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How Rituals Form and Transform: The Scrutiny Rite from Medieval to Modern Times

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By
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How Rituals Form and Transform: The Scrutiny Rite from Medieval to Modern Times

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“Ritual catechesis” is a popular topic among today’s liturgists and catechetical leaders, but this dyad has long been a topic in the Church. The Fathers of the Church knew ritual catechesis and treated it in their preaching. This dissertation explores the scrutiny rite as an important part of the catechumenate process. Scrutinies flourished in the fifth century, faded into disuse in the Middle Ages, and have been restored to regular Lenten Sunday practice since the Second Vatican Council. Our study is methodological: *how* does the ritual of the scrutinies, as catechesis, form and transform?

The study begins with the relationship among liturgy, ritual, and catechesis. Catherine Bell serves as a guide to Ritual Studies. Then, turning to the history of Christian initiation, I explore evidence about the scrutinies from Roman and Frankish liturgical sources, following Antoine Chavasse’s insights. After the collapse of the scrutiny into a single celebration (eighth century), the medieval ritual re-expanded in a process of restoration before and after the Second Vatican Council. The 1988 pastoral adaptation of the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* for the United States is a key source for my final reflections. The last chapter integrates the liturgical and theological study of the previous chapters, to reveal the scrutiny as a source of catechesis.

The scrutiny emerges as a transformative ritual. It catechizes through gestures and words. The early medieval scrutiny was dramatic, taking place while the elect stood fasting and naked as Satan was adjured to be gone. The present rite, less dramatic, still evokes transformation by its symbols and words. The scrutinies catechize the elect in an active way about Satan, evil, and the victorious power of grace. This catechesis is a formation that combines intellect and emotion, liturgy and teaching, word and act, to touch the hearts and minds of the elect. It affects and effects who they are as members of the Church. The scrutiny forms and transforms a new member of God's People, a new part of Christ's body, a new building block in the temple of the Spirit.

This dissertation by Patricia M. Mann fulfills the dissertation requirement for the doctoral degree in Religious Education/Catechetics approved by Rev. Michael Witczak, SLD, as Director, and by Margaret Schreiber, OP, STD and Catherine Dooley, OP, Ph.D as readers.

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my father, Howard M. Novak, who always inspired me to reach for the next horizon.

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INTRODUCTION

“Christians are made not born.” That is the conviction of the prolific early Christian author, Tertullian (ca. 160-220 C.E.).¹ Throughout history, people have been made Christian through Baptism. In Tertullian’s day and again in our own, part of the celebration of Baptism includes the period of the catechumenate.

This period provides a process that had originated by the third century, flourished in the fifth, became a ritual vestige in the Middle Ages, and has been restored to vigorous church practice since the Second Vatican Council. The period of the catechumenate contains a number of rituals of the church. Among these rituals is one that will form the focus of this study: the scrutinies. The history, celebration, and theology of the scrutinies will form an important part of what follows. The main question to emerge, though, is methodological: how is the ritual of the scrutiny also catechesis?

The period of the catechumenate is one of four periods in the newly renewed *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* in the Roman Catholic Church. Each period has one or several ritual components that are essential parts of the process that leads an adult to full membership in the church.

“Ritual” can be a vague term. It is both a technical term in the liturgy and a generic term in human behavior. Technically, in the liturgy, it means a specific book or action of the church. One speaks of the “ritual of Baptism” or the “ritual of Ordination.” However, ritual also refers more generically to patterns of human activity that consist of prayers, words, and gestures through which meaning is communicated.

¹ Tertullian, *Apology* 18.4. R. Spectaculis, trans. T. R. Glover (Cambridge, MA.: Loeb Classical Library, 1953).

The purpose of this dissertation is to study the specific ritual of the period of the catechumenate called the scrutiny. I will explore how ritual, and specifically the scrutiny ritual, is a means of catechesis, the process by which someone enters more deeply into the faith of the church. As we will see, catechesis is a complex form that includes intellectual, liturgical, pastoral, communal, and other dimensions to achieve its goal of allowing someone to “echo” the faith. (“Catechesis” comes from a Greek word that means “to echo.”) The focus will be on how ritual both forms and transforms, two goals of catechesis.

From the earliest years of the church’s history, catechesis and liturgy have demonstrated a strong bond. Numerous recent scholars, among them Professor Kevin Irwin, have focused on the adage of Prosper of Aquitaine, “let the rule of prayer establish the rule of belief” (originally *ut legem credendi lex statuat supplicandi* simplified to *lex orandi, lex credendi*) to exemplify the connection between theology and liturgy.¹ It may be logical to think that what we believe is what we pray, yet this classic theological adage affirms that what we pray is what we believe. Liturgy is “theological” in that it contains profound yet sometimes obvious theological insight. Since this understanding is commonly accepted today by both liturgists and theologians, it is not too difficult to see a like relationship between liturgy and catechesis. If liturgy is theological, it is also catechetical, for it is through the actions of the liturgy, the rites and prayers, that we are

¹ Kevin W. Irwin, *Context and Text: Method in Liturgical Theology* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1994), 3-6. Irwin includes a third area, *lex vivendi*. This will be treated later in the chapter.

transformed. This transformation is intellectual, spiritual, and moral. Liturgy forms and transforms, it catechizes us about what we believe and who we are as Catholic Christians.

As noted above, liturgy is composed of both rites (rituals) and prayers. This dissertation will specifically explore the relationship between ritual and catechesis. The focus of the study will be the scrutiny rite of the catechumenal process. The scrutinies were part of the medieval catechumenate and are celebrated today as a rite in the present process as well. This study will attempt to explore exactly how the scrutiny rites, precisely as rituals, are catechetical. What do they teach and how do they form and transform?

An understanding of this particular ritual and its relationship to catechesis requires an understanding of the basic nature of ritual. I will focus on current literature and research on ritual and will use the writings of Catherine Bell as a basis for this study. Bell's theory of ritual will provide a theoretical structure to help study both the specific relationship between catechesis and ritual in general and the scrutiny ritual in particular.

The dissertation will continue by exploring Roman and Frankish liturgical texts in translation to develop some understanding of the original nature and meaning of the scrutiny rite. Then I will analyze the current state of scholarly opinion on the history of the scrutinies. These studies offer insights into the context in which the scrutinies were celebrated and important clues as to their relationship with catechesis. Theological references to the scrutinies will supplement the liturgical evidence. John the Deacon's letter to Senarius and other writers such as Ambrose of Milan and Augustine will serve

this purpose. While these authors lived in locations different from the provenance of the liturgical sources, comparison of the two will offer insights into the nature and role of the scrutiny rite in the early medieval centuries of the Church.

My focus will then move to the current reform of the catechumenal process. The specific focus will be on the role of the scrutiny rite. I will analyze the ritual in the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* as a primary source for determining the goals and objectives of the reformed rite. I will further analyze the reflections of contemporary theologians and catechists on the modern scrutiny rite, including some of the pastoral issues raised by their use with catechumens who are children and by their adaptation for adult candidates for admission to full communion.

The final chapter will be integrative in that it will combine both the medieval and modern approach to the scrutiny rite with Bell's theory of ritual. The study will close with conclusions on how the scrutinies, as rituals, truly are catechetical.

CHAPTER ONE

THREE CRUCIAL RELATIONSHIPS

In the preceding introduction three relationships were mentioned: the relationship between theology and liturgy, liturgy and catechesis, and ritual and catechesis. While the relationship between ritual and catechesis is the focus of this dissertation, all of these dynamics are relevant to this topic.

Theology and Liturgy

I will begin by briefly exploring the relationship between theology and liturgy. As noted by Irwin, the insight about the relationship of prayer and belief has been revisited by contemporary theologians many centuries after the assertion by Prosper of Aquitaine (c. 390-465 C.E.). Prosper was actually writing against Pelagianism, specifically Pelagius' claim that humans are capable of earning salvation on their own. In this context, Prosper noted that during the rites of initiation at Easter and on Good Friday in particular, the whole church prayed for the catechumens in the general intercessions and asked that God's grace come upon them. The fact that we pray for God's grace for those coming into the church was profoundly anti-Pelagian and as such coming from the liturgy exhibited a theological truth. The prayer was anti-Pelagian because what the prayer said, that is that we need grace from God, was proof that we do not "earn" salvation, we receive it from God through grace.¹

¹ Irwin, *Models of the Eucharist* (New York: Paulist Press, 2005), 25.

Current theologians affirm that liturgy, including its rituals and prayers, has profound theological insight to offer the believer. In addition to the theological truth contained in the substance of the rite, the renewed theological books issued since Vatican II contain an articulation of the theology of the liturgical rites.¹ The truth of Prosper's adage challenges liturgical theologians to discover our Catholic beliefs within our liturgical practices. A principle goal of liturgy is to preach the truth accurately.

Theology uses many specialties and methods in its task. Theology has a threefold responsibility in the social setting: to the individual, to the community and to all of humanity, including those who do not believe.² Any truth about humanity is not for private use and thus no revelation from God can be any one person's individual truth. It must be proclaimed to all. One of the ways that this is effectively accomplished is through liturgy. Jesus did not leave us with a Magna Charta ready-made from heaven. Theology, like liturgy, is a product of human understanding: "Theology is a fallible enterprise that continues to correlate the past and present revelation of God in the threefold relation of God, Jesus and us."³

One of the ways in which we correlate past and present is in liturgical celebrations. In these celebrations the dynamic mentioned above is always present and active. Through the prayers and the rituals of our liturgical services, we not only worship but also convey theological truths, sometimes in very simple ways. By bowing deeply at

¹ Irwin, 25.

² Julia Upton, *The Modern Catholic Encyclopedia*, Michael Glazier and Monika Hellwig, eds., (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2004) s.v. "Liturgy".

³ Julia Upton, "Liturgy."

the point of the Creed when we mention Jesus' conception in Mary by the power of the Holy Spirit, we indicate and emphasize a profound theological truth.

Michael Aune, a professor of liturgical studies, reflects upon the fact that in contemporary liturgical theology, much time is devoted to discussing what liturgy is, but relatively little to what theology consists of. Often theology is defined merely as an academic endeavor composed of discrete disciplines such as biblical exegesis, church history, dogmatic and pastoral theology.⁴ He reminds us that Alexander Schmemmann spoke of two types of theology – the patristic and scholastic. By the patristic type, he meant that there was an “organic” connection between the theology of the Fathers and their liturgical experience. This experience was not the *object* of theology but its source and location. Schmemmann cited Irenaeus' (c. 125-202) well-known dictum: “Our opinion is in accordance with the Eucharist, and the Eucharist in turn establishes our opinion.”⁵

The scholastic type is an understanding of theology as “an independent, rational” enterprise: “it is a search for a system of consistent categories and concepts: *intellectus fidei*.” The position of worship in relation to theology is reversed: from a source it becomes an object, which has to be defined and evaluated within the accepted categories. Liturgy supplies theology with “data,” but the method of dealing with these data is independent of any liturgical context.⁶

⁴ Aidan Kavanagh, *On Liturgical Theology* (New York: Pueblo 1984), 3-22, in Michael B. Aune, “Liturgy and Theology: Rethinking the Relationship,” *Worship* 81, no 2 (March 2007): 143.

⁵ Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.*, iv.18.5; cited in Alexander Schmemmann, “Theology and Liturgical Tradition,” *Liturgy and Tradition: Theological Reflections of Alexander Schmemmann*, Thomas Fisch, ed. (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press 1990), 12, cited in Aune, 151.

⁶ Kavanagh, 151

It is the example of patristic theology, what is referred to as the *prima theologia* that interests me in the study of ritual. It is this focus on ritual that leads to the realization that ritual is indeed catechetical, that it imparts theological truths, truths which are not only absorbed intellectually but which are life-transforming.

In her article on liturgy and sacramental theology, Margaret Mary Kelleher, a scholar of liturgy and professor at Catholic University of America, highlights the fact that the entire liturgical service, not just the rite itself, is a source for sacramental theology.⁷ She notes that aspects such as objects, gestures, words, actions, relationships, and spatial arrangements all have a role to play. A homily can approach the readings from two completely different theological foci which will have an effect upon what meaning the assembly takes home from that particular church. Kelleher names the complex of these elements as the “ritual field.”

In this same article, Kelleher refers to Albert Houssiau’s affirmation that theology now uses liturgy not merely as a source for confirming church doctrine about the sacraments; liturgy is once again recognized as a source for exploring and gathering meaning.⁸ This affirms the goal of this paper: it is important to remember that the scrutiny rite catechizes not just through the ritual itself, but through the complete ritual field. One can take home a totally different meaning in a parish that rushes through the

⁷ Margaret Mary Kelleher, “Liturgy as a Source for Sacramental Theology,” *Questions Liturgiques* 72 (1991): 26.

⁸ Albert Houssiau, “La liturgie, lieu privilégié de la théologie sacramentaire,” *Questions Liturgiques* 54 (1973): 7.

ritual than one would in a parish that pays attention to detail and to the environment.

These elements of ritual are liturgical and theological, as well as catechetical.

With this basic understanding of the relationship between theology and liturgy we move to the relationship between liturgy and catechesis which naturally flows from it.

Liturgy and Catechesis

The strong relationship that exists between liturgy and catechesis has come into sharper focus over the last twenty-five years. One cannot speak of this relationship without also including the element of evangelization. Pope John Paul II in his apostolic exhortation *Catechesi Tradendae*, stated that catechesis and evangelization are not completely the same, nor are they completely separate. They are intimately related with one another. He speaks of catechesis as one of the “moments” in the process of evangelization.⁹

The Inherent Relationship with Evangelization

In *Catechesi Tradendae*, Pope John Paul II affirmed that catechesis “has the twofold objective of maturing the initial faith and of educating the true disciple of Christ by means of a deeper and more systematic knowledge of the person and the message of our Lord Jesus Christ.”¹⁰ Thus, effective catechesis occurs within the scope of evangelization and is nourished by it. Evangelization refers to the initial maturing and nourishing of faith. Catechesis and evangelization are in a mutually enhancing

⁹ John Paul II, *On Catechesis in Our Time (Catechesi Tradendae)* (Washington DC: USCCB, 1979) no. 18.

relationship. One cannot be brought to mature faith in Jesus Christ as an active disciple without both nourishing and teaching at the same time.

Through the process of evangelization there is an initial “yes” to Christ and his word. The next step involves a process of “knowing better” which can only take place through effective catechesis.¹¹ This catechesis takes place in a very specific way -- not only as “teaching” through the spoken and written word, but through the experience of liturgy with its myriad of symbols and rituals. This “knowing” is not just an intellectual exercise, but one of the whole person.

The Pope further emphasizes this point: “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 active tradition.”¹² Catechesis is neither separate from nor identical with life experience. It enriches it. This “moment” in the process of evangelization is profoundly connected to both life and liturgy. The emphasis on catechesis as a moment within the process of evangelization is one of the key principles that differentiates the *General Directory for Catechesis* (GDC, 1997) from its predecessor the *General Catechetical Directory* (GCD, 1971).¹³

The Baptismal Catechumenate as a Model

¹⁰ CT, no. 19.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid, no. 22.

Catherine Dooley, a scholar in the field of catechesis, proposes that in the years since the Second Vatican Council, the baptismal catechumenate has become the model for all catechesis. It is no coincidence that we have returned to the catechumenate process after centuries of neglect. The catechumenate process has had and continues to have a profoundly catechetical nature. *The General Directory for Catechesis* (1997) states: “ongoing formation requires a catechesis that is inspired and derives its principles from the baptismal catechumenate.”¹⁴

Dooley notes that the GDC asserts that both initiatory and ongoing catechesis have certain fundamental tasks: “to promote knowledge of the faith; to enable the faithful to participate fully, consciously, and actively in liturgical and sacramental life; to enter into a process of conversion which is evidenced by response to the social consequences of Gospel imperatives; to have all activity be permeated by the spirit of prayer; to form genuine Christian communities; and to educate to a missionary dimension.”¹⁵ Thus there is a broad meaning extended to the role of catechesis in the mission of the church that continues through this generation. Our present insights, gleaned from history, enrich our understanding of the past.

Dooley affirms “doctrine is not to be separated from liturgy or from life.”¹⁶ These three must be thought of together when speaking of the need for and the power of catechesis in the life of the church. “Catechesis must not only inspire an intellectual

¹³ Catherine Dooley, “Baptismal Catechumenate: Model for All Catechesis,” *Louvain Studies* 23 (1998): 114.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 117.

¹⁵ Dooley, 117.

assimilation of the task but touch the heart and transform conduct.”¹⁷ These statements of relationship allow us to perceive catechesis as more than simple knowledge of facts, but rather as a power and an example which transforms and connects the faithful to Christ. This recalls the *lex vivendi* of Irwin’s premise in *Context and Text*.¹⁸ With this term Irwin emphasizes that the ultimate purpose of connecting belief with liturgical expression is the living out of the message contained therein. Knowing our faith is not sufficient, we must live it.

The Stages of Catechesis

The GDC describes catechesis as “a process of formation and a true school of the faith.”¹⁹ This is an important element to consider in studying the precise nature of catechesis, for it is truly a process, a phenomenon without end which brings Christians into a dynamic relationship with Christ. Most people are accustomed to thinking about catechesis as a school of faith. It is important that it also be understood as a process of assimilation that includes liturgy as its source.

Catechesis is a “genuine process that is comprehensive, expressed in definite stages, connected with meaningful rites, symbols, biblical and liturgical signs.”²⁰ This statement of the GDC is a starting point for a discussion about the connection of

¹⁶ Ibid., 118.

¹⁷ Ibid., 119.

¹⁸ Irwin, *Context and Text*, 55.

¹⁹ Congregation for the Clergy, *General Directory for Catechesis* (GDC) (Washington, DC: USCCB, 1998), no.91.

²⁰ GDC, no. 91.

catechesis to liturgy in general and ritual in particular. The task at hand demands that the exact dynamics of this relationship be explored at length.

The U.S. National Catechetical Directory, *Sharing the Light of Faith* states:

“Catechetical ministry is a form of the ministry of the word, which proclaims and teaches. It leads to and flows from the ministry of worship, which sanctifies through prayer and sacrament.”²¹ This

statement reveals the roots of a very dynamic relationship, a two way exchange between both spiritual goods and knowledge and liturgy and catechesis. “Catechesis refers to efforts that help individuals and communities acquire and deepen Christian faith and identity through initiation rites, instruction and formation of conscience. It includes both the message presented and the way in which it is presented.”²² This is a very important concept in the relationship of liturgy and catechesis. The way in which the message is presented is an essential element in this relationship. These catechetical documents clarify that the church has come to a renewed understanding of a deep relationship among liturgy, catechesis and theology.

Liturgy and Catechesis in Other Church Documents

The National Directory for Catechesis (2005) also highlights the intimate relationship between catechesis and liturgy. It echoes *Catechesi Tradendae* when it

states “Catechesis is intrinsically linked with the whole of liturgical and sacramental activity.”²³ Furthermore, this most recent catechetical document states: “Catechesis and Liturgy originate in the faith of the Church, they proclaim the Gospel; they call its hearers to conversion to Christ; they initiate believers into the life of Christ and his Church and they look for the coming of the kingdom in its fullness when ‘God may be all in all.’”²⁴ It also reminds us “Liturgy is the privileged place for catechizing the people of God.”²⁵

Since Vatican II liturgy and catechesis have once again been fully related. In paragraph 64, *Sacrosanctum Concilium* decreed the restoration of the catechumenate, which it described as “a period of well-suited instruction...sanctified by sacred rites to be celebrated at successive intervals of time.” Gilbert Ostdiek, a theologian at Chicago Theological Union affirms that the Council did not envision a superficial juxtaposition of instruction and ritual.²⁶ Rather, the catechumenate is proposed to be a “period of formation in the whole of Christian life, an apprenticeship of sufficient duration, during which the disciples will be joined to Christ their teacher.”²⁷ The concept of the word formation joins the two ministries of instruction and ritual in a way that few words can.

²¹ USCCB, *Sharing the Light of Faith: National Catechetical Directory for Catholics of the United States* (Washington, DC: USCCB, 1977), no. 32.

²² *Sharing the Light of Faith*, no. 32.

²³ *CT*, no. 23.

²⁴ USCCB, *National Directory for Catechesis* (Washington, DC: USCCB, 2005), no. 33.

²⁵ *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (New York: William H. Sadlier, 1997), no.1074. Hereafter cited as *CCC*, citing 1 Cor. 15:28.

²⁶ Gilbert Ostdiek, “Liturgy as Catechesis for Life,” *Liturgical Ministry* 7 (Spring,1998): 78

²⁷ Austin Flannery, ed., *Vatican II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents* (Northport, NY: Costello Publishing Co., 1975), 828.

Through this process of learning and assimilation, the two ministries of catechesis and liturgy intersect to enlighten with both word and action.

Biblical Connections and *the Catechism of the Catholic Church*

The reality of the connection between liturgy and catechetical formation has a biblical basis in the Emmaus story as two disciples make their way from Jerusalem to Emmaus as they proceed from a loss of hope to true Easter faith. “It is a journey from pastoral encounter (vv. 15-24) to catechesis (vv.25-27)”, which the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC) calls the “paschal catechesis of the Lord, from catechesis to the breaking of the bread (vv. 30-31), and from table to mystagogy (v. 32) and mission (vv. 33-35).”²⁸ We see continuity between liturgical movement and catechetical moments. This is an example which illustrates this dynamic and the reason why this biblical passage is so often used as a paradigm for the catechumenate process.

The CCC echoes the theme of journey and stages in catechetical formation:

While not being formally identical with them, catechesis is built on a certain number of elements of the Church’s pastoral mission which have a catechetical aspect, that prepare for catechesis, or spring from it. They are initial proclamation of the gospel or missionary preaching to arouse faith; examination of the reasons for belief; experience of Christian living; celebration of the sacraments; integration into the ecclesial community and apostolic and missionary witness. Catechesis is intimately bound up with the whole of the Church’s life.²⁹

²⁸ CCC, no.1094.

²⁹ CCC, no. 6-7

Catechesis is intimately bound with the whole mission of the church, inclusive of all aspects. As such it is also connected with the celebration of the sacraments and weekly worship. These aspects have the quality of either preparing for catechesis (before) or following it (after).

“First” and “Second” Catechesis

It is important not simply to equate liturgy with catechesis. That would be erroneous. Gilbert Ostdiek makes an analogy to explain the difference between liturgy and catechesis when he compares liturgy to theology. He states that liturgical theologians often speak of liturgy as “first theology,” meaning lived, enacted theology in contrast to “second theology” the critical reflection which typically takes place in the classroom. In that same sense one might see liturgy as “first catechesis” and what catechists do as “second catechesis.”³⁰ Although this is an interesting analogy, it is too general. There are aspects of catechesis that do not neatly fit in any of these roles. It is, however, intriguing to explore for a moment,

With first catechesis, both catechesis and liturgy seek to bring us to an active, living relationship with our Lord Jesus Christ. When we put it in these simple terms, the principal goal of both disciplines is ultimately the same. Again the CCC 426 states “‘At the heart of catechesis we find, in essence, a Person, the Person of Jesus of Nazareth.’...Catechesis aims at putting people ...in communion...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

³⁰ Ostdiek, 78.

Holy Trinity.’” Both of these disciplines accomplish this purpose in different ways, but the goal is the same. An intended effect is mission and discipleship: the *lex vivendi* as defined by Irwin as the living out of the gospel mission.³¹

At every liturgical celebration the community keeps alive the Paschal Mystery of Christ.³² What he lived yesterday becomes our “today”. “We are strengthened to become a new person and to share his message with all those we meet; and that message, the message of salvation has touched our hearts and souls through the catechetical agency of liturgical rites and prayers. These rites and prayers have a unique formative power. Signs and symbols are an essential elemental part of this power. They speak to the whole person, not just to the intellect.

Liturgy works by repetition and accumulation.³³ It is certainly easy to relate to the fact that as we hear the prayers and the hymns over and over their meaning becomes a part of us. This type of formation could be somewhat superficial, however. When we hear the same words and music repeated over and over again, we could become closed to their meaning. More than just repetition is required for true formation to take place. The experience must be evocative and compelling. The words of the rituals and the hymns and the other symbolic images must touch us deep within, they must stir our souls in order to be truly formative for us. As Ostdiek states, “Liturgy is a school in which we learn the habits of a Christian heart.”³⁴

³¹ Irwin, 30. Irwin describes this term as “the living out of the Paschal Mystery in our own lives.”

³² Ostdiek, 78.

³³ Aidan Kavanagh, “Theological Principles for Sacramental Catechesis,” *The Living Light* 23 (1987): 322.

³⁴ Ostdiek, 79.

We cannot learn anything at this liturgical school, or through any other form of catechesis unless we are willing to listen and to be open to the message being expressed. Each of us comes to liturgy and to catechesis from our own perspective. We are only able to be transformed into active disciples of Christ if we are open to the lessons of our personal stories and are willing to be transformed. Human beings have a basic need to be understood. Once we are truly understood we are better able to move on from where we have been to where the catechesis of life is drawing us, whether through first catechesis which consists of liturgy, or second catechesis which consists of the reflection and teaching led by catechists. Thus we can see that catechesis and liturgy, as well as being intimately related to each other, are profoundly intertwined with life.

Ritual and Catechesis

The relationship of liturgy and catechesis has certain important distinctions from that of ritual and catechesis. Rituals are part of liturgy and as such they are a more specific part of the larger whole of the complexus of the liturgical act.³⁵ At the same time, the concept of ritual is something that is much broader. There certainly are a myriad of rituals which are not liturgical. Thus it is important to establish exactly what I am referring to when I speak of “ritual.”

³⁵ Irwin, *Context and Text*, x.

Irwin characterizes Christian ritual as stylized, repetitious, and familiar communal activity.³⁶ We saw some of these same elements above in terms of liturgy. However, here we are referring to a phenomenon that is more specific. The key fact is that the activity is communal. We all have personal beliefs and relationships with God. When we come together to worship and we participate in specific rituals, we reaffirm and nourish those beliefs in a manner that is cohesive in a way that goes beyond these core beliefs. We grow together as a community and we grow closer to God. This is not to deny the fact that there certainly are meaningful individual rituals, however, the focus is Christian ritual.

Irwin's definition above calls ritual "stylized." Rituals are not haphazard events. They are organized, planned around a certain meaning. As Catherine Bell indicates below, rituals evolve.³⁷ Being stylized does not mean that rituals are micromanaged, particularly early in their existence, but it does mean that there is a correlation between action and meaning that is intentional. That rituals may be repetitive is integral to their meaning.

There is something about the repetition of words, songs, and/or actions that touches deep within the human heart and soul. This connects to the word "familiar." Through repetition, rituals become familiar to us and they affect us in ways that go beyond our conscious understanding. The total effect of a ritual upon one's life and associations goes deeper than what can be readily analyzed.

³⁶ See for instance Irwin, 24 and the bibliography he presents there.

One of the very important effects of ritual is that it takes us beyond the confines of time: “Christian ritual is the means of perpetuating or actualizing (but not redoing or repeating) the saving event of Christ’s paschal mystery. As such it takes an event of the definitive past and makes it operative in a way that involves and incorporates people in the present.”³⁸ Many authors use the Greek word *anamnesis* to talk about this form of memorial.

Through a type of *anamnesis*, ritual unites us not only with each other, but also with the past and those of the past. This is a key element in the study of ritual, and is almost as important as the use of symbols. If rituals did not consist of symbols, they would lose much of their power to evoke and to transform human behavior and response. If rituals did not include anamnesis, they would lose the power of past experiences as regards human behavior.

Human beings have an innate tendency to ritualize significant moments and experiences of life. Patrick Collins, a noted liturgist, discusses Victor Turner’s definition of ritual. According to Collins, Turner, a cultural anthropologist, says that ritual is “an organized pattern of words, symbols and actions which members of the community use to interpret and enact for themselves, and to express and to transmit to others their relation to reality.”³⁹ These simple words have been the source of much study and reflection. Several dynamics, however, are present in this definition. One pertains to the word “organized.” The words, symbols and actions are organized, not haphazard. This is

³⁷ Catherine Bell, “Ritual, Change, and Changing Rituals,” *Worship* 63, no. 1 (January 1989): 34.

important for Turner. In order for these elements to be meaningful, they must have some type of pattern which is discernable to the community at hand.

Another element is community. As noted above, there is always a communal aspect to ritual when it is associated with liturgy. While someone may have certain individual and personal rituals, typically rituals are community oriented and understood in a communal sense. While every member of the community may not interpret any particular ritual in exactly the same way, there is a communal nature to the experience which should not be overlooked.

Collins next recalls Turner's use of the words "interpret" and "enact." Before one can enact a ritual for the benefit of others and for the community itself, one must interpret the meaning for oneself. The interpretation and the enactment are profoundly integrated; however, it is sometimes through the enactment of a ritual that one comes to a personal or communal interpretation of it. It is through the repeated enactment of the ritual that deep transformation may take place in the community. The words, symbols and actions of rituals are engraved deeply in our memories and are available for use to re-experience periodically outside of the celebration of the ritual itself.⁴⁰ Liturgy and specifically the rituals which compose it are exercises in remembering.

In the words "express" and "transmit" to others at the end of Turner's definition, we see an interesting dynamic taking place. One interprets and enacts the ritual for oneself, but only for the purpose of expressing and transmitting it to others. This is a

³⁸ Irwin, 24.

³⁹ Patrick Collins, *More Than Meets the Eye* (New York: Paulist Press, 1983), 53.

most important interaction. Rituals are for the benefit of others. Ritual is a social drama to be enacted for the benefit of the community. Collins, himself, speaks of ritual as both created by and creating a community.⁴¹ Through the process of the enactment of ritual the members of the community bind themselves to each other, becoming stronger and more unified. In addition, as Collins emphasizes and highlights, human existence is a mystery, the core of which lies deep within the human soul.⁴²

The last phrase of Turner's definition is "relation to reality." This goes back to the idea that rituals are not composed of haphazard words, symbols and actions. They must be organized in some way and this organization must have a relation to the reality of those who participate and those who observe. Observers have a personal reality. How they are catechized or transformed depends on their own perspective. They may not have the understanding of symbolic action that the participants do. Certain symbols have universal significance; however others have specific meaning to specific persons or groups. By observing any one particular ritual, the observer may walk away with a totally different meaning than that of the core group performing the ritual.

