground
Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence	This Is My Body
Love Is His Word, Love Is His Way	

# The Mass

## PREPARATION – LITURGY OF THE WORD

If beginning with a hymn or song, see previous page for suggestions

First Reading: Gn 14:17-20

Response: Ps 5:3-4, 7-8, 11-12

Gospel: Lk 22:14-20

## PROCLAMATION

**The Mass is our central act of worship, a foretaste of Heaven. In the Mass, Jesus' Paschal mystery is again made present. With Christ, we offer ourselves as a gift of love to the Father.**

## EXPLANATION

**The Mass is the central act of Catholic worship and summit of the whole Christian life** (see 1 Cor 11:23-29)

- ✦ It is a sacrifice of thanksgiving and praise offered to the Father for all creation and his gifts to us, especially for our redemption and sanctification
- ✦ It is a sacrificial memorial, for it re-presents the Paschal mystery of Jesus Christ and makes it truly present as one and the same sacrifice of Calvary, where Jesus is both priest and victim
- ✦ Jesus is present in four major ways in the Mass: 1) the Holy Eucharist; 2) the people gathered; 3) the priest acting in the Person of Christ; 4) the proclaimed Word
- ✦ It is prayed in the Holy Spirit, through whose power Jesus becomes present in the Eucharist

### The parts of the Mass

- ✦ The Liturgy of the Word
  - ⊗ God speaks to us, and we respond to him in faith (see Lk 24:32)
  - ⊗ Sign of the Cross, introductory rite, penitential rite, Gloria, reading from Old Testament, psalm with response, reading from New Testament, Alleluia, reading from Gospels, homily, Creed, prayers of the faithful
- ✦ The Liturgy of the Eucharist
  - ⊗ Through the power of the Holy Spirit, Jesus is offered to the Father in an unbloody re-presentation of his sacrifice on Calvary, and we receive him in Holy Communion (see 1 Cor 10:16-17)
  - ⊗ Offertory, Eucharistic Prayer during which the bread and wine are consecrated as the Body and Blood of Jesus, Lord's Prayer, sign of peace, communion rite, concluding rite, dismissal

### Vestments, offerings, altar, and sacred vessels for Holy Mass

 (see Ex 25:1-28:42)

- ✦ To reflect their role, celebrant(s) wear special vestments, with colors varying by liturgical season
- ✦ Unleavened bread and grape wine mixed with water are consecrated as Jesus' Body and Blood
- ✦ The altar is a true place of sacrifice

### Attendance at and participation in Holy Mass

 (see Heb 10:25-29)

- ✦ We are obliged to participate in Mass on the Lord's Day (Sunday or the Saturday vigil Mass)
- ✦ We are obliged to actively participate through our responses, our singing, our postures, and our conscious attentiveness to the divine actions; we are not at Mass merely to watch
- ✦ It is desirable to attend Mass often during the week, even daily, for the good of our soul

### The Mass is the source of our holiness

 (see Heb 10:19-24)

- ✦ It brings us into actual union with Christ; we are bonded to him and transformed by him
- ✦ Heaven begins on earth — through the Holy Spirit we are one with Jesus and, united with him, we offer ourselves to the Father
- ✦ The reception of Holy Communion makes us members of Christ's Body (see 1 Cor 10:17)

## APPLICATION – SUGGESTED QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. How is the Mass a celebration of the Paschal mystery of Christ?
2. How is the Mass a sacrifice that re-presents the one single sacrifice of Jesus on the cross?
3. Jesus is present in many ways in the Mass. What does it mean to say that Jesus is uniquely present in the Eucharist?
4. How is the Mass a foretaste of Heaven?
5. How should we prepare for Holy Communion?
6. Why is the Mass different from other ways of offering praise to God?
7. What are specific ways to participate fully, consciously, and actively in the Holy Mass?

## CELEBRATION – SUGGESTIONS FOR CLOSING PRAYER

1. Pray for a love for the Mass and a deep desire to be present at its celebration as often as possible.
2. Hymn or song (see previous page for suggestions)
3. Pray together Psalm 27 or Psalm 116



# The Real Presence Of Jesus In The Eucharist

As taught in John, Chapter 6

A commentary by Fr. Victor Galeone (now the recently-retired Bishop of St. Augustine, Florida)

## GOD SETS A TABLE FOR 5,000

Can a clockmaker make his clock run backwards? Of course. He simply adjusts a few wheels to reverse its direction. What we moderns grant to a simple clockmaker we sometimes deny to God. For we say that miracles are impossible. What we're really saying is that the Divine Lawmaker can't suspend the laws of nature that he himself established. For instance, some deny that Jesus multiplied the five loaves to feed the 5,000 people.

