

HOW DO YOU SOLVE A PROBLEM LIKE MYSTAGOGIA!?!

After a long and intense preparation, the celebration of the Sacraments of Christian Initiation at the Easter Vigil comes as a great time of celebration for the whole community. This is followed by the period of Mystagogia. Haven't we done work? Haven't the neophytes experienced enough catechesis? Hasn't the scriptural, the instructional, the liturgical, the ecclesial catechesis in the previous months been enough? What are we meant to do during the period between Easter and Pentecost?

The rite asks us to continue to build on the catechesis given during the previous stages of the initiation journey. The emphasis during this period is on mystagogical catechesis. But what is mystagogical catechesis?

My reflection is based on two fundamental documents:

1) the Rite itself; 2) Pope Benedict XVI's Encyclical, *Sacramentum caritatis*

1) IN THE RITE

This is how the RCIA describes the period of Mystagogia:

This is the 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 works of charity. (RCIA 234) **THE PASCHAL MYSTERY:** Mystagogia is a time of deepening the neophytes grasp on the paschal mystery. This is not a purely intellectual or academic exercise. As they reflect on the events of the Easter Vigil, they become aware of the link between the death and resurrection of Jesus and their own initiation. The death and resurrection of Jesus still bear fruit in the lives of the neophytes. They entered into the tomb with Jesus and they now share in the new life of the resurrected Christ (see (Rom 6:1-11)). During this period they are called to deepening their grasp of this wonderful gift so that their lives continues to be lives on the pattern of the death and resurrection of Jesus: dying to oneself in order to live more fully in Christ, with Christ and for Christ.

During their catechumenal

journey the word of God has helped to grow in Christ. This process is now continued and deepened as they are now sent out to be messengers of the gospel to their families, to the friends and to all people they meet.

SHARING THE EUCHARIST: During their journey they have received strength and courage from the celebration of the catechumenal rites: In the celebration of the Word of God, in the rites of blessings, healing and anointings, in the celebration of the scrutinies.

All these rituals led to and prepared for the source and summit of all liturgies: the celebration of the Eucharist. The focus of mystagogia must be on the Eucharist: deepening their understanding, eagerness and desire to participate with the rest of the community in the celebration of the Eucharist. Several of the Gospels of the Easter period point towards the Eucharist (the story of the Emmaus disciples, the breakfast on the beach, the risen Christ asking the disciples: Do you have anything to eat?)

DOING WORKS OF CHARITY: This is not new. During their catechumenal journey they have been encouraged to use their gifts and talents as a service to the church and to the community. Now they are called to share more deeply into the very mission of the Church towards all humanity. Jesus disciples are called to become the messengers of

Jesus message; they are called to become the witnesses of Jesus love for all human beings.

2) SACRAMENTUM CARITATIS

In Pope Benedict XVI's Encyclical, *Sacramentum caritatis*, the purpose of Mystagogical Catechesis

has a threefold aim:

- a) It interprets the rites in the light of the events of our salvation
- b) must be concerned with presenting the meaning of the signs contained in the rites.
- c) must be concerned with bringing out the significance of the rites for the Christian life in all its dimensions. (Benedict XVI, *Sacramentum caritatis*, 64)

The time of Mystagogia is therefore a time of reflecting on the awe-inspiring rites of Christian Initiation celebrated during the Easter Vigil. We are called to gather the neophytes and with them

reflect on the actions, the words, the symbols and the rituals of the Easter Vigil. We are called to

take the neophytes on a journey of re-visiting the celebration of the Easter Vigil, step by step, moment by moment. For each of the Easter Vigil rituals we are called to reflect on the following

three questions:

1. What did you experience during the ritual?
2. What was God/Christ/the Holy Spirit doing for you through those rituals?
3. What is God/Christ/the Holy Spirit sending you forth to proclaim and to witness through the ritual?

The emphasis and the focus of mystagogia are service, commitment and mission. That is why mystagogia is not only for the neophytes but for every member of the parish. Like the Apostles after

their Pentecost experience, we are all sent to proclaim the good news and to become the witnesses

of Christ's death and resurrection to the whole world.

I started this reflection with the question: How do you solve a problem like Mystagogia? To help

you solve the problem I have prepared a resource on mystagogia.

It consists of a book for the RCIA leader and a journal for the neophytes reflections. This is the link

to this resource:

CALLED GIFTED SENT:

The Sacraments of the Christian Initiation of the Triduum.

Catechists Manual and Catechumens Journal

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