Collins also emphasizes that unless a ritual has a relationship to the charter event for all, it will fail: "Ritual must express the dignity, the mobility, and the beauty of a meaning which is both present in all space and time yet transcends all."⁴³ Rituals take us beyond; beyond the moment, beyond the ordinary, beyond ourselves and who we are.

⁴⁰Collins, 53.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Collins, 53.

While Irwin, Turner and Collins give us some important insights into the role of Christian ritual, an exhaustive study of ritual would go well beyond the purposes of this dissertation. I have chosen to focus on the ritual theory of Catherine Bell to develop a “ritual framework” upon which to base the other chapters of this study. Bell’s views on ritual differ with and nuance the views outlined above, particularly those of Turner.

Bell’s Theory of Ritual

Catherine Bell’s two hallmark books on ritual, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice*⁴⁴ and *Ritual: Perspectives and Dimensions*,⁴⁵ offer a wealth of insight into the theoretical and practical nature of ritual from both historical and theoretical viewpoints. A 1989 article further helps to elucidate Bell’s own theory on ritual.⁴⁶

Bell indicates her differences with the theory of Victor Turner, particularly with regard to the liturgical reforms of Vatican II. She critiques his work and much of the modern over-structured discourse on ritual in which she sees that “the theoretical construction of ritual becomes a reflection of the theorist’s method and the motor of a discourse in which the concerns of the theorist take center stage.”⁴⁷ Turner’s essay, “Ritual, Tribal and Catholic,” offers one occasion for her criticism.⁴⁸ In reacting to Turner’s denunciation of the postconciliar liturgical reform, Bell points out “the dangers

⁴⁴ Catherine Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 7.

⁴⁵ Catherine Bell, *Ritual: Perspectives and Dimensions* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 82.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Catherine Bell, “Ritual, Change, and Changing Rituals,” *Worship* 63 (1989): 33

⁴⁸ Bell, “Ritual, Change, and Changing Rituals,” 33.

⁴⁹ Victor Turner, “Ritual, Tribal and Catholic,” *Worship* 50 (November 1976): 504-525.

of forsaking scholarly distance or appealing to a professional ‘expertise’ to decide what is proper ritual and what is not.”⁴⁹ She states that it is doubtful that Turner would have so harshly judged ritual reforms carefully deliberated and implemented by the Ndembu tribe he studied. Bell is aware that the problem here goes beyond Turner’s lack of objectivity. Ritual that changes self-consciously presents scholars with a contradiction of sorts because of the manner in which many viewed ritual change. This perspective on change is rooted in the history of ritual studies, which Bell outlines in her article.⁵⁰

Two General Approaches

Social change has been the focus of ritual theory since the beginning of the twentieth century. In presenting her own approach to ritual, Bell reviews two general approaches. The first is that of W. Robertson Smith, a Scottish Old Testament scholar, in which ritual had an essential role in the maintenance of social groups. This approach tends to analyze ritual as the expressive deployment of the symbolic structures that undergird a group’s common worldview. In this view, ritual acts as a mechanism of continuity which resists forces that could bring about change.

The second approach focuses on how groups change through ritual. This approach is primarily from Clifford Geertz. Geertz was a highly influential American anthropologist known mostly for his strong support for and influence on the practice of symbolic anthropology. Within this perspective, ritual is seen as integral to the way in which the ideals and traditions of the social group are adapted to changing

⁴⁹ Bell, “Ritual, Change, and Changing Rituals,” 32.

circumstances.⁵¹ According to this perspective, ritual brings about social change by fusing a community's "general conceptions of the order of existence" with the actual circumstances of its daily life.⁵²

The first approach, that of Smith, presents ritual as a way of countering change. The second approach, that of Geertz, regards ritual as affording change via adaptation or integration. While one could assemble a considerable amount of support for a choice of either approach, Bell perceives that balancing or choosing between these two approaches is not what ritual study today is all about. Indeed, our most influential theories of ritual use a concept of ritual to solve other questions besides these. She laments that little focus is paid to how rituals themselves change or to why a community's sense of appropriate ritual changes. Along these lines, Bell notes that Turner and Geertz bypass analysis of that which constitutes effective ritual for the people involved in favor of showing what effective ritual "should" be.

According to Bell, Turner and Geertz contend that modern changes in older rituals are unsatisfactory at least partially because they hold assumptions in which ritual functions either to transcend historical change or to serve as a medium of the smooth accommodation of change. For her part, Bell suggests that ritual is not concerned with resisting or embracing change. This is an essential element of her approach to ritual and her ritual theory. She sees her approach as "attempting to identify dynamics intrinsic to

⁵⁰ Bell, 32.

⁵¹ Bell, 33.

⁵² Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1975), 44 cited in Bell, "Ritual, Change, and Changing Rituals," 32.

ritual that, on the one hand, enable it to serve unchanging tradition or cultural adaption while on the other also make apparent the logic by which rituals are altered.”⁵³ This is a social-analytical approach to ritual dynamics.

She emphasizes that rites are not composed of unique acts that occur solely in the context of the rite. For her, ritual is a way of acting. Essential, however, is the fact that ritual is profoundly concerned with distinguishing itself from other ways of acting:

“Thus, it is probably more appropriate to use the term ‘ritualization’ to refer to a way of doing certain activities that differentiates those activities from other more conventional ones.”⁵⁴ The activities, which are the subject of the ritual, gain a special status through the contrast. She uses the example of the difference between a regular meal and the Eucharistic meal. There are several characteristics that demonstrate this differentiation. Some of those are the size of the congregation gathered, distinct times for repetition of the rite and the highlighting of the fact that it is not a meal for physical nourishment.

Bell also makes the important point that ritualization could employ a distinct set of strategies to differentiate it from conventional eating. The strategies chosen for use would depend on which would be most effective in making the meal distinctive from an everyday meal. Thus Bell claims “ritualization could involve the exact repetition of a centuries-old tradition or deliberately radical innovation and improvisation.”⁵⁵ In this schema, ritualization distinguishes certain things from others. These distinctions are grounded in the nature of reality for the participants.

⁵³ Bell, 34.

A series of oppositions create this differentiation. Bell uses the Catholic Mass as an example of a consistent opposition between the higher reality and a lower one. Spiritual transformation is the higher level over physical nourishment which is the lower. There is also an opposition of inner and outer and of centered and dispersed, which generates an experience of spiritual authority. This leads us to Bell's concise definition of the dynamics of ritual, "The basic dynamics of ritual, therefore, can be seen to involve two processes. First, ritualization is itself a matter of drawing strategic contrasts between the acts being performed and their being contrasted or mimed. Second, the schemes established by ritualization are impressed upon participants as deriving from a reality beyond the activities of the group."⁵⁶

The participants in the ritual action embody the schemes of perception and interpretation and use them in their social world. Through the ritual itself, the participants are able to perceive and interpret their world in ways that are reflected in the process of the rite. "Ritualization is, therefore, a type of creative socialization."⁵⁷ It is most effective and most used in organizations that differentiate themselves from other groups based on their perception of reality. Thus, secular groups might have less depth to their rituals than would a religious organization.

Bell suggests that in the approach to ritual activities outlined above one need not focus only on ritualization, which reflects timeless continuity based on the exact

⁵⁴ Bell, "Ritual, Change, and Changing Rituals," 34.

⁵⁵ Bell, 35.

⁵⁶ Bell, 35.

⁵⁷ Bell, 35.

repetition of unchanging tradition. This is only one strategy. Others can exist that orchestrate an integration of tradition with historically new circumstances. Following from this view is the reality that, when the strategic schemes of the ritual can no longer effectively interpret and dominate in a social sense, then these schemes will shift.

An Example of the Roman Catholic Mass

In order to demonstrate her theory, Bell uses the example of the Catholic Mass and the changes since Vatican II. She notes that in the ancient church, the focus was on what was done. The people repeated the actions of Christ in a form of anamnesis. The emphasis was on the *doing*. On the other hand in the Tridentine liturgy, the emphasis was on what was *said*; for instance, the words of consecration effecting transubstantiation. The communal receiving of the Eucharist declined and the people came to be passive observers of ritual.

In the above two examples, one sees schemes of ritual that are quite different, just as the social circumstances of their time were diverse. The same is true of the Mass in relation to the reforms of Vatican II. The liturgical reform after the council demonstrated some very distinctive strategies of ritualization.

The most dramatic of these changes was the return to the emphasis on communal aspects of the liturgy relating to lay understanding and participation. There was also the recognition of a place for local cultural traditions within the liturgy. The Council had reasoned that there were parts of the rite instituted by Christ himself that could not be

changed; yet those considered to have been instituted by the church might be.⁵⁸ In that way, the Council recognized both unchanging and changing aspects of the liturgy which placed the historical and particular relative to the eternal and universal. There was interplay between the unchanging church and the particular church community and the way that they worshipped. Here we find an example of the opposition that Bell spoke of. In this case, the opposition is between the universal and the particular.⁵⁹

In the new schema, the emphasis was neither on what was done nor on what was said but on “expression.” “In the postconciliar Mass people express themselves.”⁶⁰ The basis for this newly formed community is not historical, social, or cultural. It resides within each person. A basis for community within each person is evoked, expressed and experienced in this form of ritualization. Bell emphasizes that Catholic identity does not reside in obedience to ecclesiastical authority; rather, it lies in the dynamics of self-expression nourished by a communal liturgy. The participants are the church, and they are empowered by the new liturgy to experience themselves as particular manifestations of the church.

The key to understanding this new form of ritual is the new means of ritualizing the traditional Eucharistic meal. The people gathered may not share the same culture or traditions in any particular manner, but they are united by this communal service in which they express themselves. This form of expression unites them as a community.

⁵⁸ A. Bungnini and C. Braga, eds., *The Commentary on the Constitution and on the Instruction on the Sacred Liturgy*, tr. N.P. Mallon (New York: Benzinger Brothers 1965), 84, cited in Bell, 39.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Bell, “Ritual, Change, and Changing Rituals,” 39.

The participants have a sense of value of themselves and their ability to orchestrate this rite that becomes meaningful in and of itself.

The Mass found in these three examples is significantly different in each case because of the shifts in the political, social and institutional status of the church and its members. Each was effective in its own socio-historical milieu. It defined personal and communal identity in effective ways. Bell emphasizes that sometimes the repetition of an unchanging rite was the strategy at hand. At other times, the freedom to innovate and adapt was the appropriate one.

For Bell the intrinsic purpose of ritual is too narrowly conceived if it is tied simply to the issue of social change. Ritualization can function either to accommodate history or to deny it. Even when the rite is not conducted “appropriately” the participants have the power and ability to express their values by which the community orders and reorders their lives.

This example of the postconciliar liturgical changes in the Catholic Church enables Bell to demonstrate her thesis of “changing ritual” and the dynamics that take place when exact repetition reflects unchanging tradition. The ritual changed to meet the needs of the worshipping church and the needs of that community were effectively met.

Ritual as Practice

This concept as regards change connects the reader to Bell’s systematic framework for analyzing ritual as practice. Practice theory focuses not on an anthropologist’s theoretical formulations, but upon what communities actually do and

how they do it. This was demonstrated in the example above concerning the celebration of the Eucharist. The theory assumes that “what is meant by ritual may not be a way of acting that is the same for all times and places,” and hence that a universal definition of ritual may actually distort and obscure “how and why people produce ritualized actions” in the first place.⁶¹

Bell goes on to state that while no one denies that ritual is a useful way to structure and interpret our experience of the world, there is “little cause for inferring the substantive existence of some universal forms of action best known as ‘ritual.’” This denies the proposed universality of ritual held by certain scholars and denies that all ritual actions can be traced to a uniform archetypal set of actions. For Bell, ritual does not have the hard and fast rules that it holds for scholars like Turner. Ritual does not always confirm and support a community’s identity.⁶² Identities change and rituals may question or challenge instead of maintain community identity.

Given this state of affairs, Bell’s main thrust as a scholar was to critique much of the modern, over-structured discourse on ritual. She demonstrated this critique specifically of Turner on the Catholic Church’s reformed liturgy. Bell emphasizes the fact that change does not readily co-exist with a program that stresses stability, continuity, tradition repetition and loyalty to a specific ritual or liturgical past.⁶³ Rituals must be open to change and have the ability to accommodate that change.

⁶¹ Bell, *Ritual: Perspectives and Dimensions*, 82.

⁶² Bell, *Ritual: Perspectives and Dimensions*, 82.

⁶³ Bell, “Ritual, Change, and Changing Rituals,” 32.

Bell intends to modify the understanding of ritual as a “global construct” or a “key to culture.”⁶⁴ In her simpler understanding, she sees ritual as a way of acting that differentiates itself from other ways of acting. Differentiation exists, however, not to create contrast but for a future reintegration. This reintegration reconciles the dichotomy between thought and action. Nathan Mitchell, in an article about Bell, reminds us that according to her, ritual does this by acting and doing, not by theorizing or “thinking about.”⁶⁵ This is in direct contrast to Geertz whom Bell discusses at length. She highlights his view that “the ritual participants act whereas those observing them think.”⁶⁶ She states:

Meaning for the outside theorist comes differently: insofar as he or she can perceive in ritual the true basis of its meaningfulness for the ritual actors—that is, its fusion of conceptual and dispositional categories—then the theorist can go beyond mere thoughts about activity to grasp the meaningfulness of the ritual.⁶⁷

A New View of Ritual and Tradition

Along these lines, Mitchell also contends that Bell revises the relation that liturgists often assume to exist between ritual and tradition. Tradition is often associated with set activities or values that come from the past and are fiercely held onto today. In contrast, according to Mitchell, Bell states that details concerning tradition are open to change. Tradition is never just created “once for all,” it is constantly revised to absorb

⁶⁴ Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice*, 7.

⁶⁵ Nathan D. Mitchell, “Ritual Matters,” *Worship* 82, no. 5 (September 2008): 450.

⁶⁶ Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice*, 28.

⁶⁷ Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice*, 28.

new elements. The basics may stay the same, e.g. the event itself, but many of the details surrounding it may change.⁶⁸

As Bell states, “ritual is never simply the repetition of highly fixed activities or the desultory shouldering of the ‘dead weight’ of tradition; rather ritualization is itself a creative act of production, a strategic reproduction of the past in such a way as to maximize its domination of the present.”⁶⁹ In this definition we see that ritualization is alive, is transformative, and is not simply repetitive. Bell proposes that ritualization is not a standardized process of traditionalization.⁷⁰ While some may use it as such, this can become problematic as history proceeds.

Two Distinct Processes of Ritual

Bell’s approach to the basic dynamics of ritual consists of two distinct processes. First, ritualization draws a contrast between “what we are doing” and other actions. We have used the normal meal and the Eucharist example. Secondly, the dynamics of ritual is one in which participants come to recognize that the patterns or schemes deployed in the rite “derive from a reality beyond the activities of the group.”⁷¹ This transcendence arises when participants acknowledge what they “receive” from a source which is outside their immediate knowledge or control.⁷² These two elements of Bell’s theory, as simple

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 123.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Bell, “Ritual, Change, and Changing Ritual,” 35.

⁷² Mitchell, 454.

as they seem, are the crux of the approach with which she addresses other theories. Her method is distinct from the other theories of ritual presented in this chapter.

While I will employ the ritual view of Bell specifically to the scrutiny rite in Chapter 5, I would like to make some comments on her analysis of ritual. It has already been shown that she has basic differences with Turner, perhaps less as his theories evolved before his death. This is largely because she disagrees with methods which are over-structured. I agree with her that a theorist must be able to separate him or herself from their own perspective on a given ritual and see it in and of itself. It is important that a certain scholarly distance be maintained and this objectivity enables the ritualist to observe the ritual without preconceived judgments.

It is interesting and somewhat unique in terms of scholars of the twentieth century that Bell sees rituals as neither a force for countering nor embracing change. This approach has catechetical implications. I perceive that many rituals are not about the element of change but are about expressing a certain truth which is contained in what they intrinsically are. Rituals teach in a particular way that goes beyond mere words.

Ronald Grimes, who is a professor of religion and culture in Canada, said:

Rituals are meaningful not by reason of what they refer to, but in virtue of what they actually do, individually and socially. For this reason, ritual symbols are evocative rather than referential. They invite response, not explanation or decoding. Ritual symbols, focus our attention to evoke memory; they do not leave us with religious ideas or political statements that constitute their meaning.⁷³

⁷³ Ronald Grimes, "Reinventing Ritual," *Soundings* 75:1 (1992): 6.

According to Grimes, and I believe that Bell would agree, rituals form and transform through their symbolic nature, not their message in and of itself.⁷⁴ We do not perform the scrutiny rite in order to teach the community about what sin is and what it means in our community or our society. The rite evokes a response in the observer relative to their experience of sin and grace that is part of our universal human condition. The scrutiny rite in terms of the church really has nothing to do with embracing or avoiding change, but it *has* changed over the centuries to reflect the evolving understanding of evil, sin and grace.

Bell sees ritual as a way of acting; a way of acting that is different from other perhaps “conventional” ways of acting. For her there is conventional behavior and there is ritualistic behavior and it is important to differentiate between the two.⁷⁵ Sometimes this is simpler to see at other times. Her definition about the Catholic Mass as a ritual way of eating in contrast to normal meals is quite easy to identify with. Other examples are more complex. But the core of her outlook is the same. As noted above, ritualization is a matter of drawing strategic contrasts. The catechetical moment lies right there in the core of this differential. It is not something that one necessarily thinks of cognitively, but it is perceived through the senses, the structure of meaning which lies deep within the individual.

⁷⁴ Grimes, 7.

⁷⁵ Mitchell, 450.

Secondly, along these lines, Bell notes that the establishment of the act of ritualization derives from a reality beyond the activities of the group. It reaches beyond as it were to other aspects of life and existence. It makes connections. The secular and the sacred become connected for a moment in time in the perception of the participant or the observer.

This differentiation between participant and observer is an important one in terms of the catechetical nature of ritual. It is a matter of perceptual references. The participant in the group has different perceptual references than does the observer. This is a rather obvious but important point. The Roman Catholic participating in the Mass derives different meanings from the service than does an observer who is attending Mass for the first time. Both may incorporate the schemes of the ritual action and employ them in their social world. They will just do so differently. A form of socialization takes place.

Creative Socialization

Creative socialization is key to understanding Bell.⁷⁶ This concept is a core principle in her schema of understanding and defining ritual and ritualization. Bell's perception makes sense to me as it incorporates the fact that schemes will shift with the social reality at hand, in order to maintain their cohesion and meaningfulness. Her example of the Catholic Mass is particularly useful to demonstrate her point. This connects to the way that she analyzes ritual as practice. The three different forms of the Mass that she described corresponded to shifts in status in many different levels of

⁷⁶ Bell, "Ritual Change, and Changing Ritual:" 32.

church/social/institutional relations. The ritual did not affect or deny these changes, but they took place nevertheless to meet the needs of the given generation of faithful.

What does it say about ritual and her above example that a significant amount of the faithful long for the Tridentine Mass? No one ritual can meet the needs of an entire society. Obviously there are people who find meaning in a ritual that is more traditional and less “expressive.” Is this group less open to change? Perhaps it is so, perhaps not. It may simply be true that certain participants in ritual are more comfortable in familiar patterns.

Some Conclusions in Terms of Catechesis

I appreciate the fact that Bell does not have the hard and fast rules that ritualization hold for other scholars, some of which are named above. As she states, identities change and rituals may challenge community identity. Perhaps that is what is happening in the example of the Tridentine Mass mentioned above. Rituals must be open to new ways of perceiving reality and must adjust to that reality at hand. She welcomes this flexibility. The fact that she does not understand rituals as “global constructs” is refreshing and practical, particularly as ritual relates to catechesis. What one learns or perceives from a given ritual and how one is transformed will not be the same in every single community, nor will it be the same for any particular participant.

For Bell, ritual is simply a way of acting that is different from other ways of acting. When reintegration takes place in the future, it is not through thinking about it, it is through the doing. Again, it is here that we find the core of catechesis. Whether a

catechumen is truly transformed by the scrutiny rite depends on what they perceive through the actual “doing” of the rite, not what we tell them about it. That is why mystagogical catechesis is so essential. Let them experience the ritual, then and only then let them reflect upon it. I believe that it is only a practical concern about people being comfortable with what they will do that prevent us from fully appreciating mystagogical catechesis in today’s learning environment. Ritual is allowed to be all it can be, however, when this takes place.

Bell’s understanding of the relationship between tradition and ritual is refreshing. She denies that tradition is the simple repeating of the same acts over and over again throughout history. Like rituals, traditions must be open to the power of change. The way that she uses the words “creative act of production” allows for the past to meld with the present and extend to the future in a manner that is truly formative.

Participants in rituals acknowledge that they receive something from outside their immediate situation at hand. There is a transcendence that takes place. This transcendence is more easily grasped in terms of religious rituals. Symbols are essential elements of rituals, particularly our religious rituals in the Catholic Church. It is through our symbols that we come in touch with the Transcendent as if through a veil. To better understand the process of ritualization it is necessary to have a grasp of the power of symbols.

Symbols and Symbolism According to Pastoral Theory

The Difference Between Sign and Symbol

Symbols are the building blocks of rituals; it is important to understand their relationship with signs. A symbol is a type of sign; as such, it points beyond itself to something else, something more, and is a means of communicating this more to those who experience it.⁷⁷ Signs in general give information and usually only have one meaning. When one sees the octagonal red sign with a STOP printed on it, one knows what it means. Many other examples abound. Signs which have a single meaning can also be explained by a set definition.

A symbol is a more complex kind of sign. It is multivalent, that is, it can convey not only one meaning, but a series of meanings. The number of meanings is almost as numerous as the people who perceive the symbol. Thus, it has several different connotations. Unlike signs, symbols do more than just communicate ideas; they touch our imaginations and stir up our feelings. Some examples of these are love, hope, joy and fear. Symbols touch our values, beliefs, ideals and traditions and our insights and ideas as well. Symbols are very useful for sharing inner feelings and attitudes, much like a cake with candles symbolizes our celebration of the life and gifts of that particular person.

As Brian Gleeson, a Passionist priest and Doctor of Theology, states so succinctly, “The implication is that a symbol tends to participate in the reality it signifies, that it realizes what it signifies, that it is what it means and that it takes us beyond the

surface of things to their depth.”⁷⁸ Because symbols tend to have numerous layers of meaning, it is easier to experience it than it is to explain it. Because it touches the heart and not just the head, a symbol tends to work more powerfully than logical explanation.

The appreciation of symbol involves the capacity to “see more,” to “feel about,” to reflect, to contemplate, and to wonder. The art of being able to think symbolically is connected to the art of the poet and his or her ability to see beyond the obvious. Jesus had this poetic state of mind as he used images and stories to explain his truth. To think and to act in a symbolic way tends to also require previous experience. The appreciation of a religious symbol assumes some previous acquaintance with it.

The Constitution on the Liturgy of Vatican Council II speaks of the role of symbol in liturgy when it says, “in the liturgy the sanctification of women and men is given expression in symbols perceptible to the senses and is carried out in ways appropriate to each of them.”⁷⁹ This implies that the words that we say; the things that we use, and the actions that we carry out, take us beyond ourselves and put us into contact with the God whom we cannot see and touch and hear directly with our human senses. This is also true of the individual rituals which comprise the liturgy.

The Intersection of Ritual and Symbol

Through rituals, which are symbol systems, our relationship with God becomes a concrete relationship. We never see God face to face in this life, but through our symbols

⁷⁷ Brian Gleeson, “Symbols and Sacraments: Their Human Foundations,” *Australian E-Journal of Theology* February 2004, no. 2 http://dlibrary.acu.edu.au/research/theology/ejournal/aejt_2/Brian_Gleeson_.html (Accessed on August 13, 2010).

⁷⁸ Gleeson, 3.

we see him as if through a veil. We cannot come into contact with him directly through our senses, but symbols enable us to do so indirectly. And it is through this process that we are catechized as to not only what that specific ritual symbolizes, but as to the nature of our relationship with God. The reality which ritual expresses is embodied in objects and in human gestures and actions, all of which can be perceived to be catechetical. Our relationship with God is connected to catechesis about that relationship, particularly if that relationship is dynamic. If we are to grow in faith, we must consistently be transformed in our daily lives. It is a process that is constantly in flux, just as are our lives.

Michael S. Driscoll is a presbyter and assistant professor of liturgy and sacramental theology at Notre Dame. He approaches symbol and mystery from a religious perspective. He points out that talking “about the mystery and assigning definitions to symbols can have the adverse effect of keeping people at a distance from the mystery.” This is true and this is the reason that when we celebrate rituals in the catechumenal process, we do not explain the rite to the candidate or catechumen before the rite is celebrated, nor did they in the Middle Ages. We allow the participants to experience the transformation and mystery of the rite on their own. Then we unpack the meaning of the ritual afterwards with the participants. In this way, we come to understand what the rite meant to the individual as well what was the “intended” significance of the rite. This more experiential approach takes seriously the power of

⁷⁹ *Sacrosanctum Concilium* ,(Washington D.C.: National Catholic Welfare Conference, 1963), no.7.

rituals to speak naturally and directly to participants and to unfold the role of the symbolic.⁸⁰ St. Cyril of Jerusalem (ca. 313-386 C.E.) and other church fathers were well aware of this dynamic, even though they may not have analyzed it as such.

Christian worship is intimately tied to the world of symbols. Many of our Christian symbols evolved from the Jewish tradition. The life and actions of Jesus go beyond the historical to the nature of symbols. Much of what he said and did symbolized another reality. Worship is primarily a symbolic action. Our scientific bent as humans in recent centuries leads us to search for meaning in the liturgy and the rituals which compose them as though there were only a single meaning to be gleaned from them. “Rather than experiencing the sacraments as rich with many meanings, a reductionist tendency looks in vain for *the* meaning as though this could be attained through cognitive thought.”⁸¹

As Driscoll goes on to say, immersion in the symbolic is more important than study about it. The conciliar reforms are more concerned that people have an experience of ritual through good liturgy than that they know about them through prior catechetical preparation.⁸² It is important to differentiate here what we are saying about catechesis. This statement does not mean that the rituals themselves are not catechetical. Rather, it is saying that the catechesis should come *from* the ritual, not before it. This is an essential distinction. Rituals catechize us because they touch deep within our imaginations, not

⁸⁰ Michael S. Driscoll, “Symbol, Mystery, and Catechesis,” *Liturgical Ministry* 7 (Spring 1998): 67.

⁸¹ Peter Fink, *Praying the Sacraments* (Washington DC: Pastoral Press, 1991), 9-10, cited in Driscoll, 68.

⁸² Driscoll, 68.

just within our minds. *All* catechesis need not be factual in nature, it should also be experiential.

There are times when catechists will rehearse a sacramental celebration, however, ideally this rehearsal consists in only in procedures such as where and how to walk, etc. It should not be so mechanistic that it covers every little aspect of the experience and thus should be quite limited. One can tell a child or an adult how to hold their hands to receive the Eucharist, but one should not attempt to describe what this experience will mean to them.

Secularist Theology of Symbols

Michael Driscoll recalls that Harvey Cox, the renowned secularist, emphasized that religious practice and instructions would lose social significance and our learning would then become more independent from any religious perspective.⁸³ In this secularist theology, liturgy either had no place or it had to undergo a process of differentiation. While this theology is now dated, it still reflected with some accuracy the inculturation of the liturgy. The fact remains that symbols have become impoverished and desacralized. Symbols have lost their full range of meanings and often artificial meaning is attributed to them. Where symbols are expressed as objects, gesture, and language, the believer attempts to give expression to the mystery of God. Unfortunately, celebrants of rituals today favor the descriptive word over symbolic expression, mistrusting the power of

⁸³ Harvey Cox, *The Secular City* (New York: Macmillan, 1963), 138, cited in Driscoll, 68.

symbols to speak deeply to people's experience and mistrusting the people's ability to "understand."⁸⁴

Along these lines, one can argue that if a symbol needs defining, then it is no longer a real symbol. The word symbol comes from the Greek word *sym-ballein*, throwing together two things. In our sacramental world, the two things being thrown together are the visible and the invisible; what is known by the senses is juxtaposed with what is known in the heart.⁸⁵ The conflict between the two enables the participant to experience deeper levels of meaning through the symbol. This tension between these two poles of meaning is diminished when the symbol is explained. Symbols by their nature must be intentionally ambiguous in their meaning because they can have many meanings at the same time.

Similarly, it is important to remember that symbols are signs, but complex signs. A symbol is a polyvalent sign. All symbols are signs, but not all signs are symbols. When we explain our symbols to too great a degree, we reduce them to mere signs. Symbols reveal a wide range of meanings without ever exhausting it.⁸⁶ Symbols always have the potential to mean more because the participant in the symbol is always supplying a new life context in which the symbol will be experienced. This is directly related to the role of catechesis.

Catechetical Rituals

⁸⁴ Driscoll, 69.

⁸⁵ Driscoll, 69.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

Currently we strive for precision in our thought. We seek the exact meaning of symbols as if there were only one meaning. Reducing the symbol to a simple sign robs it of its polyvalent meaning. Rituals become more catechetical, not when we teach more about them and explain them better, but when we allow *them* to teach. This truth is illustrated in the statement, “signs declare—they define reality; whereas symbols have the ability to be evocative and elicit meanings.”⁸⁷

According to Paul Ricoeur, the famous French philosopher, the symbol arises in language as a polyvalent expression of multiple meanings. In symbol there are two levels of meaning, a literal level and a second level of deeper meaning, which is bound intimately to the first. In religious symbolism, the deeper level expresses the human relationship to the Sacred.⁸⁸ The symbol contains the level of deeper meaning, but this is always bound to the first level of meaning by which it is expressed. The symbol builds upon the literal level and without such it would be deprived of the most fundamental meaning.⁸⁹

Driscoll defines a symbol of coherence which is common in liturgy.⁹⁰ Symbol builds upon symbol to speak to our experience. Symbols speak to us in many different ways and, if the symbol were not present, the meaning behind it would be lost altogether. Through the power of a coherent symbol, a group of people grasps the meaning of its

⁸⁷ Fink, 23.