They reason thus:

"Everyone had brought along their own lunch, but not wishing to share it with anyone else, they were keeping it undercover until they could eat it alone. The example of the boy sharing his lunch with the disciples prompted all the people to share their food also. The miracle was that Jesus inspired them to be generous."

Such an explanation makes a colossal liar out of St. John, since he reported the following items as factual:

- Philip's problem with financing such a huge meal.
- Andrew's remark about the futility of five loaves for 5,000 people.
- Jesus solemn blessing of the five loaves.
- The twelve baskets of leftovers that were collected.
- The crowd's attempt to force Jesus to be their king.

But more at issue, denying this miracle disrupts the three-part unity of John's sixth chapter:

**Part 1:** By feeding the 5,000 with just five loaves of bread Jesus suspended the process that begins with spring planting and ends in an oven – a process that requires many months and much effort. With a simple blessing he was proving:

**"I can suspend the laws of nature for BREAD."**

**Part 2:** That night while the disciples were struggling to steer their boat on the storm-swept sea, Jesus came walking to them on the surface of the water. At first glance this miracle seems pointless. What was he trying to prove? According to the law of gravity heavier bodies must seek their rest on the earth's surface. By preventing his body from sinking, Jesus was declaring:

**"I can suspend the laws of nature for my BODY."**

**Part 3:** That afternoon, some of the crowd that had been fed, came to Jesus on the other side of the lake to make him king. Jesus used the occasion to promise that one day he would give a special BREAD that would be his BODY. In making this extraordinary promise, he was merely drawing the logical conclusion from the first two parts:

- 1) I can do what I want with BREAD.
- 2) I can do what I want with my BODY.
- 3) I promise a special BREAD that is my BODY. (John 6:51)

When did Jesus fulfill the promise he made at Capernaum? At the Last Supper, when he blessed the bread and wine: "*Take, eat. This is my body.*" "*Take, drink. This is my blood.*" For 2,000 years the Church has taught: At Mass when the priest does what Jesus did at the Last Supper, the bread and wine become the Lord's body and blood even though they still look the same.

Does that seem unbelievable?

This analogy might help to clarify it somewhat: You grasp an iron bar. How do you know that it's iron? From its weight, color, and hardness. But in outer space the bar loses its weight and in a blast furnace it becomes a red-hot liquid. Is it still iron? Yes, for its *substance* remains the same. Only the *accidentals* (weight, color, hardness) have changed. In the blast furnace of God's love at Mass the direct opposite takes place:

The *accidentals* of the bread and wine stay the same. The *substance* changes into the Lord's own body and blood.

This marvelous change is called *transubstantiation*.

Ever since that afternoon of the promise at Capernaum many have refused to take Jesus at his word. Some have said that the Eucharist only *represents* him, just as the stars and stripes represent our country. However, someone who bums our country's flag is charged with desecrating the *flag*, not our country. But in 1 Corinthians 11:27, St. Paul says emphatically: "Whoever eats this bread or drinks the Lord's cup unworthily, will be guilty of the *body* and *blood* of the Lord."

Besides, if Jesus meant a mere symbolic eating of his flesh, why did he permit his listeners to take him so literally? Elsewhere in St. John's Gospel, when Jesus' listeners misunderstood him, the misunderstanding was corrected at once:

- ✧ *John 2:21* – The ruined temple to be raised up in three days was Jesus' *body*, not the Jewish temple of stone.
- ✧ *John 3:5* – When Nicodemus had understood a physical rebirth, Jesus pointed out that he had meant a *spiritual* one.
- ✧ *John 11: 13* – The disciples thought Jesus meant natural sleep, so he had to specify that he meant the sleep of *death*.

But when his listeners at Capernaum objected, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" (John 6:52), far from correcting any misunderstanding, he went on to reinforce his statement by adding that they must drink his blood as well! (John 6:53) When they refused to accept this "intolerable teaching", Jesus allowed them to walk off and leave him. He then asked the twelve if they wanted to leave too. If he had intended only a symbolic eating of his flesh, then why didn't he correct the misunderstanding? (John 6:52) Why did he allow so many disciples to desert him? (John 6:66) Why did he ask the twelve if they wished to leave? (John 6:67) The only possible answer is: He was speaking of a *real* not a *symbolic* presence.