⁸⁸ Paul Ricoeur, “The Hermeneutics of Symbol and Philosophical Reflection,” *International Philosophical Quarterly* 2.2 (May 1962): 191, cited in Driscoll, 71.

⁸⁹ Fink, 23.

⁹⁰ Driscoll, 72. Driscoll defines a symbol of coherence as one that expresses meaning in such a way that if the symbol were missing the meaning behind it would be lost altogether.

own existence, and a disparate group of individuals becomes a unified whole. This leads us back to the thinking of some of the scholars mentioned in an earlier section of this chapter.

Symbols are essential components of ritual. It is through the symbol that we are connected in the present to the beyond. As the authors above proposed, symbols touch our imagination and touch us deep within, affording us the possibility of transformation and change. Without symbols, rituals would be static communication of reality. In fact, a ritual would lack the essence of what it is without the power of symbol.

Conclusion

This chapter has outlined three important relationships between theology, catechesis and ritual. The study of ritual led to the theory of Catherine Bell, which will be the basis for the framework in studying the scrutiny rite as a ritual. Symbols, as important elements of rituals were discussed in terms of their relationship with signs. Bell's theory offers a ritualistic approach to the scrutiny rite by providing a framework that will enable further historical and technical study. In the following chapters I will examine the nature of this rite as ritual, following Bell's approach and will examine this ritual as catechetical. Through this first chapter, relationships have been established which will enable proceeding to the crux of this issue. The relationship between

theology and liturgy, between liturgy and catechesis and between ritual and catechesis are the essential groundwork for this study.

CHAPTER TWO THE SCRUTINY RITE AS PRESENTED IN FRANKISH AND ROMAN LITURGICAL TEXTS

This chapter will focus on the scrutiny ritual as recorded in the *Old Gelasian Sacramentary*. This sacramentary dates from the middle of the seventh century. While there is much discussion among scholars as to its provenance, it is believed that it is a Roman sacramentary that traveled to France, where many Gallican additions took place. Some conclusions will be made as to how this ritual was celebrated in Rome.

Antoine Chavassee is a scholar who concentrated a great deal of his work on the *Old Gelasian*. I will review his study of the scrutiny ritual. Chavassee has given us extensive and detailed information about the text of the ritual. Through this study it will become obvious that there are differing views among scholars as to the date and practice, as well as the provenance of the rituals of the *Old Gelasian*. The viewpoints of various of these scholars, most notably those of Chavassee, will be examined. Among these, some new conclusions based on studies by Dominic Serra, presbyter and associate professor at the Catholic University of America, will be introduced. The chapter will also include some references to *Ordo XI*, which is the only detailed directory of the baptismal ceremonies from that period. Given the information resulting from these liturgical sources, I will discuss how this ritual is catechetical.

History of the Medieval Scrutiny Rite

The term “scrutiny” was used as early as the year 400 in the *Canones ad Gallos* which are a reply to a request from Gallican bishops for advice on certain matters.¹ The term scrutiny was used to refer to the pre-baptismal exorcism of candidates for Baptism. Thus, the antecedents of this pre-baptismal ritual, including various forms of exorcism, date back to the patristic age. The word “scrutiny” was used for those occasions during the second stage of catechumenal preparation in which the catechumens’ hearts were scrutinized to determine whether they were freed of the snares of the devil and were rescued from the power of darkness. Different from the renunciation of the devil, which was a deliberate act resolutely taken by the catechumens of their own free will, the scrutiny, as a form of exorcism, was performed by another.

While we have accounts of scrutiny or scrutiny-like rituals from many different sources, the only verifiable liturgical evidence that exists for the texts of the rite in the West is contained in the *Old Gelasian Sacramentary*. This sacramentary which is further described below, offers both exorcisms and Mass formularies for three scrutiny rites which according to their titles took place on the third, fourth and fifth Sundays of Lent. Because this document is Roman with Gallican additions, it is difficult to ascertain sure facts about the rituals and when they were held. Nevertheless, it offers a great deal of information about the texts used in the scrutiny rituals. From these texts it is possible to

¹ Canon 8 of “Canones ad Gallos” as cited in E.C. Whitaker, ed., *Documents of the Baptismal Liturgy*, revised and expanded by Maxwell E. Johnson (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2003), 205.

propose how these rituals were catechetical and to what degree they were able to form and transform the community.

While the *Old Gelasian* is our best record of the scrutiny ritual, there are known to have been three scrutinies in Rome as far back as the time when the *Canones ad Gallos*² were issued, namely at the very beginning of the fifth century or possibly earlier still.³ In the time of Pope Siricius, the Bishop of Rome from 384-399, the final preparation for initiation began forty days before Easter when the elect gave in their names, and were purged by exorcisms and daily prayers and fastings. This is substantiated by the Letter of Pope Siricius to Himerius of Terragona in Spain (ca. 384-385).⁴ This forty day period of Lenten preparation originated with a two-day fast before Easter from which it was lengthened to a week (Holy Week), then to three weeks and finally forty days. This transformation seemed to be a result of “the shift of the world view in the post-Constantinian Christian community.”⁵ As a result of this shift in worldview, the Church was more concerned with historical events, when it had previously been oriented to the *parousia*. At this time the candidates were still largely adults. This final intensive preparation took place in the presence of the faithful, who could not only profit from listening to the instructions given, but were concerned to see

² Bruns, *Canones Apostolorum et Conciliorum*, Berlin, 1839, as translated and cited in Whitaker, 205.

³ J.D.C. Fisher, *Christian Initiation: Baptism in the Medieval West* (London: S.P.C.K., 1963), 5.

⁴ J.D. Mansi, *Sacrorum Conciliorum Nova et Amplissima Collectio*, III (Florence 1759-1798), 656B, cited in Johnson, 161.

⁵ Ibid., 202.

that the future members of the Church showed the proper dispositions for receiving the sacraments and seemed likely to persevere in the faith.⁶

This manner of instruction was a form of catechesis for both the elect and the faithful. This instruction took place with both words and actions. Whether or not this preparation in the form of the scrutiny took place at a Sunday celebration of the Mass makes a significant difference regarding the number of people who were catechized by the ritual and who thus had an active role in the process of initiation. The ritual extant in the *Gelasian Sacramentary* focuses on the catechetical nature of the ritual even more so than the present rite, in terms of actual references to catechesis. This will be emphasized as this chapter unfolds.

In addition to the liturgical evidence in the *Gelasian Sacramentary*, certain details concerning the liturgy of this ritual can be found by examining a letter of John the Deacon, a Roman, writing to Senarius, a high official of the court at Ravenna, in about 500. Senarius asked John the Deacon what a scrutiny is and why infants (*infante*) are scrutinized three times before the Pascha. This statement will be examined in greater depth in chapter three. However, for current purposes, one should not be confused by the use of the term infant (*infante*). It could be used for a person of any age who is to be reborn through Baptism. It is not entirely clear and there are varying opinions as to

⁶ Johnson, 6.

exactly when the ritual came to be performed primarily for infants. One thing is sure, however, that the rite in the Gelasian was originally composed with adults in mind.⁷

The scrutinies were celebrated in the region where the *Old Gelasian Sacramentary* is in use, but they had been recently imported from Rome.⁸ The documents that contain the oldest Roman liturgical documents place the first scrutiny and its readings on the second Sunday of Lent. It was moved to the third Sunday because of the introduction of the Ember Days, one of which was celebrated on Saturday evening before that Second Sunday of Lent. The present *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* has yielded to this ancient practice in beginning the scrutinies on the third Sunday of Lent. There is no reason for maintaining this change to the third Sunday of Lent since the Ember Days have been suppressed and there is no longer an Ember Saturday liturgy celebrated in the evening.

In earlier times, the word “scrutinies” was used for occasions in which “we scrutinize their hearts through faith, to ascertain whether the renunciation of the devil and the sacred words have fastened themselves on their minds; whether they acknowledge the future grace of the Redeemer, whether they confess that they believe in God the Father Almighty.”⁹ By the end of the fifth century, however, the object of the scrutinies was not to examine the faith and knowledge of the catechumens but to discover whether the evil spirit has departed from them and for this reason they were primarily exorcisms. At the

⁷ Fisher, 7.

⁸ Archdale King, *Liturgies of the Past* (Milwaukee, WI: Bruce Rob Publishing Co., 1959), 136.

⁹ John the Deacon, cited in Whitaker, 209.

time of Ambrose and Augustine, as early as the late fourth century, the scrutinies were used more as exorcisms than as examinations.

As stated by Thomas Finn, Professor of Religion at William and Mary, exorcism dramatized conversion as a struggle with Satan and the renunciation of Satan personalized the struggle for the candidates in rite and symbol.¹⁰ The scrutiny rite prepared and strengthened the elect to be on the winning side of this struggle. It also catechized them in a very dramatic manner about the role of Satan and of evil in the life of the individual Christian and in the Church. This took place through the adjurations and the vulnerable position of the elect on the rug. By the end of these rituals, the elect should have had no question about the seriousness of this spiritual threat and this reality was reemphasized for those present as well. It is important to remember, however, that the scrutiny was and is ultimately about the triumph of grace.

Date, Provenance and Genre of the *Gelasian Sacramentary*

The *Old Gelasian Sacramentary* manuscript or *Sacramentarium Gelasianum Vetus (GeV)*.¹¹ dates from the middle of the seventh century. While there is considerable discussion as to when it was actually composed, this is the most likely time period because it features modification introduced by Gregory the Great (590-604), but does not

¹⁰ Thomas Finn, *From Death to Rebirth* (New York: Paulist Press, 1997), 182.

¹¹ *Liber sacramentorum Romane Ecclesiae ordinis anni circuli (Cod. Vat. Reg. lat 316/Paris Bibl. Nat. 7193, 41/56) (Sacramentarium Gelasianum)*, ed. L.C. Mohlberg (Rome: Casa Editorice Herder, 1981). Hereinafter references will follow the designation GeV.

yet contain the Masses for the Thursdays in Lent, introduced by Pope Gregory II.¹² While the manuscript itself was written around 750, it is a copy of material from 715-720. The manuscript kept in the Vatican Library, *Cod Vat. Reg. lat. 316*, was transcribed at the monastery of Chelles around the year 750. Today, it is commonly accepted that the core of the *GeV* originated in Rome, was brought to France and transcribed at the monastery with additions.¹³ Chavasse believed the Roman core goes back to the year 600. How the core came to Frankish territory and how the Roman and Frankish elements were combined are his speculations based on detailed study. There is but one manuscript, the abovementioned from which the conclusion is missing. The separated folios are found in *Codex latinus 7193* of the Bibliotheque Nationale of Paris.¹⁴

The Genre of the Sacramentary

The *GeV* appears to be the first liturgical book organized as a sacramentary. It can be correlated with several evangelaries, or Books of the Gospel.¹⁵ Its attribution to Pope Gelasius is no longer sustained since we have learned that orations composed by Gelasius have been preserved in sacramentaries but that he is not the author of the type that bears his name. The *GeV* is a liturgical book in the full sense of the word since it was actually used in the liturgy and its origins appear to be Roman through and through; something we know as a result of the work of Chavasse and others. Its title, “Here begins

¹² Eric Palazzo, *A History of Liturgical Books from the Beginning to the Thirteenth Century* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1998), 45.

¹³ Ibid. A. Baumstark is one of few to discount this theory, holding that it is a work drawn up after the death of Gregory the Great, probably in Frankish Gaul, using older Roman materials.

¹⁴ Palazzo, 45.

¹⁵ Ibid.

the sacramentary of the Roman Church ordered according to the yearly cycle” and its Sanctoral confirm this origin.¹⁶

The contents of this sacramentary show that it is a mixed book in two senses: it is a Roman book to which many Gallican elements have been added, and even the Roman base itself is mixed, being a combination of papal and presbyteral elements. The *GeV* at the core is a sacramentary of the presbyteral type, in contrast to the Gregorian Sacramentary, published in 785-786 which is a papal sacramentary that no longer includes the scrutinies, except one for Holy Saturday morning.¹⁷ Even in the portion of the *GeV* edition said to be “Roman” there are varieties in composition, sometimes within the same paragraph. There is an intermingling of a variety of Roman *libelli* belonging to different periods and representing both papal and presbyteral usage.¹⁸ The sacramentary contains everything needed by a priest in charge of a “titular” church or a parish church. Chavasse proposes that the *GeV* was compiled for a single church out of the twenty-five titular churches which existed in Rome at the time: St. Peter in Chains.¹⁹

Even if the *GeV* were composed in Rome, the Gallican/Frankish additions definitely introduced several new elements. *GeV* appears as the earliest example of the Romanization of the Frankish liturgy before the reform of Pepin the Short.²⁰ In use in the

¹⁶ Palazzo, 45.

¹⁷ Adrien Nocent. “Christian Initiation in the Roman Church from the Fifth Century Until Vatican II,” in *Sacraments and Sacramentals*, Volume IV of *Handbook for Liturgical Studies*, Anscar J. Chupungco, ed. (Collegeville: Liturgical Press/A Pueblo Book, 2000), 49-90.

¹⁸ Cyrille Vogel, *Medieval Liturgy: An Introduction to the Sources* (Washington, DC: The Pastoral Press, 1986), 64.

¹⁹ Nocent, 49.

²⁰ Palazzo, 45.

presbyterial churches of Rome in the seventh and eighth centuries, it most likely reached Gaul in the course of the 8th century through the intermediary of pilgrims returning from a Roman visit. Once received there, it was Gallicanized by the insertion of five sections. These are attested in the writings documenting the liturgy in Gaul before the introduction of the Roman books.²¹

Liturgical historians are not yet in accord as to the nature and extent of the Frankish additions. Five sections, however, form compact blocks easy to detect within the structure of the *GeV*. These are located in sections 26-44. They concern the ritual for ordinations, the ritual for the consecration of virgins, the ritual for the dedication of a church, the ritual for the blessing of the lustral water, and the ritual for funerals. One should be careful, however, in regarding the Gallican additions as blocks of material juxtaposed to the older Roman elements. It is preferable to treat them as fresh additions or combinations which were gradually amalgamated with the older Roman structures.

The Structure of the Sacramentary

The 1,704 pieces of the *GeV* are divided into three books in the manuscript. The first, containing the scrutinies, comprises the celebrations of the temporal from the Nativity to Pentecost. The second is devoted to the Sanctoral with one Common Mass for Saints and includes the Advent Masses. The third comprises the Masses for ordinary Sundays, the canon of the Mass, and a series of votive Masses. The typical Mass formulary of this sacramentary is made up of two collects, one secret, a proper preface, a

²¹ Palazzo, 45.

postcommunion, and one oration *ad populum* (to the people). The two collects in the beginning of the formulary are traces of the presbyterial usage in the *GeV* because the second one is purported to serve as a conclusion to the general intercessions.²²

The manuscript *Reg 316* has two characteristics which distinguish it from the Gregorian Sacramentaries, referred to above. Firstly, it is divided into three separate books with the Temporal and the Santoral kept distinct. Secondly, in every Mass-set there are two very similar prayers appearing before the secret. The first cannot be a stational collect, a collect for a stational church, since stations do not exist in this kind of sacramentary. Stational churches are part of a Roman tradition that certain celebrations of the Mass are celebrated at specific churches in Rome on specific days. The manuscript *Reg 316* was composed for a single church, such as Peter in Chains, as mentioned above. Perhaps they are alternative prayers left to the celebrant's choice or perhaps the first is an *oratio* proper and the second an *oratio super sindonem* as in the Ambrosian rite.²³

Scholars are divided as to the exact usage of the two prayers before the secret.

However old the *GeV* may truly be and whatever its original date of redaction, it was clearly used at Rome during much of the seventh and the first part of the eighth centuries. It served side by side with a Gregorian-type sacramentary and when Gregory II decided to compose Masses for the Lenten Thursdays, he borrowed a few selections from a Gregorian book but took the greater number from a Gelasian.²⁴

The Ritual Text of the Scrutiny Rite

²² Nocent, 49.

In this section of the chapter, I will explore and explain the rituals as presented in the *Old Gelasian* and *Ordo XI*.

The Scrutiny Rite in the *Old Gelasian*

Book I.XXVI The Third Sunday (in Lent)

The Mass is celebrated, for the scrutinies of the elect.

We ask you O Lord, bestow upon these elect right hearts and wise minds
As they come to confess your praise: so that man's ancient dignity, which
Once by sin they had lost, by your grace may be restored in them.
Through...

The Secret

O God we ask you, bring your servants in pity to these mysteries, and at
all times lead them in the way of devotion. Through ...

Within the Canon, when he says

Remember Lord you servants, both men and women, who are to bring
the elect to the holy grace of baptism: and all this congregation here
present. *And you keep silence. And the names are read of the men and
women who are to receive the infants from the font. And you continue:*
whose faith is known to you.

Again within the Canon

We pray you therefore, O Lord, that you will favourably receive this
oblation, which we offer to you for your servants, both men and
women, whom you have deigned to choose and call to eternal life
and to the blessed gift of your grace. Through Christ,

*And the names of the elect are read. And when they have been recited you
say, We pray you, Lord, for these who are to be renewed in the fount of
baptism, and by the gift of your Spirit make them ready for the bounty
of your sacraments. Through....*

The Postcommunion

O Lord we ask you, watch over the work of redemption, and graciously
Shield the preparation of those whom you raise up by the sacraments of
Eternity. Through...

²³ Vogel, 64.

²⁴ Ibid, 69.

[*The Collect*] ad Populum

Suppliant, O Lord, your holy family awaits your gifts and your compassion: bestow upon it, we ask you, those things which you bid it to desire. Through...

Book XXVII The Fourth Sunday [in Lent]

(The Mass is) for the second scrutiny.

Almighty everlasting God, send your Holy Spirit to bless your Church with increase, and grant that those who by birth are earthly may be a second birth be made heavenly. Through....

[*The Secret*]

We joyfully present before you, O Lord, the elements of the everlasting remedy, and pray that in a right spirit we may revere them and acceptably set them forth for those that are to be saved. Through....

Within the Canon, as above.

The Intercommunion

We ask you, O Lord, of your goodness always support your family: place it beneath your correction; guard it in its subjection; and of your perpetual goodness guide it in the way of salvation. Through...

[*The Collect*] ad Populum

We ask you, O Lord, let it be your pleasure to set your servants in the right way: endue them with such virtues as please you, that having overcome all things they may attain to your reward. Through...

Book XXVIII The Fifth Sunday [in Lent]

[The Mass is] for the Scrutiny.

Grant O Lord in the elect that being thoroughly taught in your mysteries they may be renewed at the fount of baptism and numbered with the members of your Church. Through....

The Secret

Hear us, Almighty God, and by the power of this sacrifice cleanse your servants in whom you have sown the first seeds of the Christian faith. Through....

Within the Canon, as above.

The Postcommunion

O Lord we ask you, may your people live at peace among themselves: and serving you with a pure heart and being free from all strife, may they both take a ready delight in their own salvation and with good will pray for those who await their second birth. Through....

[*The Collect*] ad Populum

O God who at all times are busy with the work of human salvation, and who at this present time with more abundant grace multiplies your people: look favourably on these whom you have chosen, that, being helped by your fatherly protection, they may be conceived and born again. Through...

Book XXIX Notice of the Scrutiny

Which begins in the third week of Lent on the second day.

Dearly beloved brothers, take notice that the day of scrutiny is at hand, when the elect are instructed in divine things. With watchful devotion therefore, let us meet on (such and such) day following, at about the sixth hour of the day: so that the heavenly mystery, when the devil with his retinue is destroyed and the door of the heavenly kingdom is opened, may by God's help be perfectly performed. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, who with the Father and Holy Spirit lives and reigns one God throughout all ages. Amen.

Book XXX Prayers over the Elect

For making a Catechumen

Almighty everlasting God, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, look upon these your servants whom you have called to the elements of faith. Drive from them all blindness of heart [Mark 3.5: Eph. 4, 18]: loose the bonds of Satan with which they were bound: open to them, O Lord, the door of your religion: that, bearing the sign of your wisdom, they may turn from the squalor of fleshly lusts and delight in the sweet savour of your commandments and joyfully serve you in your church: that first taking the medicine they may increase in virtue day by day until by your favour they come to the grace of baptism. Through our Lord...

O Lord we ask of you, of your goodness hear our prayers and protect them your elect with the power of the Lord's Cross, with which we sign them, that from this first beginning of the worship of your majesty being ever set about by your commandments, they may attain the glory of the second birth. Through...

God, who created the human race that you might also restore it, look with mercy on your adopted people, set the offspring of your new race within your new covenant that when they could not attain by nature, the children of promise may joyfully receive by grace. Through our Lord...

Book XXXI The Blessing of the Salt to Be Given to the Catechumens

I exorcize you, creature of salt, in the Name of God the Father Almighty and in the love of our Lord Jesus Christ, and in the power of the Holy Spirit. I exorcize you by the living God and by the true God, who has created you to be a safeguard of the human race, and has commanded you to be consecrated by his servants for those who come to faith. And therefore we ask you, O Lord our God, that in the Name of the Trinity this creature of salt may be a saving sacrament to drive away the enemy: O Lord, sanctify it and bless it that it may remain as perfect medicine in the bowels of all who receive it, in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ who shall come to judge the living and the dead and this world by fire.

And after this prayer, you place salt in the mouth of the infant, and say:

N. receive the salt of wisdom, for a token of propitiation unto eternal life.

Book XXXII The Blessing after the Salt is Given

O God of our fathers, O God who establishes all truth, we humbly ask you to look favourably upon this your servant, and grant that he who has taken this first morsel of salt may hunger only until he is satisfied with heavenly food: until then, Lord, may he ever be *fervent in spirit, rejoicing in hope*, and always *serving* [Rom. 12.11] your Name. Lead him to the laver of the second birth that with your faithful people he may be worthy to receive the eternal rewards of your promises. Through the Lord...

Book XXXIII The Exorcism Over the Elect

The acolytes shall lay a hand upon them and say:

God of Abraham, God of Isaac, God of Jacob, God who appeared to your servant Moses upon Mount Sinai and led the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt, sending to them the angel of your goodness to guard them by day and by night, we ask you, O Lord, that you would send your holy angel that likewise he may also guard these your servants and lead them to the grace of your baptism.

Therefore, accursed devil, remember your sentence and give honour to God, the living and the true, give honour to Jesus Christ his Son, and to the Holy Spirit, and depart from these servants of God. For Jesus Christ our Lord and God is pleased to call them to himself and to give them his holy grace and blessing and the fount of baptism. This sign of the holy cross, which we now make upon their brows do you accursed devil never dare to violate.

And over Females

God of heaven, God of earth, God of angels, God of archangels, God of the prophets, God of the martyrs, God of all who live good lives, God *whom every tongue confesses, of things in heaven and things in earth, and things under the earth* [Phil 2.10], I call upon you, Lord, to watch over these your servants and lead them to the grace of your baptism.

Therefore, accursed *as above*.

And over Males.

Listen, accursed Satan, adjured by the Name of the eternal God, and of our Saviour the Son of God: you and your envy are conquered, depart trembling and grounding. Let there be nothing between you and the servants of God, who even now ponder heavenly things, who are to renounce you and your kingdom and make their way to blessed immortality. Give honour therefore to the Holy Spirit as he approaches, descending from the highest place of heaven, who shall confound your deceits and at the divine fount shall cleanse and sanctify their breasts the inward hurts of past offences, as the servants of God they may always praise the everlasting God, and bless his holy Name throughout all ages. Through our Lord Jesus Christ who shall come to judge the living and the dead and this world by fire.

And over the Females.

God of Abraham, God of Isaac, God of Jacob, who admonished the tribes of Israel and freed Susanna from false accusation, I humbly ask you, Lord, to free also these your servants, and to lead them to the grace of your baptism.

And over Males.

I exorcize you, unclean spirit, in the Name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, that you may go away and depart from these servants of God. For he himself commands you, accursed one, damned one, he who walked with his feet on the sea and stretched out his right hand to Peter as he sank.

Therefore, accursed *as above*.

And over Females

I exorcize you, unclean spirit, through the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, that you may go away and depart from these servants of God. For he himself commands you, accursed one, damned one, who opened the eyes of the man born blind, and on the fourth day raised Lazarus from the tomb.

Therefore, accursed *as above*.

Then shall a priest [sacerdos] say the prayer following:

O Lord, holy Father, everlasting God of light and truth, I call upon your eternal and most just piety for these your servants, that you would lighten them with the light of your understanding. Cleanse and sanctify them. Give them true knowledge that they may come worthily to the grace of your baptism. Let them hold a firm hope, right counsel, holy doctrine, that they may be fitted to receive your grace. Through...²⁵

Interpretation of the Ritual

We are not absolutely sure of the authorship or provenance of this document. It is believed that it is a composite document made up of a number of layers and strands which are composed over a period of time.²⁶ In the *GeV*, the texts are different for the three scrutinies and at each celebration there are different formularies for the men and the

²⁵ *GeV*, cited in Whitaker, 213-218.

²⁶ Paul Bradshaw, Maxwell Johnson and L. Edward Phillips, *The Apostolic Tradition, A Commentary*, ed. Harold Attridge (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002), 4.

women which make a total of six exorcism prayers. Each of these prayers is composed of two elements. First, there is a prayer to God to ask for his aid. This is followed by a prayer which is addressed directly to the devil.

The text of the scrutinies contains several different parts. The *GeV* contains Mass prayers for the various parts of the Mass for the three Sundays. These prayers are very straightforward. There is an introductory prayer, the Secret, two prayers within the Canon, the Postcommunion and the Collect (*ad Populum*). These prayers are repeated on each of the three Sundays. Following the prayers for the three Sundays and the announcement of the scrutiny, there are the prayers over the elect. This is followed by the blessing of salt to be given to the catechumens. The salt is administered and then there is a blessing. Next is the exorcism over the elect. As noted above, this is divided between the males and the females. These prayers are imprecatory in nature and powerful adjurations. The prayer over the males is slightly longer and begins “Listen, accursed Satan.” The prayer over the females opens with references to creation and refers to the martyrs.²⁷

If in fact, the Gelasian rites were written originally with adults in mind, it appears somewhat confusing the way the instructions are written in the ancient part of the canon. The words are addressed to the godparents “both men and women, are to *bring* the elect to the holy grace of Baptism:” and it says that the names are read of the men and women who are to receive the infants from the font, as if they are truly infants. The *infra*

²⁶ Chavasse, xvii.

actionem, an addition to the Eucharistic Prayer within the action continues below, with direct reference to the elect whose names are then called.

In the prayers of the fourth and fifth Sundays, there is a notable theme of rebirth “grant that those who by birth are earthly may by a second birth be made heavenly...” continuing to “with good will pay for those who await their second birth,” and “they may be conceived and born again.”²⁸ The theme of salvation is appropriately also notable throughout the three Sundays of prayers

After the Mass prayers for the three Sundays, the Gelasian contains a “Notice of the Scrutiny” which is for the scrutinies that were held on weekdays during the second half of the sixth century. Whitaker believes that this is clearly an insertion from another source.²⁹

Next we see the “Prayers over the Elect” for making a catechumen. It is important to note at this point the difference between the catechumen and the elect, terms which are combined in this prayer. In the early centuries of the catechumenate before the sixth century, Chavasse claims the catechumen was enrolled during a ceremony in which the cross was signed on the forehead and a laying on of hands took place. The evil spirit was exorcised and the candidate received a little salt to taste. The catechumens were expected to undergo conversion of heart and mind. This took place over a considerable period of time. The simple catechumens were admitted by the means of the ritual reserved by the *GeV* and by John the Deacon. While we do not know exactly the amount

²⁷ *GeV*, XXXIII.

of time the typical catechumen remained at this stage, we do know that for some it was quite a lengthy period.³⁰

As they neared the Easter of their Baptism, they became the *electi*. They officially put forward their names for Baptism. They were lead step by step through the rites and prayers leading up to their Baptism. They participated in the scrutinies. By the words of Section XXX we can see that by the time of the *GeV*, these two periods had been practically combined. One became a catechumen and an elect at the first scrutiny. They were signed with the cross, but referred to as the elect. We again see a reference to a second birth. The elect are referred to as “the offspring of your new race within your new covenant.”³¹

Following is a blessing of the salt to be given to the catechumens. This is an interesting prayer in which the salt is addressed as a creature, not a thing. It is referred to as “creature of salt” and as a “safeguard of the human race.” From earliest time, salt has been viewed as an instrument of grace to preserve one from the corruption of evil. Salt is also a prefiguring of the Eucharist³². This connection is made in the blessing after the salt is given where it says “grant that he who has taken this first morsel of salt may hunger only until he is satisfied with heavenly food.” John the Deacon says the following about the salt:

²⁸ Whitaker, 214, 215.

²⁹ Ibid., 216.

³⁰ Chavasse, *Les deux rituels romains*, 79-80, citing Galatians 3:15-29.

³¹ Whitaker, 216.

³² Roger Béraudy, “L’Initiation Chrétienne,” in *L’Église en Prière*, 3rd ed., ed. A.G. Martimort (Paris: Desclée & Co., Editeurs, 1965), 546.

The catechumen receives blessed salt also, to signify that just as all flesh is kept healthy by salt, so the mind which is drenched and weakened by the waves of this world is seasoned by the salt of wisdom and of the preaching of the word of God; so that it may come to stability and permanence, after the distemper of corruption is thoroughly settled by the gentle action of the divine salt.³³

It is not certain from the *GeV* exactly when the blessings of salt take place. What follows in Section XXXIII are three sets of exorcisms over the elect. It is supposed that they were probably divided between the three weeks of the scrutinies, but it is not precisely known. The prayers are divided between the males and the females. Appropriately, Suzanna is mentioned in one of the exorcisms over the females and the man born blind and Lazarus are mentioned in the final one as well. The cross is the sign of the victory of Christ. When it is used upon the elect, it establishes a sort of boundary over which evil may not cross:

Therefore, accursed devil, acknowledge your condemnation, and pay homage to the living and true God, pay homage to Jesus Christ, his Son and to the Holy Spirit, and depart from these servants of God, N. and N. for Jesus Christ, our God and Lord has called them to his holy grace and to the font of baptism. Accursed devil, never dare to desecrate this sign of the holy cross that we are tracing on their foreheads.³⁴

In the intercessory prayers, God's past action in the lives of humankind is always a focus. God's saving action is requested on behalf of the catechumens who are now in his care. Thus we see in the first prayer over the men, the minister recalls that in the

³³ Whitaker, 209.

³⁴ *GeV*, XXXIII, cited in Whitaker.

desert, God sent an angel to guard the Hebrews. He asks a similar favor for the catechumens who need guidance on the way to their Baptism.³⁵ The other biblical images evoked in these prayers are the freedom from slavery in Egypt, the deliverance of the Ten Commandments, the deliverance of Suzanna, the miracle of Jesus who saved Peter on the water, the cure of the blind man, and the raising of Lazarus.

The adjurations against the devil are consistent in demanding that he recognize the condemnation that he has undergone by the power of Jesus Christ. The prayer demands that he submit to this judgment and depart from the catechumen who has been called by the Lord to Baptism: “For Jesus Christ our Lord and God is pleased to call them to himself and to give them his holy grace and blessing and the fount of Baptism.”³⁶

Similar ideas are found in the prayers of the second exorcism of the men. The defeat of the devil is a *fait-accomplis* and for this reason he must depart from the elect. This departure of the devil from the elect is appropriate for several reasons. Primarily, the elect are already tied to heavenly realities and for another they will shortly renounce Satan and all his works. They will become heirs to eternal life. Satan must depart, for he is faced with the power of the Holy Spirit who will sanctify the elect through the power of their Baptism.

The link between the prayers of exorcism and the Mass is made by the *Oratio Aeternam ac iustissimam* (eternal and most just). This closes the exorcisms and Chavasse believes probably served as the collect of the scrutiny Mass. This prayer concerns an

³⁵Béraudy, 545.

invocation to God to ask him to light the future baptized with the light of the knowledge of God. The *oratio* (prayer) next invokes the two effects of the scrutiny: purification, which is particularly tied to the exorcism and the sanctification which is moreover tied to the celebration of the Eucharist.³⁷

Traditionally the Gospel readings for the three scrutinies are the Samaritan woman at the well, the man born blind, and the raising of Lazarus from the dead. These gospel readings were normally considered as figures of Baptism. It is not known at exactly what time these Gospels were read in conjunction with the scrutinies,³⁸ but these prayers in the *GeV* indicate to us that this was the situation at the time they were written. In the ancient scrutiny rite, the prayers do not seem to flow directly from the gospel readings as they do in the modern rite.

The acolytes say all of the prayers noted above and the priest says the final prayer. It is notable that he is not called “presbyter,” but “sacerdos,” a use which is unique to the Gelasian ritual of the catechumenate. This term also appears in other rites of Holy Week. This is another indication of the ancient nature of parts of the text because it was a term only used in earlier times.³⁹

³⁶ *GeV*, XXXII, cited in Whitaker.

³⁷ Béraudy, 548.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Chavasse, 162.

It is also notable that in some of the ritual prayers the priest is referred to in the third person, but in others, the second person singular. In the oldest texts the celebrant is not personally designated and the rubrics address him in the second person singular.⁴⁰

The Liturgy of the Eucharist follows the Liturgy of the Word. Of course, the elect were not present for this portion of the Mass, but the Christian community was able to offer further prayers for them. The *Hanc igitur* proper of the Mass indicates that a prayer was said for the servants that God deigns to call to eternal life through the sacrament of Baptism. The names of the elect are mentioned.

The Text of *Ordo XI*

While the main focus of this chapter on liturgical texts is the *GeV*, it is useful for comparison to examine some of the similarities and differences with *Ordo XI*. The following is only a portion of the first scrutiny ritual. It is followed by some of the text from the end of the scrutiny rituals.

1. *Dearly beloved brothers, take notice that the scrutiny is at hand where the elect are instructed in divine things with watchful devotion, therefore, let us meet on Wednesday next following at about the third hour, so that the heavenly mystery, when the devil with his retinue is destroyed and the door of the heavenly kingdom is opened, may by the Lord's help be perfectly performed.*
2. When they have come to the church on the fourth day of the week at the third hour, as we have said, let the names of the infants and those who are to receive them from the font be written down by an acolyte: and the acolyte calls the infants into the church by name in order as they are written, saying: *Such and such a boy*, and so the males are placed one by one by themselves on the

⁴⁰ Ibid.

- right side. *Such and such a girl*, and so the females are place one by one by themselves on the left side.
3. And then first of all let the presbyter make the sign of the cross upon the forehead of each one with his thumb saying: *In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.*
 4. And placing a hand over their heads, he says: *Almighty everlasting God, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.* And he does the same over the females.
 5. Afterwards he blesses salt, in this manner: *I exorcize you, creature of salt.*
 6. And he places some of the salt in the mouth of the infants, one by one saying: *Receive, such a one, the salt of wisdom, for a token of propitiation unto eternal life.*
81. It is to be so ordered that from the first scrutiny which begins in the third week of Lent to the vigil of the Pascha on Holy Saturday there shall be seven scrutinies, corresponding to the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit, so that when the sevenfold number is completed there may be given to them the sevenfold grace of the Spirit.
 82. And the presbyter announces that on Holy Saturday at the third hour they are to return to church and are then catechized and make return of the Creed and are baptized and their sevenfold oblations completed.
 83. The order in which they are catechized is as follows.
After the third hour of the Sabbath, they go to the church and are arranged in the order in which their names are written down, males on the right side, females on the left.
 84. And the priest makes the sign of the cross on the forehead of each and places his hand on the head of each and says: *Be not deceived, Satan.*
 85. When that is done, the presbyter touches the nostrils and ears of each with spittle from his mouth and says in the ears of each one: *Effeta, that is be opened, unto the odour of sweetness, and the rest.*
 86. When this is done, he walks around them, placing a hand on their heads and chanting in a loud voice, *I believe in one God*, and the rest. He turns to the females and does likewise.
 87. Then the archdeacon says to them: *Pray you elect, Bow the knee, complete your prayers together and say Amen.* And all reply Amen.
 88. Again they are admonished by the archdeacon in these words:
*Let the catechumens go.*⁴¹

⁴¹ Whitaker, 249-51.

Many elements in *Ordo XI* are similar to the *GeV*. The formularies for the most part are the same. *Ordo XI* combines several elements which are separate in the *GeV*. We see from the section of *Ordo XI* quoted first above that both the scrutinies in the *GeV* and *Ordo XI* contain the blessing of the creature salt and the placing of the salt in the mouths of the infants. As noted in the section above, the use of salt was catechetical because it preserved people from the power of evil.

The names of the infants and those who are to receive them from the font are written by an acolyte in *Ordo XI* (2). In the *GeV* (XXVI), the names are read out during the Mass of scrutiny in the Eucharistic prayer and they are written down in the part of the rite for making a catechumen. One item that is unique in the *Ordo* (64), is that the giving of the Creed is included in the scrutiny ritual.

Our interest focuses on the use of the words “instruction” and “catechized” and the role that catechesis plays in this ritual. In the text above, *Ordo XI*, 1, we are told that the elect are “instructed” in divine things. This implies directly that the scrutiny ritual is catechetical in nature. It is through the ritual that the retinue of the devil is destroyed and the door of the heavenly kingdom is opened. This process gives the strong impression that the elect are instructed or catechized in these matters precisely by the ritual.

What elements exactly are catechetical? I would say that it is a combination of the words of the presbyter and the gestures of the acolytes. Through the laying on of the hand of the acolyte, the elect are singled out as being unique and valued as children of God. They are chosen and selected to receive the saving grace of Baptism and to be

released from the stronghold of the power of sin. *Ordo XI* contains more gestures than words in contrast to the *GeV*, and each of these gestures has an implied significance. The words are significant as well and combine with the gestures to make the ritual an act of catechesis. The first words of introduction to the rite as noted above are significant. The word “instruction” gives us another clue to the medieval sense that catechesis went beyond teaching and was connected with ritual. The gestures of the sign of the cross and the laying on of hands alternate with the words as if responding to one another in meaning.

These observations are further confirmed in *Ordo XI*, 81-83 where the actual word “catechize” is used in the ritual. The elect are catechized by the laying on of hands on the infants. This occurs in the sense that through the laying on of hands they come to an understanding of who they were and who they would become as initiated Catholic Christians. This solemn gesture imparts to the elect an understanding of what it means to be transformed in terms of one’s struggle with evil and one’s openness to grace.

In the *GeV*, (XXXIV) the *effeta* rite is separate from the scrutiny rituals. It takes place as part of the Exposition of the Gospels to the elect. The ears of the elect are opened so that they can hear the Word of God as present in each of the four gospels. In *Ordo XI*, the *effeta* rite is part of the seven scrutiny rituals. The touching of the ears takes place in the context of a reading from Isaiah and from Colossians. The gospels are read to the elect in a fashion similar to the *GeV* (XXXIV); that is, after these two readings.

In *Ordo XI*, 86, the presbyter then places his hand on the heads of the infants and walks around them saying the words of the creed over and over again. This section of the ritual is unique to *Ordo XI* and is also catechetical. The repetition of the words over and over is an important part of ritual meaning. It touches people below the surface level of observation.

There is a great deal of additional repetition in the scrutiny rituals of the *Ordo XI*. In the first chapter of this dissertation, I focused on the role of repetition in ritual. While this is not one of Bell's primary emphases, one cannot deny that repetition is a valuable and significant aspect of ritual and the meaning that the observers remember. Repetition is important because it is a source of emphasis. As the words echo in the mind of the elect, the significance of what is repeated echoes in their heart and touches them in ways that goes beyond, but includes the intellectual.

This follows upon the point raised at the beginning of this dissertation that emphasized that catechesis is formational and informational. RCIA, 75 reminds us that "This catechesis leads the catechumens not only to an appropriate acquaintance with dogmas and precepts but also to a profound sense of the mystery of salvation in which they desire to participate."⁴² Through participation in liturgical rituals and Christian service, the catechumen is truly formed in the faith and not simply informed about it.

So, given that the words and the gestures of the scrutinies in the *Ordo XI* are catechetical, what exactly does that mean? Rituals offer us a vision that considers the

⁴² RCIA, n. 75.

various scrutinies as transformational rather than instructional. Through the ritual actions that take place, the elect are no longer the same persons that they were before the ritual. This does not pertain to intellectual knowledge, particularly since at this time the elect are almost all infants. There must be an intrinsic transformational value to the ritual itself. It would appear that through this transformation, the elect have been opened to the power of grace. This point is further explored in Chapter 3.

The Work of Antoine Chavasse on the Scrutiny Rite in the *GeV* and *Ordo XI*

Most of what we know about the historical evidence on the scrutiny rite is thanks to the detailed and painstaking work of Antoine Chavasse. Despite the fact that his work is nearly fifty years old, it is a starting point for most discussions by current scholars. Through the work of Chavasse, it is possible to ascertain a great deal about the age and provenance of various elements in the *GeV* sacramentary.⁴³

Dominic Serra, a liturgical studies scholar, is helpful in understanding Chavasse's study of *GeV* and the restoration of the scrutinies in the present rite. Serra notes that Chavasse has worked out the original format of the system of readings for Lent. As a result of Chavasse's research, we now know that the texts assigned to the Friday of the third week of Lent and to the Wednesday and Friday of the fourth week in the pre-Vatican II liturgy originally were on the third, fourth, and fifth Sundays of Lent. Chavasse's discovery made it possible for the Church to restore the three scrutiny readings to their proper places on the

⁴³ Antoine Chavasse, *Le sacramentaire gélisien (Vaticanus Regensis 316): Sacramentaire présbyteral en usage dans les titres romains au viie siècle* (Tournai: Desclée, 1958), 156-158.

third, fourth and fifth Sundays of Lent. This contribution restored the baptismal character to our Lenten observances.⁴⁴

According to Serra, Chavasse's study consisted in a meticulous and precise study of the communion antiphons assigned to the twenty-six consecutive liturgical synaxes from the start of the Lenten fast to the Friday preceding Holy Week. From this most detailed study, Serra says that Chavasse is able to show that the consecutive assignment of the psalms is interrupted five times. These interruptions include the Friday of the third week and the Wednesday and Friday of the fourth week of Lent. On these three days the original antiphons taken from the psalms have been replaced with antiphons taken from the gospel texts of John 4, 9 and 11. This evidence can be combined with the fact that the Mass texts for the third, fourth, and fifth Sundays of Lent were changed with the texts from these weekdays.

It was noted by Serra that Chavasse claims that this shows that the gospel readings of the Samaritan woman, the man born blind, and the raising of Lazarus are the original Roman gospel for the system of Sunday scrutinies. This is a true detective feat which indicates that the Sunday scrutinies were moved to these specific Lenten weekdays only after the introduction of the consecutive communion psalms were assigned in the first decades of the sixth century. This must have been before the time of Gregory the

⁴⁴ Antoine Chavasse, "La structure du carême et des lectures des messes quadragésimales dans la liturgie romaine," *La Maison-Dieu* 31 (1952), 76-119, cited in Serra.

Great, however, because his homilies show that John 8, not John 11, was read on the fifth Sunday.⁴⁵

Diverse Aspects of the *GeV* According to Chavasse

As was noted above, the *GeV* is compiled with parts pertaining to different periods of history in which Gallican elements are placed side by side with Roman elements. In order to understand the provenance and significance of the different parts of the rite, particularly the scrutiny, it was necessary for Chavasse to undertake an extensive analysis of the work. This he did and we are indebted to him for the precise and specific nature of his study.

One might imagine that in the city of Rome at the time of the *GeV* there was liturgical uniformity. This is not true. The more historians studied this matter, the more it became obvious that there was quite a degree of liturgical diversity. This diversity existed between the different churches of Rome. From one church to the next there could be a separate liturgical ordinance and different formularies that were employed.⁴⁶

This diversity has several different causes. Often it is the case that in one church one kept an old liturgical ordinance while in another nearby church, a new ordinance was accepted. There were Masses with one or two collects, followed by a *super sindonem*, and Masses with one collect that had no *super sindonem* following. The title *super sindonem* is an Ambrosian title that Chavasse accepts. The first type is the older, the

⁴⁵ Chavasse, "La discipline romaine," 227, cited in Serra.

⁴⁶ Chavasse, xxiv.

Gelasian Mass, the second the newer, the Gregorian.⁴⁷ In other cases it may simply be that there are certain ceremonies or certain feasts that are particular to one church and not another.

It is easier to understand this liturgical diversity in Rome when one acknowledges that it was still the practice in the sixth century to compose the liturgical formularies on a day-to-day basis. When the Gregorian Sacramentary was edited, this custom existed which was common in all of the churches of the city. At the end of the sixth century, however, and the beginning of the seventh century, many old collections were recopied and reused in different ways by composing new pieces from copies. The seventh century was a fruitful period of time. Besides this, formularies were composed which conformed to liturgies that were close to disappearance.⁴⁸ This relative liturgical liberty assists in comprehending how easily seventh-century Rome accepted the foreign importations of liturgical practices. Various popes from different areas brought practices with them to St. John Lateran that the titular churches did not necessarily share. Thus, for various different reasons one can ascertain that there was distinct liturgical diversity throughout the city. The papal and the presbyteral reflect the diversity of the two Roman local liturgies.⁴⁹

The diversity of the liturgical practices that were adopted in Rome is also the result of other factors. The study of the *GeV* supplies a number of examples and the composition of this book becomes intelligible when one takes for granted this level of

⁴⁷ Chavasse, xxiv

diversity. The sacramentaries in Rome in the seventh century are not the only ones to find their roots in different liturgical settings. Other liturgical books, such as the *Divine Office*, show similar diversity. For this reason, one cannot determine the Roman origin of one particular book, just because it differs from another. Other factors must be taken into account.⁵⁰ It requires a systematic study such as that undertaken by Chavassee.

The Approach of Chavassee

While Chavassee has much to offer as far as history, he does not propose to study the rites of the catechumenate and of Baptism in and of themselves. He relates to these matters only in so far as they help to clarify the composition of the *GeV* and to determine the place that it holds in the evolution of the local Roman liturgy. He pursues this study on a literary level, in order to solve the complex problems that pertain to the actual composition of the texts put together in the *GeV*. Once this task is completed, he determines who exactly edited the rite and the precise period of history in which the organization of the rites takes place.

The best way to conduct this study is to place the Gelasian formularies side by side with those of *Ordo XI*⁵¹ which is the only detailed Roman directory of the baptismal ceremonies from that period. Chavassee did undertake this painstaking work in order to

⁴⁸ Chavassee, xxv.

⁴⁹ Chavassee, xxv.

⁵⁰ Chavassee, xxiv.

⁵¹ According to Whitaker, the *Ordo Romanus XI* followed the *GeV* at approximately the year 700. Knowledge of the *Ordo* is based on a selection of Frankish manuscripts in the ninth century and later. The *Ordo*, like the *GeV* employs the same Mass formularies but it is not clear how much these formularies were revised in France.

highlight the differences and the similarities between the two rites. While he found the matter too complex to reproduce in his book, he does offer a summary of his findings.⁵²

From a literary point of view, the baptismal formularies of the *GeV* belong to two groups, created in different periods. The oldest group is characterized by rubrics which are written in the second person singular for the principal celebrant. The more recent group contains rubrics in the third person as regards both the celebrant and others mentioned. The two groups are distinguishable by other relevant factors which will be noted below. These two groups are sometimes combined in the center of the same formulary. One contains parts from the ancient text, the other containing parts that have been added through Gallican additions, modifying the ancient texts. But in three major cases, the ancient texts have not been altered. These are the scrutiny Masses, the liturgical gathering on Holy Saturday, and the blessing of the water for Baptism and Confirmation.⁵³

The most notable characteristic of these formularies that has not been changed is that the *GeV* places them exactly where a liturgist would expect they would be in the liturgical cycle. Each one of the three scrutiny Masses is placed on the appropriate Sunday where it would appear, given the three Sunday scrutinies. The first (I, XXVI A), which follows the inscription of names and the election of the candidates, is found in the Mass of the third Sunday of Lent. The second (I, XXVIII A) contains the Mass for the fourth Sunday of Lent and the third (I, XXVIII A), which coincides with the third

⁵² Chavasse, 156.

scrutiny and the presentation of the creed, is found at the fifth Sunday of Lent. Chavassee has determined that these Mass texts with the appropriate scrutiny rites, actually represent the regular Roman practice of the fifth century. The titles of these Masses which refer directly to Sunday, as seen above, provide the most convincing evidence that the scrutinies were celebrated in Rome on the indicated three Lenten Sundays.⁵⁴

In the introductory rubrics in the first Mass, the appropriate words are inserted in the Roman Canon and they address the celebrant, and him alone, with verbs that are in the second person singular.⁵⁵ The older rubrics are usually written in the second person singular, while it is the practice that Gallican texts which would be added later contain rubrics addressed to a master of ceremonies who would be referred to in the third person singular.⁵⁶ It is noticeable also, that the phrase *et intras* (and one enters) is used. This is a specifically Roman usage which is also found in the old *ordo* of the blessing of oils done by a priest. One can note as well, that during the three Masses there is an insertion of the appropriate words which correspond to the formulary called *infra canonem* which is rare in the *GeV*. The *infra canonem* is an addition to the Eucharistic prayer within the canon. One only finds it in these three Masses and in the ancient rubric for the first Mass of Holy Thursday.⁵⁷

⁵³ Chavassee, 156.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 157.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 158.

⁵⁶ Dominic E. Serra, "New Observations About the Scrutinies of the Elect in Early Roman Practice," *Worship* 80, no. 6 (November 2006): 513.

⁵⁷ Chavassee, 231.

Chavasse believes that the ancient Roman practice consisted of three scrutinies fixed during the fifth and sixth century on the third, fourth and fifth Sundays of Lent. He is also sure that these three scrutinies passed to weekdays (the third Friday, the fourth Wednesday and the fourth Friday) during the second half of the sixth century when Baptism of adults became the exception to the rule. This change is complete by the time that St. Gregory gave his homilies on the gospels from 590-593 and when the Gregorian liturgical books were compiled. These have no mention of Sunday scrutiny rites.

The discipline of the catechumenate was further modified when the papal liturgy and those of other Roman churches switched to the celebration of seven scrutinies which corresponded to the Baptism of children, as is shown in *Ordo XI*.

The Evolution of the Formularies

The evolution of the scrutiny rite passed through three stages: three Sunday scrutinies, three weekday scrutinies, and finally seven weekday scrutinies. The *GeV* attests to these stages.⁵⁸ In exploring the scrutinies, Chavasse first examines how the Gelasian formularies of the three Sunday scrutinies fit in with the rest of Lent and in general the rest of the sacramentary.⁵⁹

The three formularies noted above are in the second person singular and use the formulary *infra canonem* while those in the rest of the sacramentary, except for Holy Thursday, use the formulary *infra actionem*.

⁵⁸Ibid.

⁵⁹Chavasse, 231.

The formulary of the first scrutiny supplies the postcommunion prayer for the Masses of Tuesday and Wednesday of Easter. The formulary of the second scrutiny supplies the collect of the fifth Monday of Lent. The prayer response *ad populum* of this same formulary is taken from formulary III, LI. The style of this last section, like that of the postcommunion that precedes it is usually part of a short oration, but it is classical in Rome in the consecratory orations. It is adopted at the moment when the tone of the prayer rises to that of an incantation.⁶⁰

The formulary of the third scrutiny has supplied the secret for the next Monday and its oration *ad populum* is used to create the oration *super sidonem* (prayer above the sidonem) of the secret for Easter. These three formularies make up a body with the rest of the Lenten Gelasian and the rest of the sacramentary. They could be called an archaism. Before the secret, they only contain one oration and as such they make up the normal and only Mass of the third, fourth, and fifth Sundays of Lent.

The fact that they only contain one oration before the secret may be explained by the great antiquity of these formularies. One would see this also before the period where Roman adopted the oration *super sidonem*, which is before the sixth century. Chavasse, however, sees the possibility of another explanation.⁶¹

According to Chavasse, this single oration could have been an oration *super sidonem*, and the collect could have been left out because the beginning of the Mass may have been occupied with the celebration of the scrutiny. However, Chavasse notes that

⁶⁰ Chavasse, 231.

this interpretation comes up against the indication of *Ordo XI*, in which the oration of *GeV*, I, xxvi, is placed with the *introit* between the ceremonies of admission to the catechumenate and those of the scrutiny. Chavasse also asks if it is legitimate to call upon this *ordo* for information that is of such a different subject matter. Upon examining the third Gelasian formulary, one can find a similar situation as those of the Sunday scrutiny rites. A rubric which is prescribed for imposing penance on a sick person who can no longer talk is followed by a Mass formulary which has only a single oration before the secret.

Another objection can be made with regards to the formulary of the Mass celebrated during Easter night. Even though this Mass takes place after the celebration of Baptism, it has two orations before the secret. Chavasse notes that in effect this is a different situation. At this Mass, the priest chants the Gloria and it is normal that he would follow the Mass in the usual order. Yet, with the exception of this Mass, the Roman priest would not be allowed to chant the Gloria at any ordinary Mass, except his ordination Mass. It is thus possible that after the scrutiny or a reconciliation, the Mass begins right away with the readings.⁶²

Whatever might be the explanation, the fact is that the scrutiny Masses only have one oration before the secret and as such those who compiled the Lenten formularies of the *GeV* wanted to respect a preexisting formulary. He rewrote this formulary without modifying it, as if he were the author himself. The rubrics in the second person and the

⁶¹ Chavasse., 232.

particular phrase *infra canonem* attest to the fact that the compiler copied from more ancient works.⁶³

Chavasse wonders why these Masses still conform to the old Sunday scrutinies. He concludes that simply because that particular church remained faithful to the old form, like other churches outside of Rome did as well. How long did these churches remain faithful to the ancient rite? They remained unchanged until the seventh century, when the new discipline of the weekday scrutinies were recorded in the *GeV*. This new discipline presents itself in effect under the form of a reworking of the ancient formularies. Chavasse believes these to be those of the Sunday scrutinies and the block of Lenten formularies to which they are tied, well before these changes took place.⁶⁴

As regards the *Ordo XI*, Chavasse believes that it is historically clear that the *GeV* predated the *Ordo XI* in provenance. The main historical evidence for this assumption is that fact that the second person singular, the more ancient form, is used for the celebrant in the *GeV*, but not in the *Ordo*. By examining the two scrutiny rituals together, it seems clear that there is a progression that reflects the fact that the elect were largely children and that parts of the *Gelasian* were combined in the *Ordo*.

Further Insights on the Scrutiny

In another article by Chavasse on the Rite of Acceptance to the Catechumenate, he gives further insight into the liturgical remnants of the scrutiny rite. He begins by reviewing the Letter of John the Deacon with some of his own comments. In this letter to

⁶²Chavasse, 233.

Senarius, John answers numerous questions about the catechumenate proper. In the beginning of the letter, he reviews each of the rites that make up the catechumenate itself. He recognizes first of all the exsufflations and exorcisms. It is obvious to John that the rite of exsufflation is finished at the moment when the exorcism is undertaken. The nonverbal rite of exsufflation takes place before the verbal rite of exorcism.⁶⁵

As he continues to explore the role of the rite of acceptance, Chavasse notes that John the Deacon proposes a two stage catechesis which is separated by the *Traditio Symboli*, or the giving of the creed. The first stage is to detract the catechumens from the influence of the devil and to turn them towards God whom they will encounter in their Baptism. Chavasse indicates that one should not be too confident to identify each part of the rite that John describes with the section of the sacramentary that it corresponds to. He does say, nevertheless, that the one solid criterion for comparison is the order of succession of the rites. On this point, he believes that there is satisfactory agreement between the description of the scrutiny rite in John the Deacon and the *GeV*.⁶⁶

Dominic Serra on the Scrutiny Ritual

The Ancient Nature of the Ritual Confirmed

Dominic Serra adds another contribution to the proposed ancient nature of the rites. He notes that the *Hanc Igitur* of the Roman Canon, as it appears in the third book

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 234.

⁶⁵ Antoine Chavasse, "Les Deux Rituels Romain et Gaulois de l'Admission au Catechuménat Que Renferme Le Sacramentaire Gelasien," *Études de Critique et d'Histoire Religieuses* (1948): 80.

of the *GeV* includes the Gregorian addition *diesque nostros in tua pace disponas*.⁶⁷ This additional phrase does not appear in the special *Hanc igitur* of the scrutiny Mass formularies. He notes that this does not prove that it predates the Gregorian adjustment, “but it does allow us to maintain that the use of the *diesque nostros* in the Gelasian text of the Canon should not prejudice the establishment of a date earlier than 604 for the *Hanc igitur* of our formulary.”⁶⁸

A New Claim Concerning the Days of the Roman Scrutinies

In the article by Serra noted above, he makes some new claims about the readings for the Sundays of the scrutiny rite. He notes that the ancient Gelasian formularies for the scrutiny rites appear in no other sacramentary of either Roman or Gallican provenance. There is evidence in other sources, however, which mention the readings and how they were used during Lent.

Serra notes that there are other sources which confirm the three scrutinies of Roman Lenten practice. In a pastoral response to Gallican bishops, a Roman synod (ca. 400) advises: “Concerning the exorcized oil, whether it should be administered on a few days or many matters less than its meaning...if he who is scrutinized at the third scrutiny is touched with the oil only once and not many times, God acts upon his (whole) life.”⁶⁹ This quote appears to offer reasonable proof that it was the custom in Rome to scrutinize

⁶⁶ Chavasse, 83.

⁶⁷ *GeV*, 1247.

⁶⁸ Serra, 512., meaning “this therefore,” these words are part of an opening phrase of a prayer in the Roman Canon.

⁶⁹ *Canones ad Gallos*, Canon 8, translated in Whitaker, 205.

three times and to use oil at the third scrutiny. Serra notes, however, that Chavassee recommends caution in the use of this document's claims.

It may be the case that the Gelasian formularies for the scrutiny Masses were in place on the third, fourth, and fifth Sunday of Lent by the middle of the fifth century. It cannot be ascertained that Rome practiced a six week Lenten period as preparation for Easter Baptism before the papacy of Siricius (384-399). Prior to this time, it is believed that the Roman Lent was three weeks long, not six.⁷⁰ Chavassee believes that the first of seven weekday scrutinies probably took place on the Wednesday of the current third week. Scrutinies were thus celebrated on the Wednesday, Friday and Saturday of the third and fourth weeks of Lent and the seventh scrutiny on Holy Saturday morning.⁷¹

Toward the end of his article, Serra poses some pertinent questions and puts forth a new proposal as regards the nature of the medieval scrutiny rites. He notes that in North Africa and Milan, these rituals were truly dramatic events which involved powerful experiences at the culmination of a week of prayer and fasting. The dramatic nature of these rituals will be further explored in chapter 3. Serra claims that this dramatic experience could not have produced the same effect if Africa observed the scrutiny at Sunday Mass, as it appears to have happened in Rome. He notes that the scrutiny in Milan appeared to have a similar dramatic effect as did those in North Africa

⁷⁰ Johnson, *The Rites*, 163.

because they took place on a Saturday night after fasting. It would not be in keeping with the discipline of fasting if the scrutinies took place on a Sunday, even a Sunday during Lent. The dramatic effect of a nighttime ritual would be lost.

Serra proceeds to ask that if two of the three churches that observed the scrutiny rites, observed them on Saturday nights, why is it so certain that Rome did not do so as well? It does not make much sense that the Roman scrutinies were the only ones which were not powerful experiences of exorcism. And there is also the issue of fasting on Sunday, which was definitely not the norm in Milan and North Africa. From the evidence of the *GeV*, we can see in fact that the exorcisms are very powerful indeed as they address the devil.⁷²

Even though the scrutiny rites contain these powerful exhortations, they do not appear among the Mass formularies of the *GeV*. Serra notes that they appear in a block of catechumenal rites associated with no particular day and are situated between the Saturday of the fifth week of Lent and Palm Sunday. They are attached to neither of these Sundays.⁷³ It is extremely important to note that:

The Mass formularies for the third, fourth and fifth Sundays of Lent make no reference whatsoever to exorcisms or ritual actions that could give us any clue to the shape of the scrutinies we believe to have taken place on these Sundays.⁷⁴

⁷¹ Serra, 520.