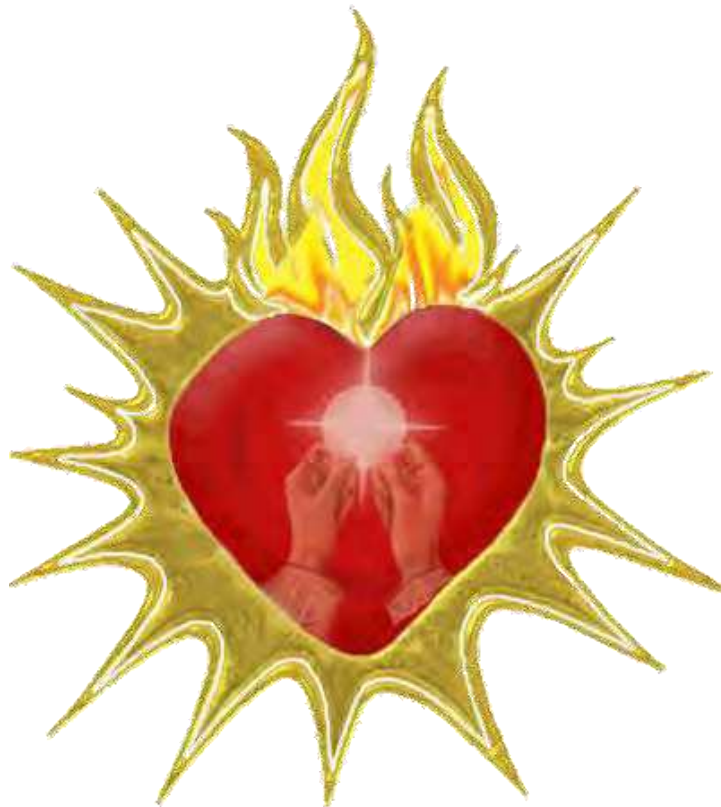
Back in the 11<sup>th</sup> century, a monk by the name of Berengarius was the first to deny that Jesus' presence in the host was real. In his opinion the bread and wine remained unchanged; they were merely symbols of the Lord's body and blood. Ultimately, Berengarius recanted his error. Before Pope Gregory VII he made the following profession of faith:

*"I, Berengarius, believe in my heart and profess with my lips that the bread and wine on the altar, through the mystery of the holy prayer and the words of our Redeemer, are substantially transformed into the true, life-giving Flesh and Blood of Jesus Christ. After the Consecration, they are the true BODY of Christ, which was born of the Virgin, nailed to the cross for the salvation of the world, and is now seated at the right hand of the Father; and the true BLOOD of Christ, which flowed from his side. They are present, not merely symbolically or by reason of their effects, but in their true and proper nature and substance... This is my faith, and thus shall I ever teach hereafter..."*

#### **LIFE-GIVING BREAD**

All living things – plants, animals, and human beings – need food to survive. Furthermore, each species needs its own appropriate food. For example, cows can't eat meat; man will starve on hay. So too, the divine life that we received at Baptism needs its own proper nourishment to survive – the Eucharist.

*"Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you will have no life in you."* (John 6:53)



# Participation in God's Life:

## *The Four Means of Entrance into Christ's Life*

*His Divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and Godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, that through these you may escape from the corruption that is in the world because of passion, and become partakers of the Divine nature. - 2 PETER 1:3-4*

**ENTRANCE INTO CHRIST:** The definitive aim of catechesis is to put people not only in touch but in communion, in intimacy, with Jesus Christ: only he can lead us to the love of the Father in the Spirit and make us share in the life of the Holy Trinity. (CT 5; see GDC 80)

**CHRIST IN YOU:** I became a minister according to the Divine office which was given to me for you, to make the Word of God fully known, the mystery hidden for ages and generations but now made manifest to his saints. To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. (Colossians 1:25-27)

### We “Enter” into Christ through...

#### I. COMMUNITY *CALLED TOGETHER IN THE LORD JESUS*

“A person who has given adherence to Jesus Christ by faith... needs to live in communion with those who have taken the same step. Catechesis runs the risk of becoming barren if no community of faith and Christian life takes the catechumen in at a certain stage of his catechesis...welcoming [catechumens] into an environment where they can live as fully as possible what they have learned.” (CT 24)

“Catechesis prepares the Christian to live in community and to participate actively in the life and mission of the Church.” (GDC 86)

The Christian community is the **foundational means** of entrance into Christ (remember that the pagans were frequently first struck by the love which the early Christians had for one another). Consider Jesus' discourse just before his passion and death in John 13:34-15:12.