⁷² Serra., 523.

⁷³ *GeV*, 283-328.

⁷⁴ Serra, 525.

According to Maxwell Johnson, a liturgical scholar, it can be assumed that the scrutiny exorcisms, which appear in the sacramentary just before Palm Sunday, are the texts used during the Sunday scrutinies and that they were moved to the current position once the scrutinies were moved to unspecified weekdays and multiplied in number.⁷⁵ This conclusion is supported by the rubrical headings in the *GeV* for each of the three scrutiny Sundays. These headings are noted as “The Third Sunday which is celebrated for the scrutinies of the elect,” “The Fourth Sunday for Scrutiny II,” and “The Fifth Sunday which is celebrated for the scrutiny.”⁷⁶

Serra continues to note that the Gelasian text provides Mass formularies for the three consecutive Sundays of Lent which are identified by their titles with the scrutinies. The sacramentary, however, contains no rubrics and no euchological texts for these rites. It also provides the texts and the rubrics for scrutiny exorcisms but no Mass formularies and no information about when they were to be celebrated. The titles noted above are the only evidence that we have for the Sunday celebration of the scrutiny rite. Serra is intrigued by this and offers an interesting explanation.

He reviews the form of the Roman Lent. It consisted of forty days of fasting by counting each day from the first Sunday to the Thursday of Holy Week. This does not include the six Sundays of Lent which are not days of fasting. One also arrives at the number forty by counting the days from the Wednesday before the first Sunday to Saturday of Holy Week, excluding the six Sundays. These Sundays are not fast days yet

⁷⁵ Johnson, *The Rites*, 180.

they are called *Dominica in Quadragesima*. This is not because they are days of fasting but because they are Sundays observed *during that period of fasting*. Serra questions whether the same could be true for the titles of the scrutiny Sundays. “Could it be that the third, fourth and fifth Sundays are days ‘celebrated for the scrutinies of the elect’ in the sense that they are the Sundays occurring during the season of scrutiny?”⁷⁷

He makes a very intriguing point, which is further strengthened by two other matters of rubrics. The first refers to the announcement of the beginning of the scrutiny process. *GeV* 283 is introduced by this heading: “Notice of the Scrutiny which begins in the third week of Lent on the second day.”⁷⁸ Serra questions whether the announcement is to begin on the second day (Monday) of the third week of Lent or whether the scrutiny is to begin at that time. He responds by claiming that it is much more likely that the scrutiny is to begin on that day (Monday).⁷⁹

This announcement clearly states that the scrutiny begins on the third week of Lent on the second day, this cannot be refuted. But of interest to my purpose is the word “instructed” used in the first line of the announcement. It indicates quite clearly that at this early date the redactors of this liturgical document viewed the scrutiny rite as an act of catechesis. Through this process they are “instructed” in divine things. This is very precise and interesting wording which is key in ascertaining the ancient perspective of the rite. It distinctly implies and indicates that the ancient scrutiny rite was a means of

⁷⁶ *GeV* 193, 225, 254, cited in Serra.

⁷⁷ Serra, 524.

⁷⁸ Translation from Whitaker, *Documents*, 215.

⁷⁹ Serra, 525.

catechizing the elect and perhaps those present to the truths of the church that were contained therein. The catechetical instructions did not convey purely intellectual teaching, and still less were they a scholastic exercise.⁸⁰

The second point on rubrics made by Serra is that the Mass formulary for the Monday following the third Sunday includes a rubric instructing that the canon inserts used the day before should be used again in this Mass.⁸¹ As noted before, these prayers were added as special intercessions for the godparents and for the elect who were preparing for Baptism by means of the scrutinies.

Serra notes that Chavasse is well aware of these rubrics and does not draw the same conclusion. Chavasse clearly believes that the scrutinies took place on the days so indicated. Serra now believes that there is enough doubt to put this in question and believes he has a valid suggestion that the Sunday scrutiny Masses of the *GeV* are celebrations that mark the season of scrutiny in which the elect will undergo the actual rite of scrutiny and all that it consists of on the weekdays.⁸²

This is a very interesting conclusion, one which probably cannot be proven one way or the other given the existing liturgical evidence that is available. The titles for the Sundays and the notes below them appear to be in direct conflict with the announcement transcribed above in section XXIX of the *GeV*.

⁸⁰Robert Cabié, "The Evolution of Christian Initiation," in A. G. Martimort, *The Church at Prayer, Volume III, The Sacraments* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1988), 28.

⁸¹Chavasse, *Le Sacramentaire ge' lasien*, 159.

⁸²Serra, 525.

This liturgical quandary does have catechetical implications. If the scrutiny rites were celebrated on Sundays, they would have been much more powerful means of transformation for the whole community and not just the elect and their godparents. This is significant. Serra's theory is unique among scholars, most of whom accept the titles as written.

Serra notes in the concluding paragraphs of his article that the fact that the ancient scrutinies may have been held on weekdays does not impact the fact that we hold these rituals, which are considerably different in nature, on Sundays. The nature of the present ritual is not at variance with a Sunday celebration of the Eucharist. He emphasizes, in fact, that the celebration of the scrutinies on these occasions and with the present text provides an opportunity for them to be understood as acts of church, a church which is seeking its own purification. This church not only seeks its own purification, but is catechized and transformed by these rituals when they are performed well.⁸³

The Passage from Baptism of Adults to Children

The issue of when Baptism passed primarily for adults to children is an important one in terms of catechesis and is a topic upon which scholars disagree. Peter Cramer, a historian, claims that at the time of John the Deacon (ca 500) infant Baptism was already

⁸³ Serra, 527.

the norm.⁸⁴ It is not until a century later that the number of scrutinies is increased from three to seven. Chavasse addresses this issue in his chapter on baptismal formularies.⁸⁵

The reworking of section XXXV of the *GeV* describes the way in which the creed is successively presented in both Greek and Latin by an acolyte. In both of these cases it is not the Apostles creed which is presented, as in the time of John the Deacon, but the Creed of Nicea-Constantinople. This change is important because it has an implication on dates. The above reworking took place during the Byzantine period of Roman local history and it did not appear before approximately the year 550.⁸⁶ Chavasse contends that considering the other evidence, these sections are written for infants. To verify this conclusion, he examines *Ordo XI*. When examining the passages that appear to originate from the most ancient sources and those that use the word *electi* the *Ordo XI* regularly uses the word “infants.” Chavasse believes that this is not in the usage of a child of God, but actual infants. There are two sections where the *Ordo* uses the words *pueri* and *parvuli*.⁸⁷

Also, when the acolyte presents the Creed, he takes in his right arm one of the infants and when they come out of the baptismal water, they are carried away in the arms of those who brought them. It appears to be the same case in the *GeV*. The rubrics for the presentation of names use the term *infants* and the acolyte who presents the Creed also takes the infant in his left arm.

⁸⁴ Peter Cramer, *Baptism and Change in the Early Middle Ages* (Cambridge: University Press, 1993), 142

⁸⁵ Chavasse, 156-176.

⁸⁶ Chavasse, 164.

⁸⁷ Chavasse, 164.

Chavasse proposes two different solutions: one, that at the time of John the Deacon, infants were already the principal participants in the sacrament of Baptism or two, that there were still a significant amount of Baptisms of adults but that infants were presented for Baptism with these adults. The wording of the rubrics and the interpretations of several scholars sides with the first position.

Other evidence in section XLII of the *GeV* further confirms this suggestion. This section begins with the words *Reddunt infants symbolum*. When it was a question of adults, it was the elect him or herself who on the morning of Holy Saturday made their profession of faith. In the *GeV*, this has disappeared in all practicality. There is a rubric where the celebrant recites the profession of faith by himself, implying that it is a case of infants who cannot speak for themselves. The celebrant acts as a substitute for them. Chavasse concludes that the most ancient of the rites of Baptism in the *GeV* reflect the fact that at this early date Baptism was primarily for the reception of infants.

This truth affects the catechetical nature of the rite in an obvious manner. Of course the infants are not catechized by the rite, but perhaps those who are present are. As discussed in chapter one, rituals are catechetical for both the participants and the observers.

Some Conclusions

As was expressed above, the three scrutinies were originally examinations of the candidate's faith and conduct, necessary in the case of adults, but a practice which lost

most of its meaning as infant candidates became more numerous. While the need for the graces imparted by the sacraments is the same for infants and adults, the pastoral and catechetical implications are different. In every case the scrutinies are meant to uncover and 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.⁸⁸ When the community is present, the ritual is a powerful witness of faith to all present and transformation can take place for both catechumens and the witnesses.

In the case of adults, it becomes clear that catechesis was not mainly notional instruction on the subjective level but active formation on the objective level as well, involving prayer, hand-laying, exorcism, fasting and tasting salt. The Lenten scrutinies are major acts of catechesis in which the whole community benefits. Unlike earlier levels of catechesis, these do not address themselves to the more personal and subjective aspects of a catechumen's conversion process.⁸⁹ Through the scrutiny, the Church claims that personal and subjective layer of conversion as its own and gives itself (the Church) to the catechumen in return. The liturgies themselves are dimensions of the whole catechetical process by which one is formed for full participation in the faith.

The proportion of adults and children who presented themselves for Baptism was gradually reversed as Christianity spread. Eventually the matter came to the point when only rarely did individuals enter the Church except as very young children. It is

⁸⁸ *RCIA*, n. 141.

⁸⁹ Kavanagh, 60.

interesting, however, that the Church did not dispense with the scrutiny ritual. It must be inferred that it still was of some value.

There were the noted changes however, in the course of the sixth century. The number of scrutinies was changed to seven. This was as though to make up for the passivity of the subjects by a more intense activity of the Church.⁹⁰ This is an interesting thought. God's gift is truly unmerited, whether in the case of adult or child. Since the community as a whole no longer was involved in the catechumenate to the same extent as it previously was, the scrutinies were moved to weekdays. The biblical passages previously assigned to Sundays were now read. At a second stage of this evolution the first two scrutinies alone were tied to a specific day of Lent, namely the third Thursday and Saturday. The others were moved as convenient. This situation is reflected in *Ordo* XI which dates from the seventh century or perhaps the end of the sixth.⁹¹

When the practice takes place solely in the case of infants, this dimension of witness and participation is lessened, and completely lost when they are moved to weekdays. Thus, in order for the scrutinies still to be of value, one's theology must hold that these rituals are much more than pure symbol, if symbol is *that* through which the reality is made present. They truly serve as a protection against the action of the devil, who, through doubts of faith or darkness of understanding can impede the growth of faith in a Christian. The preparation of the elect does not rely only upon their personal efforts to live morally and to embrace the faith of the Church. It depends upon God, and that

⁹⁰ Cabié, 65.

preparation is compromised by the power of Satan. This is the crux of the essence of the scrutinies. They accompany the moral and doctrinal formation in a powerful way which transforms the candidates beyond any personal human strength.

⁹¹ Cabie, 65.

CHAPTER THREE

THE RITE OF SCRUTINY IN FOURTH-CENTURY CHRISTIANITY

The goal of this chapter is to examine the role of the scrutiny rite in the early church and to present several theological conclusions as to how it was understood in patristic times and the exact role that it played in the catechumenal process. The chapter will begin with a review of the nature and history of exorcism in general and its relationship with demonology. I will proceed to review the writings of the early Church fathers about the scrutinies in their patristic context in order to ascertain their theological nature and their role during the apex of the catechumenal period.

While the goal and purpose of the scrutiny rite has been a topic of discussion in modern times, it is clear in the writings of Augustine and Quodvultdeus of Carthage that the object of the scrutinies was not to examine the faith and knowledge of the catechumens, but to discover whether the evil spirit had departed from them.¹ This is reflective of the fact that the pre-sacramental portion of the catechumenal process consisted primarily in moral versus pedagogical formation. Today, we would say that formation superseded information. The scrutiny was a tool of this formation through which the catechumen became worthy of the Easter sacraments.

This is not to say, however, that this period of moral formation, or the scrutiny rite itself was not profoundly catechetical. The rituals of the medieval catechumenate were

¹ Augustine, *Sermon 216*, as cited in Whitaker, 145. Quodvultdeus, *Sermon on the Creed* (PL 40bis.637), as translated and cited in Whitaker, 151.

steeped in symbolism suitably fashioned to express the meanings hidden beneath the surface. The words and symbols of the scrutiny rite expressed a great deal about what the medieval church believed about many things including grace, Baptism, and the power of the devil.

The Role of the Exorcism Vis-a-Vis the Demonology of Patristic Times

It is clear throughout early church history that the church had developed an understanding of the sacrament of Baptism as a ritual which moves one from the power of sin to that of grace through the Holy Spirit. Just what this meant and how the church perceived the power of sin and the embodiment of evil changed through the centuries. The dynamics of this process of transformation in grace, how it took place, and what it signified are pertinent to a study of the scrutiny rite as a major exorcism. I will give a brief sketch of this development based upon the work of Henry Ansgar Kelly, a scholar who has focused much attention on the role of Satan throughout history.¹

In the New Testament evidence for the ritual of Baptism, we see little reference to spirits of evil. However in the third century a transformation took place. There suddenly was a diabolic dimension, and the ritual of Baptism was the highpoint of a fierce struggle in human nature between the higher and lower realms.²

¹ Henry Ansgar Kelly, *The Devil at Baptism: Ritual, Theology and Drama* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985).

Sin Demons

One cannot study the history of Christian demonology and exorcism without an understanding of sin demons and their removal. This is essential to an understanding of the spirit world in the patristic era. The action of Baptism was the occasion of a dramatic battle between two worlds in the life of the candidate, those of sin and grace. Of course, it took place in their soul and was manifest by their level of faith because both protagonists, Christ and Satan, were invisible. The candidates made manifest their faith in God the Father Almighty and their resistance to the devil by participating in rites that were both active and passive. They participated in exorcisms, such as the scrutiny rite, in which the exorcist prayed over them and later they actively renounced Satan. The nature and purpose of these rites are important elements of the present study. Through their participation in these rites, the catechumens learned firsthand what the church believed about the power of the devil in their lives and what it meant to combat this power as part of their Christian journey.

Kelly points out that in some baptismal rites the candidates turned toward the west, which was the ritual seat of Satan and then they turned towards the east, which was a ritual reference to the power of God, and professed their belief in the Trinity. They were anointed with exorcized oil, were baptized with exorcized water and finally anointed with another type of exorcized oil to strengthen them for their struggle against the power

² Kelly, 10.

of evil they would encounter. It was in this way that the power of Satan was expressed liturgically and ritualized.³

Cyril makes an analogy of the exorcism with the purification of gold: “We are trying to get pure gold. Can the impurities be removed from it without the fire? In the same way, the soul can’t be purified without exorcisms.”⁴ Ambrose also speaks of the purificatory nature of the scrutiny as he states: “...so also now, because you are exorcized in the Name of the Trinity and scattered upon this earth and this sackcloth, the devil may not lurk in those who stand over you, or those who pass by you, as they undergo the scrutiny: but that he may be shown forth and expelled, that they may be found pure and true.”⁵ We see similar references to the power of exorcism in the works of Cyril of Jerusalem and Ambrose of Milan who will be studied at greater length in this chapter.

The understanding of Satan and his power as a fallen angel in terms of Baptism was developed during patristic times and not prevalent during the time of the New Testament. According to the view of the Fathers, Satan becomes the ruler of the world who has the power of death. It is only the Messiah who has the power to oust him from his role. His submission is not complete, however, as he maintains a stronghold on the hearts of mankind.⁶ The extent of this stronghold is expressly presented to the catechumens and to the faithful through the dynamics of the rite.

³ Kelly, 10.

⁴ Whitaker. 28.

⁵ Ibid., 185.

⁶ Kelly, 17-19.

Three Basic Processes for Dealing with the Devil

Kelly cites three basic processes for dealing with harmful spirits that are important to understand in terms of Baptism and the scrutiny rite. These three are expulsion, renunciation, and repulsion: "The spirits that caused injury by their physical presence, especially by dwelling within the human body, had to be driven out and away, the evil principles and way of life espoused by the spirits had to be repudiated and once the spirits were removed physically and morally, their attempts to regain control had to be resisted."⁷ The relationship between these three processes and the physical and moral indwelling of the spirits is of interest to my study in both patristic and modern times.

Exorcism was the usual means of expulsion on a physical level and this was performed by someone other than the person who was possessed. We see in the gospels where Jesus and his disciples expelled demons on a regular basis:

In their synagogue was a man with an unclean spirit; he cried out, "What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are--the Holy One of God!" Jesus rebuked him and said, "Quiet! Come out of him!" The unclean spirit convulsed him and with a loud cry came out of him. All were amazed and asked one another, "What is this? A new one teaching with authority. He commands even the unclean spirits and they obey him." ⁸

Expulsion is thus a form of exorcism which takes place through a series of commands, as we see revealed in Scripture.

⁷ Ibid., 19.

⁸ Mark 1:23-27, NRSV.

Renunciation and repudiation are quite similar. The basic difference between these two terms and expulsion is in the agent of the action. Expulsion takes place when a person is thought to be possessed by an evil spirit and they require the action of another, an exorcist, to rid them of the spirit. Renunciation refers to the voluntary rejection of the influences of the evil spirit. Repudiation refers to voluntary rejection of evil in the moral realm, an effort that one can take on by oneself.

Kelly holds that the three types of demonical possession that are found in the Scriptures, as well as the three methods outlined above for dealing with it, are not likely to have been the primary inspiration for the scrutiny rite or other types of prebaptismal exorcism that emerged in later times. He proposes that it is the doctrine of sin demons which is a far more likely source although what we see in the Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles can be viewed as evidence for the necessity of such rites.⁹

The doctrine of sin demons, or vice demons, upholds that the commission of various kinds of sins was the result of the indwelling of corresponding evil spirits. In his discussion of this question, Kelly relies upon Franz Josef Dölger, who studied this process extensively in his work on baptismal exorcism.¹⁰

Demonology in Other Traditions

In Qumran writings there is a strong motif of the struggle between the spirit of evil and the spirit of truth within a person's heart. This is particularly notable in the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*, fragments of which have been discovered in the

⁹ Kelly, 23.

Qumran library. *The Testaments* as we possess it today is generally assumed to have been revised by a Christian editor, a factor that is of interest in attempting to explore the origins of Christian ritual.¹¹

Hermas's *Shepherd* takes over the Qumran demonology in that when the author demonizes sin, he does so not only in terms of the devil himself, but also in terms of the spirits of the *Testaments*.¹² Hermas was a first or second century author of the above book which was a great authority in ancient times. He addresses himself not to baptismal candidates but rather to people who are already Christian and he speaks about the effects of virtue and vice in their lives. Nevertheless, what is important for this discussion is the fact that Hermas offers us evidence of a particular sort of demonology. He declares that each man has two angels with him, one of uprightness and one of evil. Hermas asks how he is to recognize their workings, since both of them dwell within him. He is told by his supernatural informer that when the heart is filled with virtuous thoughts it is a sign that the angel of uprightness is with him and when he finds himself attracted to evil thoughts, it is a sign that the angel of evil is in him. He is to trust in the angel of uprightness and to depart from the angel of evil, "you see, therefore," he is told "that it is good to follow the angel of uprightness and to renounce the angel of evil."¹³

Origen (ca. 185-254 C.E.), an early Christian scholar and theologian, gives no sign that there was a practice of prebaptismal exorcism in the communities of Egypt and

¹⁰ F.J. Dölger. *Der Exorcismus im alchristlichen Taufritual* (Paderborn 1909), cited in Kelly, 45.

¹¹ Kelly, 46.

¹² *The Testaments* refers to the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* which was an ancient Qumran writing. It was purportedly edited by a Christian editor and offers insights on ancient Christian initiation practices.

Palestine where he lived and worked. This does not mean that he was not familiar with their practice. He was in Rome around 212 when he would have had the opportunity to encounter the exorcistic practices which appear to be part of the Roman custom, if the Apostolic Tradition is a safe witness to that practice. Nevertheless, in the records of mainstream Christianity during the first two centuries, there is little reference to any anti-demonic practices in terms of Baptism. It is in the West at approximately the beginning of the third century that we first see references to rituals directed against evil spirits.

Prebaptismal ceremonies are discussed in the *Apostolic Tradition*. In this work there is a process of moral examination whose purpose is to see if the catechumens' conduct is beyond reproach, then they are exorcized every day and examined by the bishop. In a description of the prebaptismal ceremonies it says that "they are exorcized every day, and near the end by the bishop himself, to see whether they are clean. Anyone who is not good or clean is set aside."¹⁴ There is a difference of opinion between Dom Bernard Botte and Kelly as to exactly what "good" and "clean" signify. According to Botte, the well known liturgist from Louvain, "good" corresponds to the interrogation concerning conduct and "clean" to the results of the exorcism. Kelly believes that unclean means bad.¹⁵ I hold with Botte in his context that one term refers to the moral interrogation and the other to the results of the exorcisms. This seems to make more sense given the context.

¹³ Hermas, *The Shepherd*, Mand. 5.1, 2-4; in *Le Pasteur*. (Paris: Les Editions du Cerf, 1958).

¹⁴ *Ap. Trad.* 15, quoted in Whitaker, 7.

¹⁵ Kelly, 85. See B. Botte, *La tradition apostolique de Saint Hippolyte* (Münster, 1963), 36.

Following the prebaptismal examinations, there is a signation which may be an ancestor of the Effeta tradition. This tradition may or may not be anti-demonic in nature. This is difficult to be ascertained from the ritual as it is written. According to the practice described in the *Apostolic Tradition*, the catechumens, most of whom have been under instruction for three years have now undergone exorcism, bathing, fasting and the Saturday rituals. Early on Saturday morning, they are baptized.

By the time of Augustine, the practice of a prebaptismal exorcism was common in much of Western Christianity.¹⁶ The exsufflation was closely linked to the exorcism according to the writings of Augustine.¹⁷ As in the *Apostolic Tradition*, this rite seems to have taken place on the Saturday before the Baptism was to take place. .

As far as the exsufflation itself, we are not told how it was performed in the prebaptismal ritual, except that breath was blown in the face of the candidates as in the *Apostolic Tradition*. Kelly postulates about different meanings for this rite, but again holds to his view that it is just a symbolic equivalent of what would be the case if one were dealing with true demonic possession. Whitaker, in the glossary of his book, describes exsufflation as a mark of contempt for the devil.¹⁸

The question of the true nature of exorcism is addressed by Thomas Finn in his work *Early Christian Baptism and the Catechumenate*. He reminds us that as the catechumens' viewpoints evolved, so too did their conduct. This concurs with what I have implied about ritual and catechesis and their effects on the person. This was the

¹⁶ Kelly, 112.

formative task of the catechumenate. This is where the role of the exorcism became relevant. The obstacle to be fought against was a field of forces which were physical, psychological and spiritual. The true enemy, however, is Satan.¹⁹ The outer manifestations were Satan's tools and the result of his work. In this way, catechesis became intimately connected with exorcism, which is interesting to note for the purposed of this paper. The catechumens obtained a profound sense of the power of Satan in the life of a Christian. They did not just learn it as a fact to be understood, they experienced this reality in a very real fashion. It is important to note, however, that the scrutiny ritual is a preparatory rite for the sacrament of Baptism. The elect are undergoing a process which will bring them into a state of grace and intimacy with God.

It is interesting to note that in the East, neither Cyril of Jerusalem nor John Chrysostom²⁰ believed that the pagans who presented themselves for Baptism were possessed by demons, yet they had inherited a ritual that treated them as if they were.²¹ Some kind of exorcistic breathing ceremony was common in the West and in the Western-influenced regions of the East from the time of the *Apostolic Tradition* onwards.²²

Cyril tells the faithful in the *Catechetical Homilies* "that they must undergo the exorcisms with fervor, for whether they were breathed upon or exorcized, it would be for

¹⁷ Augustine. *Contra Iulianum opus imperfectum* 3.199 (PL 45.1333), as cited in Kelly, 112.

¹⁸ Whitaker, 309.

¹⁹ Thomas M. Finn, *Early Christian Baptism and the Catechumenate* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1992), 5.

²⁰ John Chrysostom (ca. 347-407 C.E.), was the Archbishop of Constantinople and an Early Church Father.

²¹ Kelly, 146.

their salvation. The function of the exorcists was to inject fear into the soul, and as a result the hostile demon would flee and the soul would be cleansed of its sins and would win salvation for itself.”²³ Cyril was the one of the most gifted catechists in what was essentially effective liturgical catechesis, as he broke open the experiences of the faithful after they had an opportunity to learn through active experience.

Reference to exorcisms and the scrutiny rite occurs also the *Canones ad Gallos*. In Canon 8 of these responses, it says that “if the chrism poured upon the head imparts its grace to the whole body, in the same way also if he who is scrutinized at the third scrutiny is touched with the oil only once and not many times, God acts (nevertheless) upon his (whole) life.”²⁴ Here in Canon 8 we discover two important facts: the first clear indication of the Roman use of “exorcised oil” within the rites after the *Apostolic Tradition*, and that the Roman tradition has come to know three scrutinies during the period of final preparation for Baptism.²⁵

There is also a catechetical message to be noted here. The chrism poured on the body imparts grace. This is understood by the catechumen not only by the respect and the fashion in which it is poured but through the medieval understanding of the strengthening purpose of the use of oil.

The above synthesis of the role of evil spirits and their expulsion during the period of the early church makes clear the fact that from the third century onward, the

²² Ibid., 145.

²³ Cyril of Jerusalem, *Procatechesis* 9 (PG 33.348-349), cited in Kelly, 145.

²⁴ Whitaker, 205, cited in Johnson, 161.

²⁵ Johnson, 161.

church became concerned with the power of Satan in the lives of the elect. While exorcistic rites, similar to the scrutiny, existed in various forms in both East and West, it is in the West that we see the rite as a common and accepted prebaptismal ritual.

The Role of the Scrutiny According to the Fourth Century Church Fathers

Ambrose of Milan

I will begin with Ambrose, Bishop of Milan from 374-397. The work by Craig Satterlee, *Ambrose of Milan's Method of Mystagogical Preaching*²⁶, yields insights into the role of the scrutiny rite in the catechumenal process in Milan in the late fourth century. Satterlee, who is an author and conference speaker, opens his book by claiming that he proposes a method of mystagogy based on the preaching of Ambrose of Milan. Ambrose was one of the first great mystagogues. As he addressed his neophytes during the week after the Easter Vigil, he engaged in sacramental catechesis which is relevant for us to this day. Through post-baptismal catechesis Ambrose helped the neophytes to truly understand what they had seen and heard and what had been done to them. At the same time, the rites themselves, including the scrutiny rite, had a story to tell.

Two principal works of Ambrose are of interest to us in this study: *De mysteriis* and *De sacramentis*.²⁷ While the authorship of these works was a source of controversy for a time, both of these works are generally recognized as genuine works of Ambrose. *De sacramentis* is a stenographic record of the addresses given by Ambrose to the

²⁶ Craig Satterlee, *Ambrose of Milan's Method of Mystagogical Preaching* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1989), 152.

neophytes during Easter Week. *De mysteriis* is a version of *De sacramentis* which was polished and edited most probably by Ambrose himself.²⁸ Both of these works give us important insights into the catechumenal process of Milan in the fourth century.

Ambrose writes that in Lent, perhaps during vigils on the third, fourth, and fifth Saturdays,²⁹ the *comptentes*, those preparing for the sacrament of Baptism at the Easter Vigil went through an exorcism or series of exorcisms. Ambrose refers to these exorcisms as “the mystery of the scrutinies.”³⁰ He gives very few specifics about this particular rite, other than the fact that it included a physical examination. As Satterlee stated earlier in his work, the Church believed that the human heart was concealed from human observation but could not be hidden from God and the angels.³¹ The Church therefore trusted the Holy Spirit to use physical manifestations to reveal the intentions of the heart. Thus, we see the importance of the physical examination in the rite. Ambrose says: “There was a search - lest anything unclean still cling to the body of anyone of you. Using exorcism we sought and brought about a sanctifying, not only of your body, but of your soul as well.”³²

Preparation for Baptism during the season of Lent in North Africa as well as in Milan included three scrutinies, which could be quite severe.³³ Maxwell Johnson, in his

²⁷ T. Thompson, *On the Sacraments and On the Mysteries*, rev. ed. (London S/P/C.K., 1950).

²⁸ Ibid., 15.

²⁹ Thomas M. Finn, *From Death to Rebirth: Ritual and Conversion in Antiquity*, (New York: Paulist Press, 1997), 223 and 235, no. 45.

³⁰ *Explanatio symboli ad initiandos*, 1 (SC 25bis 46), trans. Satterlee.

³¹ Satterlee, 152.

³² Satterlee, 152.

³³ Ibid, 153.

book *The Rites of Christian Initiation* recalls Thomas Finn's description of the North African scrutiny:

In the eerie light of the first dawn the candidates stood barefoot on the coarse animal skins (*cilicium*), naked and with head bowed. Invoking the power of Christ and the Trinity, voicing vituperative biblical condemnation of Satan, and imposing hands the exorcist hissed in the faces of *competents*,³⁴ peremptorily commanding the evil one to depart. There followed a physical examination to determine whether the *competents* showed evidence of disease, which signaled the continued inhabitation of Satan. Granted that they passed scrutiny, *the competens*, each in his or her own voice, then renounced Satan, his pomps and his service.³⁵

While Ambrose gave us no detailed description of this rite as it took place in Milan, Finn allows us to conclude that the rite in Milan was probably quite similar to that of North Africa described above. Though Ambrose did not give us a detailed account about the scrutiny, his works, most specifically *De sacramentis*, gave us an important and useful account of the catechumenal process. A brief study of his work and perspective on the catechumenate helps to develop some basic conclusions on the role of the exorcisms in general and the scrutiny rite in particular during this period of time.

Fourth Century Milan

Understanding the background of the place and people to whom Ambrose preached is an aid in appreciating the emphases and the theology of his mystagogical

³⁴ In explaining their name, *competentes*, Augustine likens them to those who are competing together in a class action suit. They were fellow teachers, fellow runners, fellow soldiers. He used this idea to get across the idea that we pursue the Christian life as a community, not as individuals, a thought that was lost for a time in the Middle Ages.

preaching. The walls of the city were two and one half miles in circumference and embraced an area of approximately 275 acres. From isolated data it can be determined that there were probably 130,000 people living in Milan at this time.³⁶ The posts in the imperial bureaucracy and army were staffed with many different kinds of people. There was a flourishing labor class, and Milan was an important center of commerce and trade. It was also known for its schools and the educated society that had grown up around the court, which included poets and philosophers. At the time of Ambrose's Baptism and Ordination as bishop, it was a flourishing and diversified society. It is interesting to note that although the church in Milan was quite diverse, in worship Ambrose preached to a united congregation. He effectively united his diverse congregation through the singing of psalms and hymns.³⁷

In his *Confessions*, Augustine commented on the manner in which Ambrose moved him to tears between the quality of his preaching and his music. Two other comments of Augustine are also insightful along these lines. First of all, he observed among the congregation how much their lifestyle varied and second, he noted that all were taken up by the preaching of Ambrose. Thus, one could conclude that while the congregation had differing levels of commitment to Christianity, all were appreciative of the varied talents of their gifted bishop. He faced a constant challenge of speaking to people of various levels of commitment to the Church, but at least the newly baptized

³⁵ Johnson, 187.

³⁶ De Marchi, *Antiche epigrafi di Milano*, 316, cited in Satterlee, 41.

³⁷ Augustine, *Confessions*, 9.7.15 (CCSL 14.141), trans. Satterlee.

shared a certain level of faith and commitment having undergone the process of initiation.³⁸

The newly baptized of Milan were united by the intense experience of preparation that they had experienced together, including both the class process and the rites. We know from Ambrose and from early Church history that Baptism was frequently delayed. People often entered the catechumenate, but waited until their deathbed to complete the ritual of Baptism. There was a conflict of interest between allegiance to the empire and to the Church. True allegiance to the Gospel way of life was a standard too tall for many and thus they waited until they were near death to have their sins washed away through the power of Baptism.³⁹

Yet, there were several reasons for becoming Christian before the death knell. Satterlee quotes several of these as regards Milan in the time of Ambrose. First of all, there is the power of the Christian message. We know that Augustine was brought to faith by the power of Ambrose's preaching and surely others were as well. Secondly, there was the hope of the resurrection through Christ, and thirdly there was perhaps the influence of past martyrs on the Church. Another possible reason was having recovered from sickness of some type of miraculous event. Whatever the reason, the potential baptismal candidate had to be sufficiently motivated to pursue the lengthy process required for Baptism.⁴⁰

³⁸ Satterlee, 118.

³⁹ Satterlee, 120.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

Ambrose viewed the secular world of Milan as diametrically opposed to the Christian faith. It is for this reason that the scrutiny rite held such importance. One would think that once Christianity had become the official religion of the empire that temptations would lessen. But actually, they were greater since Christians were now officials of the empire. Excessive luxury of the rich in contrast to the poor, greed and unrestrained habits, particularly drunkenness, were consistent challenges. There was an absence of morality in marriage. People attended horse races and theatrical productions, both of which were frowned upon.⁴¹

The Sermons

Ambrose begins his first sermon to the newly baptized with the words: "I shall begin now to speak of the sacraments which you have received."⁴² Ambrose makes it clear that he is a mystagogical preacher. As Satterlee affirms for us, the text of this type of preaching is the rites, the rites that the neophytes have most recently experienced.⁴³

Another important point highlighted by Satterlee is that when we say that mystagogy is based on the "text," we are defining *text* not as an ancient document but as the living experience that encompassed not only words but actions, objects, place and time as well. The rites of initiation provide the text for *De sacramentis* and *De mysteriis*.⁴⁴

⁴¹ Ibid., 75.

⁴² Ambrose of Milan, *De sacramentis*, 1.1.1 (SC 25 bis. 60), trans. Satterlee, 145.

⁴³ Satterlee, 145.

⁴⁴ Satterlee, 145.

These mystagogical writings are our chief evidence for the liturgical practices in Milan, but this presents several difficulties.⁴⁵ Satterlee quotes Paul Bradshaw, a specialist in the history of early Christian liturgy, in his reference to the fact that Ambrose is writing to those who have just experienced the rite, and thus he leaves out certain important details. Secondly he uses metaphor extensively and it is difficult at times to tell when he is speaking literally.⁴⁶ Despite these realities, it is possible through a review and study of Ambrose's mystagogical works to reconstruct to a certain degree what the rites consisted of and to a lesser degree to come to a comprehension of Ambrose's understanding of the theology of the rites.

As in other parts of the world, Christian initiation in Milan was an intense and lengthy process. Ambrose describes five stages: 1) enrollment, 2) Lenten formation, 3) the Rites of Initiation, 4) the celebration of the Easter Eucharist and 5) a period of mystagogy or daily instruction on the meaning of the sacraments during the week following Easter.⁴⁷ I will focus on the Lenten Formation, since it is here that the scrutiny rite takes place.

In Milan the period of Lenten formation consisted in daily moral instruction, fasting, scrutinies, and learning the Creed. This formation took place in an atmosphere of secrecy called the *disciplina arcani*.⁴⁸ This made Lent a very intense period. The Lenten instruction was one part of a worship service that also included readings and psalms.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Paul F. Bradshaw, *The Search for the Origins of Christian Worship: Sources and Methods for the Study of Early Liturgy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992) 115, cited in Satterlee, 146.

⁴⁷ *De mysteriis*, 1.1(SC 25bis.156) trans. Satterlee.

This instruction was held twice daily, Monday through Friday, at the third and ninth hours.⁴⁹

Fasting was the second component of Lenten Preparation. Ambrose encouraged proper fasting for the whole congregation. Ambrose explained that in fasting they would obtain the same benefits as Elijah:

Elijah ‘raised the widow’s son from the dead’ (just as the *competentes* would rise from the dead at baptism), ‘he drew down fire from heaven’ (just as the *competentes* would draw down the fire of the Spirit), ‘while fasting he was snatched in a chariot to heaven and gained the presence of God’ (just as the *competentes* would be swept after baptism into the presence of heavenly mysteries).⁵⁰

For Ambrose, true fasting was connected to the work of justice and it was one part of a rigorous discipline that he called the *competentes* to embrace.

The Theology of Ambrose

This section explores Ambrose’s approach to the sacraments of initiation and his theology with a specific focus on the scrutiny rite. Like Cyril, Ambrose’s writing is mystagogical. In other words, the explanations of the ritual actions are given only after the neophytes have participated in the sacraments. Ambrose states:

Now is the time to speak of the mysteries and to reflect systematically on the sacred ritual actions. We would not

⁴⁸ Satterlee, 149.

⁴⁹ Leonel Mitchell, “Ambrosian Baptismal Rites,” *Studia Liturgica* 1 no. 4 (1962) 242, cited in Satterlee, 149.

⁵⁰ Ambrose, *De Helia et ieieunie* 2.2 (Buck, 47), cited in William Harmless, *Augustine and the Catechumenate*. (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1995), 95.

have considered it helpful to those not yet initiated, but rather a betrayal of them if we had decided to give such a detailed explanation before baptism. Indeed it is better for the light of the mysteries themselves to have inundated you as a surprise than it would have been for us to have given an explanation beforehand.⁵¹

Ambrose gives two reasons for this pedagogical approach. “First to speak to the uninitiated about the sacraments would be to betray rather than portray them; second, the rites themselves had an inherent pedagogy, not so much in the visible play of symbols as at the inner light which “infuses itself better in the unsuspecting.”⁵² This pertains directly to my purposes in viewing liturgy and the scrutiny rite, in particular, as catechesis. Ambrose appears implicitly, if not explicitly to be saying that one learns best by experiencing the liturgy. This will be further explored later in this paper.

Along these lines, Ambrose holds that pedagogically one learns more easily if one has seen and experienced before being instructed. Ambrose seeks to show that the mystery of God’s saving activity in Christ is contained in the liturgical action. It is only through faith that one comes to understand what one has experienced.⁵³

One could say that the theology of Ambrose is complex and yet simple. The neophytes encounter the risen Lord and are profoundly moved on several different levels beyond just the spiritual. Ambrose seeks to draw out and elucidate their understanding of what they have experienced through his connections with Scripture and Church teaching.

⁵¹ *De mysteriis*. 1.2 (SC25bis, 156), trans. Satterlee, 187.

⁵² Harmless, *Augustine and the Catechumenate* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1995), 100.

⁵³ Satterlee, 187.

Thus the catechesis has a profoundly dualistic orientation. One learns from both experience and reflection upon that experience.

Although Ambrose speaks only briefly about the scrutiny rite itself, what he does say gives some clue as to its purpose and meaning. He calls them the “mysteries of the scrutinies”. By using the word mystery he quotes it in its usual general meaning in the writings of the Fathers. The Fathers referred to the sacraments as mysteries because there was always a layer that could not be penetrated by the reason of human beings. God’s acting below the surface of our understanding was always present and active. It is important to note that for Ambrose, the rites are the starting point for understanding God’s saving activity. He begins not with a theological treatise, but with the rites themselves. Ambrose respects, in this way, their nature as mystery. While a mystery can be pointed to, hinted at, and even glimpsed, it can never be defined and never exhausted.⁵⁴ Thus when he refers to the scrutiny rites as “mystery”, we can infer that he speaks of something that is not fully defined nor fully understood.

Through his implication of a physical examination, we see a reference to the physical presence of the spirit of evil, which makes a person unclean. As described above, this physical presence is the manifestation of the intentions of the heart in physical form. While little else is said by Ambrose, it is significant that the scrutiny rite is mentioned at this early date and it is referred to as an exorcism which seeks to cleanse

⁵⁴Satterlee, 198.

both body and soul. It is also notable that Augustine would have witnessed this rite in Milan.

Augustine and the Scrutiny Rite

Having explored the history and theology of Ambrose regarding Lent and the scrutiny rite, it is appropriate to move on to Augustine who actually experienced these rites in Milan. Augustine wrote to Ambrose and petitioned for Baptism during early autumn of 386. He was baptized at the Easter Vigil, the night of 24-25 April 387.⁵⁵ Augustine had changed considerably in many different ways after the occasion of his Baptism. He had retired from his post as a teacher of rhetoric, he had given up on the idea of married life and he had committed himself to celibacy. A year later, in 388, he left Milan and returned to Africa to set up a community on his family farm in Thagaste. Eventually, as a presbyter of Hippo, he found himself in the role of teaching *competentes*. Four years after becoming a bishop, in approximately 400 he corresponded with the Deacon Deogratias and wrote his famous work *De catechizandis rudibus* on catechizing inquirers.⁵⁶

Augustine was a gifted preacher. As bishop, his audience included a mix of people such as merchants and beggars; married and ascetics; freeborn and slaves; baptized and the catechumens. As Lent approached, each year a certain number of the catechumens would petition for Baptism. Like Ambrose, Augustine would make impassioned appeals to enroll for Baptism to the congregation. During Lent, these

⁵⁵ Harmless, 107.

“petitioners” (*competentes*) would go through a training that included 1) a demanding penitential discipline, 2) scrutiny and exorcisms, 3) a mix of public and private catecheses.⁵⁷ As in the case of Ambrose, our knowledge of this process is not complete. However, Augustine does give more detail to the scrutiny rite. Sermons 205-216 cover the main portion of the Lenten period. In his book *On Faith and Works* Augustine elucidates much of his view on the catechumenate and particularly the Lenten disciplines.⁵⁸

Augustine made a point of distinguishing ordinary catechumens from those who had put in their names for Baptism. He referred to the latter either as *baptizandi* or as *competentes*. He also stated that “during the days for harvesting this grace, the Church investigated the lifestyle of those who had given in their names.”⁵⁹ It is not specifically described, but it is clear there was some sort of procedure for barring unworthy candidates. Considering the role of the scrutiny rite in terms of making people “clean” in both the physical and spiritual sense, I think that it is worth noting the criteria that Augustine alludes to in different works. He begins in *De fide et operibus* by giving some criteria:

...candidates agreed to live only with “their lawful and true” wives. Also “prostitutes and actors and all other professionals in public indecency” were refused unless they had “first loosened or broken themselves altogether from their filthy bondage.” Finally, “drunkards, the greedy, the evil tongued” were to be rigorously disciplined and

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 245.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ *De fide et operibus* 6.8, trans. Harmless, 247.

admitted only if they “approach baptism with a change of heart for the better.” The investigator was to “refuse them baptism if they resisted correction and publicly declared themselves inflexible.” Should someone be barred, it was not a matter of “preventing willing candidates from coming to Christ” but rather of taking people at their own word: “we are convicting of guilt those who, by their own public statements, do not want to go to Christ.”⁶⁰

Augustine continues in some sermons to describe some of the typical disciplines of Lent, saying that people were cleansed by “abstinence, fasts and exorcisms,”⁶¹ and later he says that they were “catechized exorcised, scrutinized.”⁶² He describes similar procedures in his sermons to the neophytes: in *Sermon 227*, he mentions “the humbling fast and the sacrament of exorcism”⁶³; in *Sermon 229* he says that, after people had “given in their names” a “milling process began with fasts and exorcisms”⁶⁴; in *Sermon 29A*, he reminds them that “you underwent (a sort of threshing) by fasts, by observances, by all-night vigils, by exorcisms.”⁶⁵ It is interesting to note that Harmless, whose translations and commentaries on Augustine’s work are used here highlights that ascetical practices and exorcisms are cited in each case while catechesis is cited only once. As he proposes, perhaps Augustine was simply taking catechesis for granted and wanted to stress elements that made the Lenten training distinctive.⁶⁶

The Lenten Disciplines

⁶⁰ *De fide et operibus* 6.8, trans. Harmless, 247.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ *Sermo 227*; *Sermo 229.1* (-Denis 6); and *Sermo 229A.2* (=Guelf. 7) trans. Harmless.

⁶⁴ *Sermo 227*; *Sermo 229.1* (-Denis 6); and *Sermo 229A.2* (=Guelf.7) trans. Harmless.

⁶⁵ Harmless, 248.

⁶⁶ Harmless, 249.

In speaking directly of catechesis during Lent, Augustine emphasized that it was important that all doctrine be interwoven with moral formation:

Quite frequently (matters of faith) come first and (admonitions) follow; still in the cross-weave of a sermon, both are given to catechumens, both to the faithful, both to those to be baptized, both to those already baptized; that by health-giving teaching and highly crafted preaching, either the catechumens may be instructed or the faithful roused from forgetfulness, that either those to be baptized may be led to profess the art (of Christian living) or those already baptized firm up their skills in it.⁶⁷

This interrelationship between teaching and moral formation was an essential part of the gospel message for Augustine. This is interesting from a catechetical perspective.

Teaching is only one small part of catechesis. Transformation of many types can be a part of catechesis. He also reported that there was a highly charged emotional atmosphere during Lent.⁶⁸ He could surely have drawn on his own experience as he wrote his homilies for the *competentes*.

To approach the exact elements of the Lenten discipline, the *competentes* embraced a strict regimen. According to Augustine, they were expected to fast each day until the ninth hour. They also abstained from all meat and wine and kept their diet bland and simple. On Sundays and Holy Thursday, the fast was lifted, while on Holy Saturday, it was tightened so that they, together with all the faithful, would take neither food nor drink. If married, the *competentes* were to fast from sex. They also distributed alms and occasionally spent all night praying. Finally the *competentes* were not allowed to bathe –

⁶⁷ *De fide et operibus* 13.19, trans. Harmless.

an ancient tradition alluded to as early as the *Apostolic Tradition*. This involved not only physical discomfort, but breaking with the social life of the public baths. The fast from bathing ended on Holy Thursday.⁶⁹

The outward disciplines of Lent were meant to be an outward indication of the inner change of one's life. As Augustine once told the *competentes*, penitential practices were taken up because "no one chooses a new life without having repented of the old."⁷⁰ Moreover he reminded them – the Church's rhythm of penance first, Baptism later, followed the dictate by Peter in Acts 2: "Do penance and be baptized in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."⁷¹

For Augustine, Lenten discipline was a way of bringing the body back into right relations with our interior selves:

Let us restrain our body and saddle it into service; and let us, in taming it, bridle it back from things allowed: so that we not, because of our untamed flesh, slip-slide into things not allowed. Other days, we should avoid drunkenness and carousing; these days, however, we should pull back from meals, (usually) permitted. We should always swear off—and flee from—adultery and fornication, but these days, even married people should hold back from sex. (That way) our flesh, which will have gotten used to being reined in from enjoying in its own rights, will submit to you so as not to usurp someone else's.⁷²

⁶⁸ Harmless, 249.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 251.

⁷⁰ Harmless, 252.

⁷¹ *Sermo* 325.2, trans. Harmless, quoting Acts 2:37-38.

⁷² *Sermo*, 207.2, trans. Harmless, 254.

For Augustine, the problem was not in the flesh. This is only where the problem surfaced. The real problem lies in the human heart which loved things in the wrong way. It was a matter of purging the poisons out of one's system.⁷³

Unlike Ambrose, it appears that the *competentes* attended daily liturgies and sermons with the faithful. Besides these daily public sermons they did receive private instructions. These seem to be largely on the occasion of special events, such as the scrutiny or the handing over of the creed.⁷⁴

The Ritual

Both pagans and Christians at the time of Augustine believed that invisible demonic forces wandered about the earth wreaking havoc. These demonic forces were responsible for the diseases, natural calamities and social problems that existed throughout the world. Christians tended to interpret these threats as evidence of the power of Satan. Satan affected the social, political and religious structure of their daily lives. We are led to believe through Augustine's preaching on exorcism and the scrutiny in particular that he believed strongly in this phenomenon.

Conversion for the Fathers and for Augustine specifically consisted in a shift or transfer of power from the reign of Satan to the reign of God. A change came about with this transfer of power. "One no longer suffered Satan's tyranny and came to enjoy God's

⁷³ *Confessions*, 10.31, trans. Harmless, 254.

⁷³ Harmless, 254.

rule.”⁷⁵ Along these lines, Augustine biographer Peter Brown notes the dynamics of this situation:

The Christian found himself committed to a wrestling match, an *agori*. This ring was clearly defined: it was the ‘world,’ the *mundus*. The enemy was specific and external to him, the devil, his angels and their human agents. The ‘training’ provided by his Church had equipped the Christian for the due reward of victory in any competition—a ‘crown’ in the new world. Simple men in the time of Augustine would....dream of fighting a wrestling match of horrible violence: they would long to escape from this double prison, the flesh and the world.⁷⁶

In the scrutiny rite, one could say that this competition was played out. Harmless suggests that in Hippo, the rite took place probably soon after enrollment or just before the first handing back of the Creed. He states that the whole tone and tenor of *Sermo 216* suggests that it occurred soon after the beginning of Lent. However, in Carthage, it is clear from the Lenten sermons of Quodvultdeus that it took place there one week before Baptism. As Harmless states, there is general scholarly agreement that the scrutiny/exorcism referred to by Augustine is the same as that of which Quodvultdeus speaks in Carthage.⁷⁷ Despite Augustine’s apparent tone in *Sermo 216*, the rite seems to fit better with his understanding of the purpose of Lenten baptismal preparation, and thus it would come late in the Lenten preparation process. This would be consistent with his own experience of the initiation rituals, although this is not historically relevant.

⁷⁵ Harmless, 261.

⁷⁶ Peter Brown. *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 240.

⁷⁷ Harmless, 262.

As far as the scrutiny rite itself is concerned, after the *competentes* stood on the goatskin and underwent some type of physical examination, the exorcist would come forward, according to Augustine, and say, “invoke the name of your redeemer” and “heap well-deserved curses on the devil.”⁷⁸ The invocations included calling down “the lowly most high Christ” and “the earth-shaking all powerful Trinity.”⁷⁹ According to another North African, Optatus of Milevis, the formula of imprecation against Satan was: “Cursed one, get out!”⁸⁰ Besides the verbal part of the exorcism, the exorcist would hiss at the candidate. Augustine explained its significance:

Just as you saw today, even little children are hissed at and exorcised, so that the hostile power of the devil—who deceived one man to lay hold of everyone—might be knocked out of them. So it is not these children—God’s creation—whom we hiss at and exorcise, but the one whose sway all those born with sin come under, that is, the power of sinners.⁸¹

Augustine names the rites in order, though on one occasion he speaks of the exsufflation as part of the exorcism.⁸² Augustine viewed these rites of exorcism and exsufflation as proof of a traditional view of original sin and concluded that their purpose was to liberate the candidates, even infants, from the “power of darkness” or the “power of the devil”.⁸³

Kelly concludes that Augustine considered the pre-baptismal a dramatic metaphor for the redemption of souls from the devil rather than an actual eviction of a demon from

⁷⁸ *Sermo* 216.9, trans. Harmless.

⁷⁹ *Sermo* 216.9, trans. Harmless.

⁸⁰ Optatus, *Libri VII (de schismate Donistarum)* 4.6, cited in Harmless 264.

⁸¹ *De symbol ad catechumenos* 1.1, cited in Harmless, 264.

⁸² Augustine, *Contra Julianum opus imperfectum* 3.199 (PL 45.1355), trans. Harmless, 264.

⁸³ PL 44.649.705, trans. Harmless, 264.

the body of a candidate. Harmless, on the other hand disagrees with Kelly's conclusion. He begins his section on the scrutiny by stating: "But more often, they envisioned conversion in cosmological terms: it was marked by a metaphysical shift, a transfer of power from the reign of Satan to the reign of God."⁸⁴ It does not make sense to me that Augustine would describe this elaborate process at length in terms of the presence of demons and the stomping on the goatskin simply as a metaphor. While the doctrine of original sin certainly is predominant in the thought of Augustine, I believe that more than just a transfer of allegiance takes place in this rite. It appears certain that Augustine believes that Satan is present in some form, while not in the form of traditional demonic possession.

In one of his sermons, Augustine recalls the ceremony in the minds of his congregation in these words: "When you were being scrutinized and the persuader of apostasy and desertion was being duly rebuked in the omnipotence of the awesome Trinity, you were not clothed in sackcloth, but you did stand upon it, in symbolic fashion."⁸⁵ I interpret the word "symbolic" to be referring to the goatskin and the symbolism of standing on it and all that that entails. This symbolism is truly real to Augustine.

Earlier in the same sermon, he addressed the candidates in the present tense and spoke of their role in the scrutiny rite. While the scrutiny is being conducted they can perform a self examination of conscience which makes it much more effective:

⁸⁴ Harmless, 261.

What we do to you adjuring you in the name of your redeemer, you are to complete by a scrutiny of your heart and remorse. With prayers to God and rebukes we withstand the wiles of the ancient enemy, while you carry on with your own prayers and heartfelt contrition, so that you may be rescued from the power of darkness and brought to the kingdom of light. This is now your task, this is your labor. We heap upon him the curses that his wickedness deserves; but you on your side declare a most glorious war against him by your aversion and your pious renunciation.⁸⁶

Thus, during the exorcism, the candidate was to find the moral courage and repentance necessary to make the formal renunciation of Satan meaningful and lasting. This reality is emphasized by Michel Dujarier in his *History of the Catechumenate* in which he emphasizes the fact that it is *God* who scrutinizes the candidates' hearts to remove any impurities that lurk there: "But the God who expels the evil spirit only works in hearts that have decided to live according to the Gospel."⁸⁷ Thus we see again that Augustine viewed the scrutiny rite as participatory on the part of the *competentes*. It was not magic; it required consent and collaboration in order to effectively free the *competentes* of the power of evil and to assist them in their ability to combat its influence into the future.

Harmless claims that finally, either at the scrutiny itself or soon after, the *competentes* would formally renounce Satan. This, too, is questionable according to different authors, but it does not make sense if the scrutiny takes place at the beginning of

⁸⁵ Augustine. *Serm.* 216, 11 (PL 38.1082). Kelly, 115.

⁸⁶ Kelly, 115.

⁸⁷ Michel Dujarier, *History of the Catechumenate*, translated from the French by Edward J. Haasl (New York: William H. Sadlier, 1978), 102.

Lent. It is more viable if it takes place on Holy Saturday night because the *competentes* would have already completed the entire Lenten regimen along with its many exorcisms.

As was emphasized above, this rite is a rite of conversion and Augustine highlights this fact by focusing on conversion extensively in *Sermo 216* which is given right after the dramatic rite. In terms of catechesis, Augustine has an important quote that elucidates the power of catechesis through action and not just words:

So great is the power of sympathy, that when people are affected by us as we speak, and we by them as they learn, we dwell in the other and thus both they, as it were, speak in us what they hear, while we, in some way, learn in them what we teach.”⁸⁸

For Augustine, the individual who was undergoing conversion was as much a teacher as the catechist, even though they spoke in a different way. There was an inherent back and forth or exchange of knowledge and experience between the catechist and the catechized.⁸⁹

Throughout *Sermo 216* Augustine compared the Christian life to a wrestling match or a battle. Conversion is a process of wrestling with Satan. One needed to stay sharp and keep prepared. Through the scrutiny rite, they had been removed from their state of allegiance toward Satan, but he was always waiting in the wings to attack. The body was the site of the war. Through asceticism the *competentes* could keep themselves

⁸⁸ *De catechizandis rudibus* 12.17, trans. Harmless, 272.

⁸⁹ Harmless, 272.

strong and keep themselves free of the power of Satan. This required a great deal of power.⁹⁰

This led Augustine to the quote I used above in the first section of this chapter that during the scrutiny rite the *competentes* were to scrutinize their own hearts with contrition. The exorcist pleaded with God and the *competent* applied contrition of heart. During the rite, Augustine as exorcist had battled with words: on the one hand by imprecations against Satan, and on the other by invocations to God. Yet, the *compententes* had work to do “turning public scrutiny into interior scrutiny.”⁹¹ Harmless holds that Augustine certainly thought that demons wandered the earth, but he worried most about those that haunted the human heart. As he once put it: “The devil is not to be blamed for everything; there are times when a man may be his own devil”⁹² Thus, we see cooperation and complementarities between the exorcist and the exorcized as the catechist and the catechized.

Augustine also commented on three other moments within the rite: the stripping of the tunic, the standing (or stomping) on the *cilicium* (sackcloth), and the invocation of the Trinity. He encouraged the *competentes* to strip off their old self just as they had stripped off their tunic: “Do you see, my fellow recruits, what delights of the Lord you will come upon when you toss away the delights of this world?...Strip off the ‘old man’ (Adam) that you may be clothed with the new (Christ).”⁹³

⁹⁰ Ibid., 271.

⁹¹ *Sermo* 216.6, trans. Harmless, 272.

⁹² *Sermo* 103B.5, trans. Harmless, 272.

⁹³ *Sermo* 216.2, trans. Harmless, 272.

In the same way, he encouraged them to conquer and trample the world just as they had conquered and trampled the goatskin. They are to invoke the name of the Trinity who has the power to conquer all evil. Towards the end of the sermon, he explained the moral importance of this part of the rite:

When you were scrutinized and when that one who persuaded you to run away and desert (God) was rightly rebuked in the (name of) the earth-shaking, all-powerful Trinity, you were not clothed in goatskin-sackcloth; however, your feet mystically stood on it. The vices and hides of goats must be trampled on; the rags from young goats (that will one day stand) on the left hand must be torn to shreds.⁹⁴

The scrutiny was just the beginning of a life long process of conversion and battle with the devil.

Quodvultdeus

Life and Background

Relatively little is known of Deacon Quodvultdeus of Carthage, the author of several creedal homilies. Thomas Finn offers some important biographical information about Quodvultdeus in the introduction to his translation of these homilies. I am indebted to him for much of what follows.⁹⁵ Augustine addressed him as a fellow deacon in their correspondence which took place around 428-429. The Deacon of Carthage petitioned Augustine to compose a handbook of heresies for the clergy of

⁹⁴ *Sermo* 216.10-11. trans. Harmless, 272.

Carthage. Augustine delayed several times, but finally wrote about eighty-eight heresies in *De haeresibus ad Quodvultdeum*.⁹⁶

Finn recalls that Dom G. Morin first identified Quodvultdeus as the author of twelve creedal homilies originally attributed to Augustine. Until 1914, several of the works of Quodvultdeus were considered “Pseudo-Augustine. The homilies exhibit a sound education in terms of rhetoric. They also exhibit the authorship of someone who had a deep dedication to a life of service in the Church. Quodvultdeus served as deacon under Bishop Aurelius about 420. He remained in this position until he became assistant bishop to Aurelius’s successor Capreolus. Quodvultdeus succeeded Capreolus around 437. When his native city came under siege by the Geiseric and the Vandals, he became an active participant in the life of the church at Naples. His See at Carthage remained vacant until 457, when Deogratias was consecrated, which indicates that by then Quodvultdeus had died in Naples.”⁹⁷

Quodvultdeus was highly influenced by Augustine and it is thus not surprising that his works were considered Pseudo-Augustinian. Unlike his mentor, however, Quodvultdeus was a pastoral leader, not an intellectual one.⁹⁸

The Homilies

The three homilies entitled *De symbolo*, now attributed by most to Quodvultdeus, are the subject of this present study. *De symbolo* 1 appears to have been delivered in the

⁹⁵ Thomas M. Finn, “Introduction,” in *Quodvultdeus of Carthage: The Creedal Homilies, Conversion in Fifth-Century North Africa*, Ancient Christian Writers 60 (New York: Newman Press, 2004), 1-22.

⁹⁶ Finn, “Introduction,” 1-3.