Parishioners must come to see and appreciate their role in the initiation process. They must constantly 'widen the tent pegs of their hearts' for those whom Christ is calling.

#### II. SACRED SCRIPTURE *CALLED TO FAITH IN THE WORD MADE FLESH*

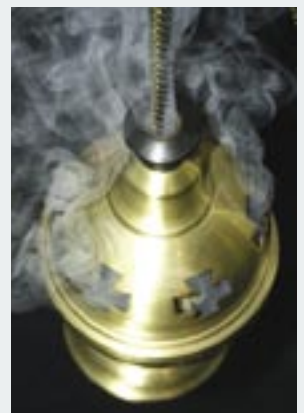
“The Word of God...is strength for faith, food for the soul, and a pure and lasting font of spiritual life.” (DV 21)

“Catechesis must be impregnated and penetrated by the thought, the spirit, and the outlook of the Bible and the Gospels through assiduous contact with the texts themselves.” (CT 27; see GDC 94)

Scripture is the **basic means** for entrance into Christ. As the Church proclaims the Good News of salvation, those who hear come to learn “the surpassing knowledge of Jesus Christ.” (Philippians 3:8)

We must come to know Christ through the Scripture and be transformed by the power of God's Word so that we might preach this Word “in season and out of season.” (2 Timothy 4:2)

When Jesus asked the apostles if they would also leave on hearing his 'hard sayings,' “Simon Peter answered him, 'Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life; and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God.’” (John 6:68, 69)



### III. SYSTEMATIC CATECHESIS CALLED TO HOPE IN CHRIST'S PROMISES

“Authentic catechesis is always an orderly and systematic initiation into the revelation that God has given of himself to humanity in Christ Jesus, a revelation stored in the depths of the Church’s memory and in sacred Scripture, and constantly communicated from one generation to the next by a living and active *traditio*.” (CT 22, see GDC 114,115)

“Catechesis takes the form of a process or a journey of following the Christ of the Gospel in the Spirit towards the Father. It is undertaken to reach the maturity of the faith...according to the possibilities and needs of everyone.” (GDC 143)



Systematic catechesis is the **complete means** of entrance into Christ. The Deposit of Faith—that which we believe, (*fides quae*)—is acquired by learning.

It ‘demands’ a witness and a catechist; it must be explained. It must be taught in all of its “rigor and vigor.” (CT 30) Knowledge of the faith is required for adherence of faith—that by which we believe, (*fides qua*). (see GDC 85)

The process of initiation includes the education for the life of faith in which the “old man” is transformed into a “new creation” (Ephesians 4:22) with everything available to become nothing less than a saint!

### IV. LITURGY CALLED TO HOLINESS IN CHRIST'S SAVING WORK

“In the liturgy of the New Covenant every liturgical action is an encounter between Christ and the Church.” (CCC 1097)

“Christian liturgy not only recalls the events that saved us but actualizes them, makes them present.” (CCC 1104; see CCC 1085; Romans 12:1; 1 Peter 2:5)

“The three sacraments of Christian initiation closely combine to bring us, the faithful of Christ, to his full stature and to enable us to carry out the mission of the entire people of God in the Church and in the world.” (RCIA, General Introduction 2)

Liturgy is the **prime means** of entrance into Christ. It is the “summit and source” of the Christian life, (see SC 10) especially at its apex, the Eucharist, for it is there that Christ comes to dwell in us and we are drawn more closely to share his Divine life.

The liturgical rites of the Christian initiation process are important in the formation of catechumens and candidates, for in these rites they encounter Christ and are transformed by his grace.

The liturgical actions are visible signs of the spiritual journey the catechumens and candidates have undertaken, and of the conversion that God is working in their hearts.



### The Riches of Christ

*To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to make all men see what is the plan and of the mystery hidden for all ages in God who created all things; that through the Church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the principalities and powers in the Heavenly places. For this reason, I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in Heaven and on earth is named, that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with might through his Spirit in the inner man, and that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have power to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.*  
~ Ephesians 3:8-10, 14-19