⁹⁷ Finn, 3.

presence of Bishop Capreolus, whom Quodvultdeus succeeded in 437. All three would have been delivered in the mid-thirties of the fifth century, shortly before Quodvultdeus became bishop and the Vandals became a threat. The creedal homilies were preached on Sunday morning a week before Easter. The renunciation of Satan and the profession of the baptismal creed had taken place at the vigil the night before. The audience of these homilies was those who were to be baptized, the *competentes* as well as the faithful who were also present at Sunday Mass.⁹⁹

As we observed in the case of the communities of Ambrose and Augustine, the motivation to become Christian in Carthage varied among individuals. But whatever the individual case may have been, the ultimate goal of the catechumenate was the personal transformation that was known in Latin antiquity as *conversio*. As in Milan and Hippo, *conversio* was an about face, a new way of life. Here too, the *competentes* had to be fully ready to embrace the lifestyle of a Christian. They exhibited this willingness by participating in the strict Lenten disciplines, leading right up to Holy Saturday night. The setting for this transformational process was liturgy.¹⁰⁰

Oral instruction or catechesis played an important role in this liturgical/catechetical setting. This catechesis took the form of a homily centered on Scripture and was delivered in a liturgical setting. This was often a celebration of the Eucharist known in North Africa as “Mass of the Catechumens.” In the fourth and fifth centuries, the major homilists viewed their teachings in light of the sacraments which the

⁹⁸ Ibid., 2.

faithful were to receive. Quodvultdeus had the perspective of viewing the whole catechumenate process as leading up to and following the rebirth of Baptism and he spoke of his homilies as feeding “those whom she carried in her womb with proper food.”¹⁰¹

The Lenten Process

In Carthage, like in Hippo, the *competentes* attended the instruction of the Mass of the Catechumens and observed a rigorous Lenten discipline. Wine, meat, bathing, public entertainment and marital relations were forbidden. The purpose, according to Augustine, was to grind the *competentes* as grain into flour for making that bread he called the *corpus mysticum Christi* which he thought of as both church and Eucharist.¹⁰²

The first special event after enrollment, was the liturgy of “the giving of the creed”. Quodvultdeus stated that it was celebrated during a vigil on Saturday two weeks before Easter. They would spend the following week with sponsors, family, and friends trying to understand and memorize the creed, for they had to profess it formally on their own the following Saturday night, again in vigil in a rite called *redditio symboli*.

According to Quodvultdeus it is during the night of this rite that the scrutiny takes place. This would be the Saturday before the Saturday night of the Easter Vigil.

The congregation was assembled in the church just after dusk. The *competentes* are hidden in the shadows. Although, as noted above, we know some of the

⁹⁹ Finn, 4.

¹⁰⁰ Finn, 4.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 5

¹⁰² Augustine, *Sermo* 229 (PL 38.1105), trans. Finn, 5.

circumstances of the scrutiny rite from Ambrose and Augustine, only Quodvultdeus is explicit about details. Each *competens* was presented to the congregations: head bowed, dressed in a goatskin tunic, and barefoot on goatskin, while Psalm 138 was chanted—“Probe me, Lord and know my heart...”¹⁰³ Although the *competens* had already experienced exorcisms, this rite was different and more intense. It was a solemn and sometimes shattering experience, one in which the exorcist invoked the power of Christ and the Trinity and barked biblical rebukes at the devil within. The striking finale was “exsufflation.” The exorcist grabbed each *competens* and hissed in her or his face. “In their goatskin tunics and humiliation, the *competentes* enacted the status of slaves bent low under servitude—and this whether they were high-born masters or dirt-poor slaves.”¹⁰⁴ This rite was called “scrutiny” because, among other things, it involved a physical exam to see whether *competentes* displayed any physical symptoms that might signal continued diabolic possession, such as leprosy, venereal disease, or some other condition.

The *competentes* would have spent the night “not lulled with the delight of sleep nor with minds deceived by dreams...but by watching, by praying, by psalm singing, by brandishing weapons against our adversary, the devil.”¹⁰⁵

The goatskin sackcloth is not mentioned in the initiation rites of Constantinople, Rome, Milan or Gaul but appears in association with exorcism held in Antioch, Edessa,

¹⁰³ Quodvultdeus, *De symbolo* 1.1.4-8 (CCL, 60,505), 2.1.1-2.3 (CCL, 60.35) and 3.1.1- 2.3 (CCL 60:349-51), trans. Finn, 6.

¹⁰⁴ Finn, 7. see Harmless. 274.

¹⁰⁵ Quodvultdeus, *Contra Judaeos, Paganos et Arianos* trans. Harmless, 266.

North Africa and later in Spain.¹⁰⁶ It was a multilayered symbol. In itself, it was a sign of penitence. But the gesture of standing or perhaps stamping one's foot upon it was important as well. In this way, the *competentes* signaled their renunciation of the power of sin that they had inherited. This makes a connection to the widespread belief that Adam and Eve had worn tunics of goatskin.¹⁰⁷ Finn reminds his reader that in *City of God*, Augustine notes that this gesture also expressed an eschatological hope: that at the last judgment one would be numbered and among the goats, not among the sheep.¹⁰⁸

Quodvultdeus summarized the effect of the scrutiny:

All the rites that were and are enacted among you through the ministry of God's servants by exorcism, prayers, spiritual songs, insufflations, the goatskin, bowed necks, bare feet—this trembling enduring for the gift of full peace of mind – all these things, I say, are food which nourishes you in the womb, so that your joyful mother may show, you reborn from baptism, to Christ.¹⁰⁹

Here we can make a connection between ritual and catechesis. As the doctrinal and moral formation fed the catechumen throughout his/her period of preparation, so too the rituals and all of their elements listed above, nourish the *competens* and form him/her into a new person who views the world through the gift of grace. The value and appreciation of this gift of grace unfortunately began to slacken as the church entered the fourth century. But it must not be forgotten that grace is still a totally gratuitous

¹⁰⁶ Poque, "Introduction," 28, cited in Harmless, 263.

¹⁰⁷ Johannes Quasten, "Theodore of Mopsuestia on the Exorcism of the Cilicium," (*Harvard Theological Review* 35 (1942). 218, cited in Yarnold, *The Awe-Inspiring Rites of Initiation*, 10.

¹⁰⁸ *Sermo* 216.10, trans. Finn, 7.

¹⁰⁹ *De symbolo*, 3,1.3, trans. Finn.

supernatural gift from God and one must welcome this gift actively. This applies to Baptism itself and all of the rites and rituals that precede it.

John the Deacon

Life and Background of the Letter

John the Deacon is well-known for a letter that he sent to Senarius in the early sixth century. Other than this letter, there is little else that we know about either of them. Senarius asked several questions, especially about the catechumenate and the scrutinies. John's response provides us a perspective of Roman Baptism at the end of the fourth century.

Infant Baptism was becoming the norm at the time of John the Deacon. Nonetheless, there still were adult Baptisms. The baptismal rite, according to John, consisted of a renunciation of Satan, followed by the imposition of the celebrant's hand coupled with an exorcism that entailed hissing at the devil and the administration of salt. The daily catechetical instruction included daily exorcism.

John's discussion offers us some discrepancies regarding Roman practice. According to his testimony, in Rome the adults ready for Baptism, as well as the infants were referred to as the elect. Early in Lent the creed was delivered to them after which they were officially called the elect and as John referred to them as the "living."¹¹⁰ Soon after this ritual, the scrutinies began. Their purpose was to search out the candidates

¹¹⁰ Finn, *Early Christian Baptism and the Catechumenate*, 84.

whom the grip of Satan prevented from making a true profession of faith. The last scrutiny took place on Holy Saturday night. Immediately following it, the elect professed the creed (*redditio symboli*), after which the rite of “opening” the ears and nostrils took place.

According to John, however, the “opening” was actually a sealing of the ears and nostrils, and it concluded with an anointing of the breast. This immediately preceded Baptism. John’s classic quote for our purposes is:

Catechesis is the Greek for “instruction.” (Catechumens) are instructed through the church’s ministry, by the blessing of the one who places his hand (on their heads), in order that (they) may realize who (they) are and who (they) are to become—in other words, that from being numbered among the damned (they) may become holy, from (being numbered) among the unjust, they may appear among the just, and finally from (being numbered among the) servants they may become son(s and daughters).¹¹¹

John proceeds to describe the exsufflation and the giving of the salt and the reception of the creed. He states that in the scrutinies:

We thoroughly test their hearts concerning faith to determine whether, since the renunciation of the devil, the sacred words (of the creed) have become fixed in their minds, whether they acknowledge the coming grace of the Redeemer, and whether they confess to believe in God the Father Almighty.¹¹²

The quote is a little confusing for several reasons. It describes the scrutiny

¹¹¹ John the Deacon, *Epistola ad Senarium*, ed. Andre Wilmart, *Analecta reginensia*, SeT 59 (Rome 1933) 170-179, cited in Whitaker, 209.

¹¹² Ibid.

more as an examination than an exorcism. This was touched upon on the first section of the current chapter and does not make sense because many of the elect were infants.

John attempts to answer this point when he says:

I must say plainly and at once, in case I seem to have overlooked the point; that all these things are done even to infants, who by reason of their youth understood nothing. And by this you may know that when they are presented by their parents or others, it is necessary that their salvation should come through other people's profession, since their damnation came by another's fault.¹¹³

This is a plausible explanation, that the parents or sponsors represent the faith of the infant. It does not account for the fact that the scrutiny is known as an exorcistic rite, not an examination as in the works of the Fathers and others. It has been suggested that John's explanation of the scrutiny as an examination was probably nothing more than an etymological conjecture.¹¹⁴ According to Kelly, Leo I in writing one half century before John, spoke of the scrutiny as effected by means of exorcism. Furthermore, though John spoke of only one action as involving a scrutinization, he spoke of three scrutinies at the beginning of his letter. It appears that the term "scrutiny" came to mean a meeting in which the baptismal candidate participated in a number of ceremonies, notably exorcisms.¹¹⁵

Later tradition confirms that the primary purpose of the scrutinies in Rome was exorcism and not an examination of the candidate's knowledge or virtue. It is

¹¹³ Whitaker, 211.

¹¹⁴ See Michel Andrieu. *Les Ordines Romani du Haut Moyen Âge 2*. (Louvain: Spicilegium Sacrum Lovaniense, 1971), 383-384.

interesting to note, however, that John's literal explanation was repeated in still later times, especially in connection with Charlemagne's questionnaire on the meaning of the baptismal rites. Furthermore, Kelly holds that it is possible, if not probable, that such examination of faith and morals were conducted in the case of adult converts, which would be the rule in missionary contexts.¹¹⁶

Scrutinization

The whole ritual process that John refers to as scrutinization seems to involve a profession of faith that takes place after the renunciation. Traditionally, this profession, which resembles the renunciation at times, had the form of a "catechism" which is an examination consisting of questions and answers, the content of which was the Apostle's Creed or, as John puts it "the words of the symbol handed down to the Apostles."¹¹⁷ The details of the letter of John offers interesting insights into the role of the scrutiny as Baptism changed from a rite largely for adults to children. John describes the baptismal ceremonies in the following order:

Catechesis: The minister "instructs" (that is, fortifies) the candidate by a blessing,"imparted by the imposition of his hand, showing that he has or will become holy, just, a true son, from being damnable, unjust and a slave. (John apparently makes no mention of any other kind of instruction because he is speaking chiefly of infants.)

Exsufflation.

Reception of salt.

Renunciation of the devil's snares and pomps.

Reception of the Apostles' Creed.

¹¹⁵ Kelly, 118.

¹¹⁶ Kelly, 118.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

Scrutiny: “We scrutinize their hearts through faith, to see whether after the renunciation of the devil, they have fixed the holy word in their minds, whether they acknowledge the future grace of the Redeemer, whether they profess belief in God the Father almighty.”

First anointing
 Second anointing
 Unclothing
 Baptism
 Clothing and final anointing.¹¹⁸

In an attempt to further enlighten us on the difference between the scrutiny as an exorcism or an examination, it is worth mentioning the fact that a hundred years before John the Deacon’s time, Nicetas of Remsiana, the Illyrian contemporary of St. Augustine, spoke of the scrutinies in the same terms as John, as examinations of doctrine. But the examinations first occurred during or after the catechumen’s course of instruction. Kelly quotes Nicetas: “We think, therefore, that the scrutiny is called an exploration, or examination, because it is necessary after one had heard the doctrine and instruction to explore frequently how well he remembers or understands what he has heard, or with what intention he embraces it.”¹¹⁹

It is Kelly’s opinion that Nicetas meant that, just as the scrutinies were a preparation for the profession of faith, the exorcisms prepared the candidate for the renunciation of Satan. This is plausible as a viewpoint, but it is not consistent with the role of the scrutiny as Ambrose and Augustine viewed it. In their view the scrutiny was not an examination of knowledge but concerned the expulsion of the power of Satan in

¹¹⁸ John the Deacon, *Letter to Senarius*, 7,9, cited in Kelly, 118-119.

¹¹⁹ Nicetas of Remesiana, *Instructio ad competentes*, 6.23-26, 7.40-41, cf. 13-56, cited in Kelly, 119.

the *competens*. As noted in the conclusion of this chapter, however, uniformity from East to West, or even within the West, is not a characteristic of the scrutiny rite.

Another important inconsistency in the writing of John the Deacon is not so easily reconciled. He differs with the “classical” order of events for the scrutiny, in which the scrutiny precedes the renunciation, as in the case of Ambrose, Augustine and Quodvultdeus. This is important because the *competentes*, freed from the presence of the devil in their being, now use their own will to make a renunciation of the devil from whose snares they have just been released by another. In the case of John the Deacon, he has the renunciation preceding the scrutiny, which does not make as much sense. It is difficult to solve this riddle from the evidence of his limited writings.

The study of the Gelasian Sacramentary in the preceding chapter on the evolution of this rite in Rome complements the above material on John the Deacon.

Summary and Integration

Having completed an overview of the role of the scrutiny rite in the catechumenate process of several of the Church Fathers, various salient points become obvious for the history and theology of the rite. The most striking point is the diversity among them. Even though Augustine participated in the catechumenate process of the church of Milan, there are differences between the initiation rites of Milan and Hippo, some of which may be due to the sketchy history we have of the rites. It also may simply be due to differing traditions. Even within the writings of Quodvultdeus, it was

demonstrated above that there were discrepancies in the exact timing and nature of the rite. We see that there are differences in the exact sequence of scrutinization, *redditio symbol* and the renunciation of the devil. How is all of this to be reconciled?

First, many of the differences are geographical-historical in nature. This reflects the disparities in the way that the catechumenate process evolved across the empire and between the East and West. The existence of the scrutiny rite, exactly how it was celebrated and what it meant were not uniform. In attempting to formulate a theology of this rite in the patristic and immediately post-patristic age we will focus on three areas: when was the rite celebrated, how was the rite celebrated, and what precisely did the rite mean?

As far as the celebration of the rite, we have seen several variants. In the case of Ambrose, the scrutinies took place perhaps in the third, fourth and fifth Saturdays of Lent. In the case of Augustine there is discussion as to whether it took place at the beginning of Lent or at the end as in the case of Quodvultdeus. In Carthage it takes place at the end of the vigil on the Saturday night before what is now Palm Sunday. In the case of John the Deacon, the last scrutiny took place on Holy Saturday morning.

The timing of the rite pertains to both its purpose and theology. In the case of Augustine, if the rite did in fact take place at the beginning of Lent instead of towards the end, the emphasis is different. It would be taking place before the many minor exorcisms of Lent, before the *competentes* engaged in their Lenten disciplines trying to make themselves worthy of the sacrament of Baptism. The power of Satan would be

confronted at the beginning of the process rather than as its culmination. In the case of *Quodvultdeus*, it takes place after the vigil a week before Easter. This seems to be a more useful timing, both practically and theologically. It makes sense that after all the discipline, asceticism, and exorcistic prayers of Lent, that the elect would face their final confrontation before Baptism with the power of Satan.

John the Deacon places the final scrutiny on Holy Saturday, at the culmination of the Lenten period of discipline and preparation. Here we do not see mention of the physical examination as in the case of Ambrose and Augustine. This placement seems the most appropriate of all, theologically, as it places the final exorcism directly before the reception of Baptism.

In addition to exactly when the rite was celebrated, an important factor is how it related in position to the other elements of Lenten preparation, particularly the renunciation of Satan. In terms of Ambrose, from the little we can tell, the scrutinies took place on the third, fourth, and fifth Saturdays of Lent and would have been separated from the giving of the Creed and the renunciation of Satan which took place on the Sunday before Easter and during the rites of initiation respectively.¹²⁰

In Hippo, according to the writings of Augustine, the scrutiny is more closely associated with the renunciation that follows it. This is also the case in the homilies of *Quodvultdeus* where the “giving of the creed” is two weeks before Easter and the final scrutiny is the next week followed directly by a renunciation of Satan. The connection

¹²⁰Satterlee, 152-165.

between the scrutiny and the renunciation is crucial because once freed from the power of Satan in the powerful exorcism, the *competens* renounces the power of the evil one with their own free will.

As far as how the rite was celebrated, this, too, is a source of great variation. As has been shown, Quodvultdeus gives the most extensive description of this rite in its power and emotion qualities. The goatskin and the psalm are particularly powerful elements in the version he describes.

John the Deacon also gives a description of the rite similar to what we find in the Gelasian Sacramentary which offers us a record of how it was celebrated. The two are different, however, in certain aspects mostly as respects the order of the rites. The creed is presented before the scrutiny in the letter of John for instance.

Through the writings of Augustine, one is able to compose an understanding of the rite's celebration that is quite similar to Quodvultdeus and what we can glean from Ambrose. Among all these writings we see that there are many differences, yet many similarities emerge as to how this rite was celebrated throughout the West. These differences and similarities provide us with the material we need to use in attempting to formulate a theology and an understanding about what the rite actually meant in these different Christian communities.

All of the above sources, with the exception of John the Deacon, make it clear that the scrutiny rite was clearly exorcistic. Its purpose was to free the *competens* from the snares of Satan. Particularly in the case of Augustine, it connected to the power of

original sin. It is only in the case of John the Deacon where there is question that the scrutiny rite had anything to do with an examination of the understanding of doctrine. As Finn and others demonstrate, however, it was through the power of the exorcism enabled the *competentes* to let go of the power of evil, their former creed, and embrace the Apostles Creed with heartfelt allegiance.

For John the Deacon, the scrutiny rite had exorcistic elements. The fact that examinations of faith were still used in the time of Charlemagne indicates that perhaps such examinations did develop as an element of the final preparation process, but does not change the basic nature of the rite as exorcistic in Rome and throughout the West in earlier centuries. In the context of the late fourth and fifth centuries, scrutiny refers to the physical examination of the remains of demonic possession, not intellectual knowledge.

If the rite is exorcistic, one can ask what this implies in terms of history. A degree of inference is required. Kelly holds that Augustine did not truly believe it was an expelling of demons, but of the power of the devil in the lives of the *competentes*. Augustine's view on the scrutiny is at least partially related to his concept of original sin. It seems clear that both Augustine and Quodvultdeus appear to be speaking of the actual expulsion of demons. Quodvultdeus describes the *competentes* as "faceless slaves of Satan: every other status had been torn from them."¹²¹ This expulsion of demons is not what we would think of as an exorcism today, but does pertain to the presence of Satan in a powerful way.

¹²¹ Finn, "Introduction", 8.

Augustine consistently talks about the wrestling match in which the *competentes* are engaged and he states that they are “rescued from the power of darkness and transferred into the kingdom of (God’s) dazzling light.”¹²² This and many other references serve to support the view that Augustine celebrates this dramatic rite in order to expel the demons from the lives of the *competentes*.

The physical examination described by Ambrose would lead us to believe the same. The goatskin and the psalm that is read are particularly important in discerning the meaning of the rite. The connection of the goatskin with both Adam and Eve and the goats in the final judgment is enlightening as to the meaning of the rite as the *competentes* stomp on the goatskin. This drama further assists in understanding the rite as an expulsion of the devil and his power in their lives.

Through this study of the nature and the role of the scrutiny rite in the early church, I have attempted to show how the rite developed, what exactly it meant to the communities in which it was celebrated and how it affected *competentes* who actually participated in the rite. St. Augustine makes it quite clear that he is united with his *competentes* in their battle against evil. This particular rite however, separates Augustine from his *competentes*. Once the *competentes* have gone through the scrutiny rite, they are freed from the stranglehold of the devil in their lives. While the struggle against evil will be life long, through this rite and then the sacrament of Baptism, they have taken a step towards eternity. Through the scrutiny rite that frees them from the devil and the

¹²² *Sermo* 216.6., trans. Harmless, 265.

power of the Holy Spirit that unites with them in the sacrament of Baptism, they are empowered to win the wrestling match that is this temporal life.

CHAPTER FOUR THE SCRUTINY RITE IN THE MODERN CATECHUMENATE

The Origins of the Reformed Rite

By the sixth century, the catechumenal process for adults, as it was experienced in its apex, had all but disappeared in the medieval church. Early in the 4th century, Christianity became legal and there were a large number of catechumens who had less commitment than those of early years who risked their lives to enter the faith. As Christianity became the religion of the empire, many sought to be baptized simply to gain the title of “Christian.” This large number of converts and the common practice of infant Baptism soon lead to the decline of the process which had been normative in earlier centuries.¹

The next time that any thought was given to a process of initiation was in the 16th century. Encouraged by the counter-reformation, various groups engaged in missionary activity saw the need to have a formal and gradual initiation into the faith. Missionaries found their way to the New World, Africa, and Asia and theologians and pastors began to struggle with how to develop a different approach to initiation. Cardinal Giulio Antonio Santori (1532-1602) was chosen by Pope Gregory XIII to edit the new *Roman Missal* called for by the Council of Trent. He envisioned a restoration of the catechumenal process. Unfortunately, he died before his work came to fruition.²

¹ Office of Adult Evangelization, Diocese of Phoenix, 2007.

www.diocesephoenix.org/fc/AFF/documents/TheHistoryoftheCatechumenate (accessed May 31, 2010).

² Paul Turner, *The Hallelujah Highway: A History of the Catechumenate* (Chicago: The Liturgical Press, 2000), 130-131.

In the twentieth century throughout the missionary territories and the modern world there was an increasing need to have a formal process for those entering the faith, and those who after Baptism did not have an opportunity for continued catechesis. There was a revival of catechumenal structures in Africa and France. In France, great problems arose because of the large numbers of non-practicing Catholics. In Africa, the White Fathers (the French missionary society) recognized the need to build the Church from the grass roots.

The occasion of the Vatican II Council gave the church an opportunity to investigate the need for restoration of the catechumenate. There was much discussion and debate as to exactly the form that the new rite would take. After several drafts were voted upon, a provisional rite was overwhelmingly approved and distributed in 1966. It was followed by a second edition for provisional use. In 1972 the Vatican promulgated *Ordo initiationis christianae adultorum* (Order of Christian Initiation of Adults). This ritual was translated and adapted by Episcopal conferences around the world. In 1974 the provisional English translation of the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* was published.¹ In 1986 the United States Bishops approved additions to the Rite for use in the United States. By 1988 the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* was mandated for use in the United States.

A scrutiny rite, to be celebrated on the third, fourth and fifth Sundays of Lent was included in the reformed rite. These were to be celebrated only with the elect, not with

¹ Turner, 159.

the candidates for reception into the church. Candidates had their own optional penitential rite to be celebrated on the second Sunday of Lent. This is a differentiation between catechumens and candidates that was not relevant in the medieval church. There are many other differences and similarities between the scrutiny rite of the late fourth and fifth centuries and the present rite promulgated in the twentieth century after the Vatican II Council. One of the principle differences is that the exorcisms are deprecatory (addressing the power of evil indirectly) instead of imprecatory (addressing Satan himself). This fact reflects changes in theology and psychology. It also reflects changes in how the rite catechizes and what it teaches to both the elect and the community.

A study of the catechetical nature of the present rite involves other issues that were not relevant in its formative years. As implied above, one of the principle issues that the contemporary minister deals with is who is this rite for? In the medieval church it was clearly for the elect. Today we face more complicated situations which involve families who are presenting children for initiation who may or may not be baptized. Perhaps some of the family members are baptized and some are not. Are the children to celebrate the scrutiny rite with the adults? What about the already baptized members of the family? These are all pastoral questions which must be addressed by the ministers of initiation. As individual parishes make these decisions and catechetical leaders deal with their implications, the catechetical nature of the rite is at stake. How the modern scrutiny rite forms and transforms goes beyond the simple text of the rite but also

pertains to who participates in it and how it is celebrated. Each of these issues will be dealt with in this chapter.

The Ordo Initiationis Christianae Adultorum

Historical Background

As Robert Duggan notes in his doctoral dissertation on conversion in the *Ordo*, the ritual of adult Baptism, in effect for the previous four and a half centuries, was the Gelasian rite originally meant for infants.² Duggan was one of the early pioneers of the restored catechumenate in the United States and wrote prolifically on the process. The various historical movements, as noted above, created a climate which would welcome important changes to the adult catechumenate. Shortly before the opening of the Second Vatican Council a decree published by the Sacred Congregation of Rites allowed for the division of the traditional ritual into seven different steps. This was strongly welcomed by modern scholars for it signified the first step in a reform that was long awaited. Further change was necessary, however, and this would come with the advent of the Council.³

The restoration of the catechumenate came up early in the Liturgical Committee and the Central Committee formed during the Council. It became clear that there was a general acceptance of a restored catechumenate among the members of these committees. There was one reservation consistently expressed by several members and this was that it

not be made obligatory. There were a few members who held reservations about the whole concept and the schema of the new format of the Latin text went from committee to committee until the text was approved at the same time as the text of *Sacrosanctum Concilium* on December 4, 1963. The adult catechumenate was to be restored with appropriate liturgical rites.⁴

64. The catechumenate for adults, comprising several distinct steps, is to be restored and to be taken into use at the discretion of the local ordinary. By this, means the time of the catechumenate, which is intended as a period of suitable instruction, may be sanctified by sacred rites to be celebrated at successive intervals of time.

65. In mission lands it is found that some of the peoples already make use of initiation rites. Elements from these, when capable of being adapted to Christian ritual, may be admitted along with those already found in Christian tradition, according to the norm laid down in Art. 37-40, of this Constitution.

66. Both the rites for the baptism of adults are to be revised: not only the simpler rite, but also the more solemn one, which must take into account the restored catechumenate. A special Mass "for the conferring of baptism" is to be inserted into the Roman Missal.⁵

Despite the issuance of this decision, the Council Fathers were not overly concerned with the restoration of the catechumenate. They were more preoccupied with the nature of the liturgy itself and the role of the vernacular. They seemed ready to approve of the catechumenate largely for the sake of foreign lands and as long as it was

² Robert Duggan, "Conversion in the Ordo Initiationis Christianae Adultorum," (Ann Arbor Michigan: University Microfilms International, 1980), 13.

³ Duggan, 16.

⁴ Duggan, 16.

⁵ *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, nos. 64-66.

not made obligatory. Changes would take place in the coming years which would alter this perspective.⁶

On January 25, 1964, Pope Paul VI issued the *motu proprio Sacram Liturgiam*. In this message he announced that he would set up an appropriate organism for the implementation of the liturgical reforms mandated by the Council. On February 29, 1964 he established the *Consilium ad Exsequendam Constitutionem de Sacra Liturgia* with approximately 50 members and 200 consultants.⁷ The work of the committee was divided between 40 study groups or Coetus. Each had its own particular area of competency. It was Coetus 22 which dealt with the Roman Ritual and was entrusted with the revision of the baptismal rites and the restoration of the catechumenate. This group was the largest Coetus with twelve members. Balthasar Fischer and Jacques Cellier were the leaders of the Coetus.

A first schema of the proposal for the catechumenate was presented to the Consilium on November 19, 1965 accompanied by a masterful presentation from Professor Fisher. Fischer was able to clear up most difficulties that arose in discussion. A second schema was discussed with the Fathers and consultants of the Consilium and then presented to the Holy Father on March 18, 1966.⁸

Pursuant to this, several meetings were held and drafts of the document were prepared. The resulting document was sent to some fifty experimental centers throughout

⁶ Duggan, 65.

⁷ Ibid., 25.

⁸ Annibale Bugnini, *The Reform of the Liturgy, 1948-1975* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1980): 584-97.

the world during the summer of 1966. In October 1968, the responses from the experimental centers were received, processed and distributed to the Coetus. Reactions to the *Ordo* were generally favorable, but several suggestions were made. Further input was solicited and several more meetings were held before the final work was completed at a meeting in Luxembourg, September 10-14, 1969. The draft which was prepared for the Fall meeting of the Consilium was eventually approved at its final meeting in November 1969. The work of the Consilium had ended and the Congregation for Divine Worship circulated the text among the various Roman congregations. It was published with only minor alterations, on January 6, 1972.⁹ The English translation of this document was approved in 1974. The final version of the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* for use in the United States was published in 1988.

As regards the scrutiny rite in the *Ordo initiationis christianae adultorum*, it was the desire of Coetus 22 from the beginning to recapture as much as possible the rich possibilities offered by the Roman tradition for these rituals. This section of the *Ordo*, in fact, proved to be the most problematic and difficult to develop.¹⁰ During the experimental stage, the scrutinies received the most negative comment. Revision was a lengthy process which took place gradually over several drafts and meetings. The experimental rite was careful to consistently restore and renew the version of the ancient format for the scrutinies. The Gallican signations were deleted and replaced with the more ancient Roman custom of imposition of hands. A litany with invocations drawn

⁹ Duggan, 28.

from traditional sources was to be said immediately following the silent prayer. The Gelasian prayers used in the Roman Ritual were edited and made more congruent with the proper scripture readings for the Lenten Sundays, and the closing oration “*Aeternam ac justissiman...*” (eternal and most just) was restored to all three scrutinies.

Those who were part of the experimental stage (in 1966) requested changes for the scrutinies. This necessitated a reworking of these rites. The Coetus believed that a great deal of confusion existed about the significance of each individual scrutiny. Prayers were rewritten and adjustments were made. The final ordering of the scrutinies represents a significant evolution over a long period of time and study. The Coetus was careful to maintain the powerful expression of the divine action in the deepening conversion of the candidates. Particularly, great care was exercised to integrate the litanies and prayers of the scrutinies with the scriptural readings for each of the Sundays on which they were to be celebrated.

The Structure of the Scrutinies in the *Ordo*

The scrutinies are celebrated on the third, fourth and fifth Sundays of Lent during the celebration of the Eucharist. The readings of Cycle A are used. *Ordo Initiationis Christianae Adultorum* (OICA) n 161 specifies that the homily is to be directed to explain the meaning of the scrutiny in the light of the day’s liturgy and the candidates’ spiritual journey. The homily is one of the very important catechetical moments of the ritual. Even though the ritual actions on their own are catechetical, the ability of the

¹⁰ Duggan, 147.

celebrant to tie the celebration of the scrutiny rite to the day's readings and liturgy is essential for the catechesis of the elects and the whole assembly.

After the homily, the elect and their godparents come before the celebrant. Both the faithful and the elect are told to pray silently for a spirit of penance, a true sense of sin, and the liberty of God's children. It is only the elect who bow their heads or kneel. This differentiation is important for while all the assembly prays, the elect, who are not yet fully initiated, bow their heads and/or kneel. The litany for the elect follows (OICA, 163).

The two solemn prayers of exorcism which follow the litany are the most important elements of the scrutiny (OICA, n. 164). It was noted above that the revisions of the traditional prayers which were used in the experimental period were inadequate. These prayers were replaced with prayers more thematically tied in with the day's scriptures. The exorcism prayers were the topic of a considerable discussion and the draft of June 1969 contained a good deal of the material discussed in an explanatory note preceding the exorcism prayers. After these prayers the celebrant turns toward the elect and with his hands joined prays over them. The elect are then dismissed.

The Scrutiny Rite in the 1988 American Edition of the RCIA

The Introduction

The text of the scrutiny rite contains a lengthy introduction which explains both the nature and the purpose of the rite. Such a theological and pastoral introduction is one of the new features of the post-Vatican II rituals. The introduction begins, “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.”¹¹ These simple words affirm that this is a solemn rite and that it is to be celebrated on Sundays. It is interesting that the words say that it is “reinforced” by an exorcism, not that it consists of an exorcism. This indicates that the scrutiny consists of something more than the exorcism itself. The exorcism reinforces another process that takes place. The words express that the purpose is soul-searching and repentance, which above all have a spiritual purpose. There is no mention that the scrutiny consists of a test of readiness, particularly of knowledge.

The introduction goes on to say, “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.”¹² From these words it becomes apparent that the scrutiny has a purpose of moral or spiritual conversion. It mentions Satan for the first time, “For the scrutinies are celebrated in order to deliver the elect from the power of sin and Satan, to protect them against temptation and then give them strength in Christ, who

¹¹ *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 1988), no. 141.. Hereafter referred to as *RCIA*.

¹² *RCIA*, no.141.

is the way, the truth, and the life.”¹³ This statement points out a key difference between the medieval and modern scrutiny rite. It states that the rites are celebrated *to deliver the elect* from the power of sin and Satan, not to expel the power of Satan from them. This reality points to the difference in perception of Satan and the power of evil in the lives of the elect.

The first paragraph of the introduction continues, “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.”¹⁴ This is an interesting statement in that it refers to the “completion” of the conversion of the elect. Contemporary theology regards conversion as a life- long process, but in this context the rite must be referring to the immediate conversion to Christ which takes place though the catechumenal process up to this point. The elect have made an implicit decision to love God above all. The resolve and ability to live out that commitment is part of their primary conversion experience.

The next paragraph emphasizes that the elect are to progress in “genuine self-knowledge through serious examination of their lives.”¹⁵ Again this points to moral and spiritual conversion in the lives of the elect. It is stated that three scrutinies are celebrated in order to inspire a desire for purification and redemption by Christ that might not be as effective if it were only celebrated once. This is also historically consistent and significant. The introduction explores the scrutinies as a progression from the first to the

¹³ *RCIA*, no. 141.

third. First of all they are instructed gradually about the mystery of sin. Second their spirit is filled with Christ the Redeemer, who is the living water (first scrutiny), the light of the world (second scrutiny), and the resurrection and the life (third scrutiny). Through this progression, the elect should grow in their understanding of sin and their need for salvation in Christ.

The introduction describes the role of exorcism, which is relevant to this study:

In the rite of exorcism, 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 Savior.¹⁶

This paragraph shows the deprecatory nature of the present form of the rite. The elect are freed from the effects of sin and the influence of the devil. There is no question of the devil being addressed himself. He is behind the scenes doing his evil work and this rite seeks to strengthen the elect against his power and influence. This strength comes directly from the power of Christ that the elect have invited into their lives.

The following paragraph includes the role of the assembly in this ritual. It emphasizes the fact that the presiding celebrant should see to it that the faithful in the assembly will derive benefit from the ritual as well, particularly as they join in the intercessions for the elect. The role of the community is key not only in this ritual, but in the whole Rite of Initiation of Adults. Throughout the catechumenate the elect *and* the

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ *RCIA*, no. 142.

community are catechized as they observe and pray through the various liturgies that are part of the entire process. In the years since its promulgation, the baptismal catechumenate has become the basis for all catechesis in the church. By observing and participating in the transformation and formation of the elect, each member of the community grows in appreciation of their own Baptism and redemption in Christ. Much of this catechesis takes place through ritual, as is referred to in the document (no. 145).

The following paragraph emphasizes that the scrutinies should take place on the third, fourth and fifth Sundays of Lent and the readings with their chants are to be those given for the Lectionary for Mass, Year A. Permission is given to celebrate them on other Sundays of Lent or even on weekdays when necessary. In all cases the gospel of the Samaritan woman is to be read for the first, the gospel of the man born blind is for the second, and the gospel of Lazarus is for the third. These specific instructions give a syllabus for the catechesis of the period of purification and enlightenment. Each gospel has its own message and theological emphasis that is imparted to the elect and to the community as a whole.

Differences from the 1972 Latin Text

While the basic form and content of the RCIA are very similar to the 1972 text and the 1974 translation, there are several important differences. Stating that it is in the interest of pastoral utility and convenience, the English edition somewhat rearranges the contents of the *praenotanda* of the Latin *edition typica*. This rearrangement of sections

¹⁶ RCIA, no. 144.

does not omit anything from the Latin original, but the paragraphs are numbered differently.

There are also several adaptations in the 1988 addition. Anointing with the oil of catechumens has been removed from Step Three “Celebration of the Sacraments of Initiation,” and reserved for use in the period of the catechumenate and the period of purification and enlightenment.

A number of other rites have been approved for use in the USA as part of the 1988 text. These rites allow for adaptation to various pastoral circumstances. In the “First Step: Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens” (41-68), there is an optional “Presentation of a Cross” (74). This is followed by “Rites Belonging to the Period of the Catechumenate” (81-117). Here there is the inclusion of an optional parish rite, “Sending of the Catechumens for Election” (106-116), for use when the rite of election is to be celebrated by the bishop at a regional or diocesan celebration.

Other approved rites for the United States include “Christian Initiation of Children Who Have Reached Catechetical Age” (252-330), with an optional “Rite of Election” (277-290). There is an additional section on the “Preparation of Uncatechized Adults for Confirmation and Eucharist” (400-504). There are three optional rites for baptized but previously uncatechized adults: “Rite of Welcoming the Candidates” (411-433), “Rite of Sending the Candidates for Recognition by the Bishop and for the Call to Continuing Conversion” (434-458), and “Penitential Rite” (Scrutiny), (459-472).

Finally, there is an Appendix I in which “Additional (Combined) Rites” are located. These include the “Celebration at the Easter Vigil of the Sacraments of Initiation and of the Rite of Reception into the Full Communion of the Catholic Church” (331-367). The Appendix also contains three other combined rites.

The Ritual Structure and the Text of the Scrutinies in the 1988 Text

The scrutinies each follow the same outline. They take place between the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist. The outline is as follows:

LITURGY OF THE WORD

- Readings
- Homily
- Invitation to Silent Prayer
- Intercessions for the Elect
- Exorcism
- Dismissal of the Elect

LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST

Within the actual text of the ritual are the rubrics, which not only serve as directives for the presiding minister, but assist in the catechesis that is inherently part of the ritual. The texts and the readings for Mass are always those given for the scrutiny in the Missal and the Lectionary for Mass.

Each of these rubrics in the rite is catechetical. For example, the ritual reads: “After the readings and guided by them, the celebrant explains in the homily the meaning of the third scrutiny in the light of the Lenten liturgy and of the spiritual journey of the

elect.”¹⁷ This statement expresses the goal of the homily for the celebrant, but also sets the stage for what is to be experienced by both the elect and the community.

Following the homily is the invitation to silent prayer. The scrutiny rite itself is quite simple. However each part of the ritual is essential to achieving its purpose. If it is rushed through, a great deal of the meaning of the rite may be lost on both the elect and the community.

The elect are invited to come forth with their godparents and to stand before the celebrant. The community is invited to pray in silence that the elect will be given a spirit of repentance, a sense of sin and the true freedom of the children of God. Then the elect are invited to pray as well. They are encouraged to either bow their heads or to kneel down to pray. It is especially important that there is adequate time for silent prayer. The fact that the elect bow their heads or kneel down catechizes both them and the community about the serious nature of the ritual, the need for repentance, freedom from the power of sin and also of the power of prayer. God is officially invited into this situation.

Following the period of silent prayer, all stand for the intercessions for the elect. These intercessions are powerful vehicles of catechesis for all present. In the rite as it is written there are two options, A and B, which may be used depending on whether the general intercessions of the Mass are to be omitted or not. It is most effective, however,

¹⁷ *RCIA*, no 172.

if the group of the elect prepare the intercessions themselves during the week before while meditating on the gospel for the scrutiny.

Their meditation can focus on the individual needs of elect being initiated into the church, and the power of social sin as well. This is an exercise which is catechetical for them and also for those who hear and pray the intercessions at Mass. It is particularly powerful if the elect do not realize that the needs that they helped to formulate will be actually prayed as intercessions at the scrutiny rite. Reflection on each of the powerful gospels of the scrutiny rites offers a great deal of material to reflect upon for the formulation of these intercessions. It can also be particularly effective if they are sung at the Mass.

After the intercessions are the prayers of exorcism. The first part is addressed to God the Father. After this portion of the prayer is the laying on of hands. Next is the second portion of the prayer which is addressed to Jesus. Extensive comments on these prayers follow.

Commentary on the Scrutinies

In the introductory prayer to the intercessions, the celebrant asks that the grace of the sacraments they are about to receive will conform the elect to Christ in his passion and resurrection. The prayers that are included in the ritual emphasize freedom from sin and death and the faith to acknowledge the power of Christ in their lives. They are liberating and life-giving in emphasis. Thomas Morris emphasizes that in addition to

unmasking the deception of evil and sin in the lives of the elect, the focus of the scrutinies are toward life, freedom and salvation.¹⁸

The rubrics for this part of the ritual emphasize, however, that the intercessions may be adapted to fit various circumstances. These prayers, while relevant, are not directly tied to the themes of the gospel. Again, having the elect or the team prepare intercessions which express the personal and social nature of sin reflected in the gospel readings is most effective.

Below is an example of the intercessions for the first Sunday of Lent:

Celebrant:

Let us pray for these elect whom the Church has confidently chosen. May they successfully complete their long preparation and at the paschal feast find Christ in his sacraments.

A. Assisting minister:

That they may ponder the word of God in their hearts and savor its meaning more fully day by day, let us pray to the Lord:

R. Lord, hear our prayer.

Assisting minister.

That they may learn to know Christ, who came to save what was lost, let us pray to the Lord:

R. Lord, hear our prayer.

Assisting minister:

That they may humbly confess themselves to be sinners, let us pray to the Lord:

R. Lord, hear our prayer.

Assisting minister:

That they may sincerely reject everything in their lives that is displeasing and contrary to Christ, let us pray to the Lord:

R. Lord, hear our prayer.

¹⁸ Thomas Morris, *The RCIA: Transforming the Church* (Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist Press, 1989), 111.

Assisting minister:

That the Holy Spirit, who searches every heart, may help them to overcome their weakness through his power, let us pray to the Lord.

R. Lord, hear our prayer.

Assisting minister:

That the same Holy Spirit may teach them to know the things of God and how to please him, let us pray to the Lord:

R. Lord, hear our prayer.

Assisting minister:

That their families also may put their hope in Christ and find peace and holiness in him, let us pray to the Lord.

R. Lord, hear our prayer.

Assisting minister:

That we ourselves in preparation for the Easter feast may seek a change of heart, give ourselves to prayer, and persevere in our good works, let us pray to the Lord:

R. Lord, hear our prayer.

Assisting minister:

That throughout the whole world whatever is weak may be strengthened, whatever is broken restored, whatever is lost found, and what is found redeemed, let us pray to the Lord:

R. Lord, hear our prayer.¹⁹

These intercessions catechize those present about the power of sin in the lives of individuals and also the power of social sin in our world. The faithful are invited to transform their lives in powerful ways connected directly to the gospel teachings. In an article by Mark Francis, he emphasizes that the primary agent in any liturgical rite is

¹⁹ *RCIA*, no.153.

the assembly, or the people of God.²⁰ They learn and remember that sin and temptation are realities that each and every one of us deals with every day, not just the elect, but all of us.

The intercessions are a central part of the ritual in general but particularly as a catechetical tool. It is through the intercessions that a connection is made possible between the readings, the homily and the lives of the Christian faithful. Ideally the faithful learn and are transformed through this simple rite.

The exorcism prayers are also key elements of the scrutinies. As Duggan states, “This prayer is a good example of how these new compositions are expressive of the traditional dimensions of the scrutiny while still relying on the day’s scriptural lessons for their basic inspiration.”²¹

There are two options for exorcisms and the prayer which follows them. It is in these prayers that one observes the closest connection with the gospel reading. Each one of the secondary prayers contains a direct reference to the particular gospel reading of that day. As was emphasized above, it is important to notice that these prayers are deprecatory. Option A on the third Sunday of Lent is the only time Satan is mentioned directly. On the fifth Sunday of Lent the rite refers to him only as the spirit of evil. Elsewhere, Satan is referred to as the slavery of Satan or the cunning of Satan. But nowhere is Satan addressed directly.

²⁰ Mark Francis, “To Worship God in Spirit and in Truth: First Scrutiny,” in *Celebrating the Rites of Adult Initiation*, Font and Table Series, Victoria Tufano, ed. (Chicago: Liturgical Training Publications, 1992), 69.

²¹ Duggan, 152.

Below is example A of the prayer of exorcism for the first scrutiny:

The celebrant faces the elect and, with hands joined, says:

God of power,
you sent your Son to be our Savior.
Grant that these catechumens,
who, like the woman of Samaria, thirst for living water,
may turn to the Lord as they hear his word
and acknowledge the sins and weaknesses
that weigh them down.

Protect them from vain reliance on self
and defend them from the power of Satan.

Free them from the spirit of deceit,
so that, admitting the wrong they have done,
they may attain purity of heart
and advance on the way to salvation.
we ask this through Christ our Lord

Amen.

*Here, if this can be done conveniently, the celebrant lays hands on each of the elect.
Then, with hands outstretched over all the elect, he continues:*

Lord Jesus,
you are the fountain for which they thirst,
you are the Master whom they seek.
In your presence
they dare not claim to be without sin,
for you alone are the Holy One of God.

They open their hearts to you in faith,
they confess their faults
and lay bare their hidden wounds.
In your love free them from their infirmities
heal their sickness,
quench their thirst, and give them peace.

In the power of your name,
which we call upon in faith,

stand by them now and heal them,
 Rule over that spirit of evil,
 conquered by your rising from the dead

Show your elect the way of salvation in the Holy spirit,
 that they may come to worship the Father in truth,
 for you live and reign for ever and ever.
 Amen.²²

The first prayer makes the connection to the woman of Samaria, which is important liturgically. This mention revolves around the topic of thirst which is a key theme of this scrutiny. The prayer asks the elect to acknowledge the areas of sin which weigh them down. It is significant that the first scrutiny mentions Satan. This puts him front and center in the process of conversion, even though he is not mentioned again in the exorcism prayers. An important theme of this first prayer is the recognition by the elect that the power of sin has a strong role in their lives which they need to acknowledge in order to be free. So, while this prayer is addressed to God, it has a focus on the elect's realization of the power and existence of sin, evil and Satan.

Following this prayer, the celebrant may silently impose hands on each of the elect. Then, extending his hands over them, he continues with the second portion of the exorcism prayer. The second prayer is addressed to the Lord Jesus. In this prayer it is assumed that the elect have accepted the power of sin as expressed in the first prayer, for this second prayer states in the first section that they dare not claim to be without sin. In opening their hearts to Christ, they confess their faults. Satan here is referred to as the "spirit of evil." Both prayers end with mention of salvation and the second ends with

salvation in the Holy Spirit. This is important because that is the ultimate goal of the rituals, not so much the defeat of Satan, but the power of salvatory grace in the Holy Spirit.

It was indicated above that the Coetus wished to develop the scheme of the personal dimension of sin and evil in the first scrutiny. It becomes evident through reading these prayers how that develops and takes shape. The prayer follows the classical euchological structure, with an opening address to God and a reflective qualifier recalling the sending of his Son. “The request which follows on behalf of the candidates has another relative clause which evokes the parallel with the Samaritan woman in the day’s Gospel reading and then asks their acknowledgement that it is their own sins and weaknesses which burden them.”²³ This suggests that sin lies within one’s self. If sin lies within one’s self, then one finds salvation outside one’s self with the Lord.

This connection between sin and salvation is fairly clear in the prayer, which contains a rich variety of symbols. The images of vain self-reliance, self-deception and falsehood reflect the scriptural nature of the prayer. The biblical reality of the burden of personal sin is understood in the context of the reading from John. The drama of the conversion process that takes place in the life of the Samaritan women is almost encapsulated as it were in this short prayer in a very effective way. Duggan sees this as one of the strong points of the rite.²⁴

²² *RCIA*, n. 154.

²³ Duggan, 155.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

There is a proliferation of images in the prayer. Jesus is addressed as Lord, Fountain, Teacher and Holy One. He is invoked as the one who liberates, heals, refreshes thirst, gives peace, vanquishes evil, and guides to the Father. He is first addressed as the one who is longed for and sought after and then presented as the one who is all-holy and before whom our unworthiness is laid bare and our hidden sins revealed. Finally, he is appealed to as the one who can save and show the way to the Father.²⁵

Perhaps this is too rapid an exchange of images which are not directly connected with one another. The ability of this prayer to catechize effectively is somewhat compromised by the succession of images. Duggan claims that one benefit nevertheless, is that this short prayer is a lesson in Christology.²⁶ Nevertheless one can walk away with the firm idea that Jesus is the focus of the elect and their experience of this scrutiny.

Certain facts are clear from reading these scrutinies. There is a theme for each scrutiny and each exorcism is coordinated to express a particular view of the candidate's struggle with evil.

As noted above, the role of sin in the life of the individual is the theme of the first scrutiny. It is notable that the scripture utilized by the Coetus in their selection of each particular Sunday's theme does not exhaust the material present in the readings. They have chosen to take a narrower focus to reflect their thematic purpose.

²⁵ Duggan, 176.

²⁶ Ibid., 158.

The second scrutiny is celebrated on the Fourth Sunday of Lent and the prescribed reading is from Cycle A, the man born blind. A homily based on the scripture readings is essential to the ritual. The theme of sin in its social aspects, as a force exterior to the person was chosen for this particular scrutiny. Again, as above, the interpretation of the scriptural lessons represents a considerable narrowing of what could possibly be done in order to coordinate with the theme chosen.

Below are the exorcism prayers for the second scrutiny ritual, choice A:

The celebrant faces the elect and, with hands joined, says:

Father of mercy,
you led the man born blind
to the kingdom of light
through the gift of faith in your Son.

Free these elect
from the false values that surround and blind them.
Set them firmly in your truth,
children of the light for ever.

We ask this through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Here, if this can be done conveniently, the celebrant lays hands on each one of the elect.

Then, with hands outstretched over all the elect, he continues:

Lord Jesus,
you are the true light that enlightens the world.
Through your spirit of truth
free those who are enslaved by the father of lies.

Stir up the desire for good in these elect,
whom you have chosen for your sacraments.

Let them rejoice in your light, that they may see,
and, like the man born blind whose sight you restored,
let them prove to be staunch and fearless witnesses to the faith,
for you are Lord for ever and ever.

Amen.²⁷

These prayers are replete with references to the gospel of the day, the man born blind. The theme of light versus blindness exists throughout the prayers. In the second prayer there is a theme of being a staunch and fearless witness of the faith which arises after the sight of the man born blind is restored. Jesus cures us for a purpose, he cures us of the power of illness, sin and evil so that we may go forth and be his disciples, doing his will in all things. Christ is strongly identified as the light of the world which sets us free from the father of lies, a reference to Satan that is used only in these particular prayers. When one reads these two prayers as a whole the images of blindness, false values, and slavery to the father of lies are contrasted with true light, enlightenment, and restoration to Christ. This is a very effective means of creating a strong sense of connection throughout the scrutiny ritual.

Following the period of silent prayer, the litany is again recited. The celebrant's introduction signals the mood of the entire text with its call for the elect to stand firm in bearing witness to their faith.²⁸ In this scrutiny the first four intentions pertain to the elect, the remaining four concern their families, the community and the needs of the whole world. As might be expected given the theme of the scrutiny, there is much

²⁷ *RCIA*, n. 168.

²⁸ Duggan, 162.

language that deals with struggle. There is an image of fidelity in the face of resistance. There is also a marked emphasis on freedom. The emphasis is one of placing the focus on God as the active agent of the ritual, recognizing the inability of humans to overcome the powers of evil on their own. Duggan states: “The elect are envisioned as locked in a great struggle with forces beyond their power; we pray for their resistance, their perseverance, and ultimately for their deliverance at God’s hand.”²⁹ The whole theme is one of combat and there is very little, if any, illusion to their coming Baptism.

The formal prayer of exorcism underwent considerable revision even after the Consillium had given initial approval.³⁰ The prayer turned out to be a rich source of effective liturgy and as such it is clear and coherent.

There is a strong symbolic value to the story of the man born blind in this scrutiny. He gives a very effective example of a person who is caught in a web of evil which is not of his own making. As Duggan states, “evil is always prior to man, it is a condition into which we are born”³¹. Humankind is helpless in the face of evil and thus an exorcism is a “unilateral act of God”³² of which he is simply the recipient.

The text specifies the Father’s gifts and proposes two richly biblical symbols to express the nature of the Father’s action. The opening lines of this prayer contain beautiful symbols of belonging, mystical vision, and intimate personal knowledge of salvation. There is a connection of the plight of the elect with the man born blind that is

²⁹ Ibid., 163.

³⁰ Ibid., 171.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid, 166.

subtle, but present. The elect are still blind because they have not yet come to the fullness of faith.

The second request directed to the Father is to make the elect sons of light, firmly rooted in truth. The expression “children of light” hints a connection to their imminent Baptism. The prayer is brought to a climax using the images of truth, sonship and light. God’s action has a powerful effect over the candidates and offers them a victory of the above mentioned challenges to faith and virtue. After the “Amen” the celebrant continues with the second part of the exorcism with his hands extended over the elect. Again, we have a revised form of the exorcism in which the prayer is addressed directly to Jesus instead of to Satan. There is a noticeable theme of light as Jesus is recognized as the source of every person’s encounter with the light.

Two requests are made of Jesus. First of all is the request to liberate which has become a familiar theme in the scrutinies. The second request reflects the proximity of the elects’ coming initiation and refers to the nature of election. The two requests made of Jesus point to a final result which allows the prayer to end on a positive note. The goal of the prayer is an ongoing conversion that extends beyond the candidates’ reception of the sacraments.

In examining this second scrutiny it becomes apparent that the church is moving from Lent towards Easter. In this prayer just discussed there is only one mention of the Lenten struggle. The mood is definitely changing from Lenten struggle to the joyous mood of the Easter season. Both the first and second portions of the exorcism prayer

support the “Christ the light” theme. Both reflect that it is faith in Christ that leads to enlightenment and that Christ is the one who intervenes to bring the candidates to this faith.³³

The third scrutiny is to be held on the fifth Sunday of Lent with the readings from Cycle A, the story of the raising of Lazarus. The ritual again begins with the homily. From the notes of the Coetus, one can see that in this scrutiny they had the goal to focus on the mystery of sin in its most radical dimension: the corruption of death as the ultimate figure of evil.³⁴

Below are the exorcism prayers for the third scrutiny ritual, choice A:

The celebrant faces the elect and, with hands joined, says:

Father of life and God not of the dead but of the living,
you sent your son to proclaim life,
to snatch us from the realm of death,
and to lead us to the resurrection.

Free these elect
from the death-dealing power of the spirit of evil,
so that they may bear witness
to their new life in the risen Christ,
for he lives and reigns for ever and ever.

Amen.

Here, if this can be done conveniently, the celebrant lays hands on each one of the elect.

Then, with hands outstretched over all the elect, he continues:

Lord Jesus,
by raising Lazarus from the dead
you showed that you came that we might have life

³³ Duggan, 185.

³⁴ Ibid., 187.

and have it more abundantly.

Free from the grasp of death
those who await your life-giving sacraments
and deliver them from the spirit of corruption.

Through your Spirit, who gives life,
fill them with faith, hope, and charity,
that they may live with you always
in the glory of your resurrection
for you are Lord forever and ever.

Amen.³⁵

As would be expected, the prayers of the third scrutiny deal with the relationship between life and death. The prayer to the Father speaks of God as a Father of life, not of death, and speaks of the power of the Son to snatch us from the realm of death. In this particular prayer, Satan is referred to as the spirit of evil and a source of death. The prayer ends with a reference to the new life in the risen Christ, which again, is positive. Rita Ferrone is a well know leader in the Church as regards initiation. In an article on the third scrutiny, she emphasizes that the theme of the readings and of the ritual in general is “come and see.”³⁶ The disciples come and see that Lazarus is already in the tomb, but then they come and see the great miracle of his being raised. This is a joyful conclusion.

The prayer addressed to the Lord Jesus demonstrates similar contrasts between death and life. There is a whole concluding paragraph asking that through the Holy Spirit they will be filled with faith, hope and charity. This is the goal of these rituals: that the elect may have the grace to live the Christian message fully and with the power of life.

³⁵ *RCIA*, no. 175.

The rite states that if possible the celebrant lays hands on each one of the elect. Despite the tentative nature of this statement, when it is done it should be done very deliberately. Then, the celebrant says the second part of the prayer with his hands outstretched over all of the elect. Each of these gestures is powerful and is catechetical. The laying on of hands of course is an ancient tradition in the church, but even if one were not aware of that reality, the gesture is one of holiness and grace, setting this person apart as an individual, yet reminding that he or she is a member of the community as well.

Following the intercessions, the celebrant turns toward the elect and says the first prayer of exorcism. Duggan notes that this text, which first appeared as an alternate in one of the primary versions, replaces two earlier attempts.³⁷ Like the text in the previous two scrutinies, this prayer is addressed to the Father who is described in terms pertaining to this day's gospel reading. Emphasis is strongly placed on the Father as source of all life. Again, there is a theme of struggle, but this time it is focused on the life/death continuum.³⁸ This is a very dramatic prayer which challenges the elect to understand the significance of their conversion to Christ. As future Christians, it is their role to spread the word and the lifestyle that they have embraced through their initiation.

The second prayer of exorcism is again christocentric. It becomes obvious that Jesus is the agent of new life. Jesus is addressed as Lord and then the Lazarus miracle is

³⁶ Rita Ferrone, "Lazarus Come Out! Third Scrutiny," in *Celebrating the Rites of Adult Initiation*, 107.

³⁷ Duggan., 174.

³⁸ Ibid., 188.

called forth to memory. The opening prayer emphasized the pervasiveness of death's powers and in this prayer there is a strong emphasis on life that comes from Jesus.³⁹

The core of the prayer consists of three requests. The first two follow the same pattern and say basically the same thing. There is an important description of the candidates seeking life through the sacraments. As Duggan notes, the elect are being reminded and taught that the sacraments of initiation which they will be receiving contribute the means by which the Lord acts to free them from evil/sin/death.⁴⁰ The third request offers a fitting climax to the prayer. The Lord is asked to bestow on the candidates faith, hope and love. The final goal of the candidates' spiritual journey points to the Easter experience and on to their lives as fully initiated Catholic Christians.⁴¹

There are certain facts that become obvious in studying the scrutiny rituals as contained in the *RCIA*. The scrutinies attempt to ritualize the process of conversion which takes place interiorly. As such the scrutinies also catechize on the process of conversion. The Coetus went to great length to make these simple rituals meaningful and cohesive. While they succeeded more in certain aspects than others, one can see a definite progression from individual sin, to social sin to the ultimate power of evil which is death. Personal sin must be recognized first as a reality within the self. Next one comes to understand the social nature of sin, the "otherness." Finally one must come to understand sin as the source of death.⁴²

³⁹ Duggan, 190.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 178.

⁴¹ Ibid., 190.

⁴² Duggan, 191.

All of the scrutinies maintain a Trinitarian framework. The exorcism prayers address the Father and the Son, but the agency of the Spirit operates throughout. The central role of Christ as the giver of all life and the key to the struggle with sin and evil is made apparent, particularly in the second portion of the exorcism prayers, which are addressed to Jesus instead of the devil.

A Key Catechetical Element: The Homily of the Scrutiny Rite

As we are aware, the period of Lent is a time for spiritual pruning. When one prunes a vine, it does not destroy the vine, it simply trims it so it may grow more fruitfully. Similarly, Lent is not a time of self-punishment but of preparation. In order to become followers of Christ, the elect will undergo this process of pruning, which can be a very painful experience and it must be carried out properly and correctly.⁴³ Thus, the church does not want it to be the work of an individual or individuals who are arbitrary judges. Spiritual pruning must involve the consultation of many. This is why the scrutinies are celebrated after the liturgy of the word of God. The three gospels become the criteria for the scrutinies. Jesus is encountered as the living water, as the light, and as new life. Through these three gospels the church asks the elect if they are truly prepared to seek Christ in these three roles. Contrary to the world which asks us what we can do with our lives, the Gospel asks the elect and asks us what we can do to bring about the kingdom of God.

⁴³ Elio Capra, "Is It Really Lent without the Scrutinies?" *Catechumenate* 25 (March 2003): 10

God not only scrutinizes the hearts of the elect, but also the hearts of each of those gathered in the assembly. They too must allow the three Lenten gospels to uncover and heal. Thus it is important and essential that the homily that takes place as the beginning of the scrutiny rite be an effective means of catechesis and conversion for the whole community present. James Dunning, the founder of the North American Forum on the Catechumenate, presents a commentary about a “shared homily” in *Echoing God’s Word*.⁴⁴ A shared homily differs from a dialogue with the faithful. A shared homily is one in which the homilist engages in a true “conversation” with Scripture, a conversation that is essential for a meaningful homily on the scrutiny readings. This conversation with Scripture is one of the main themes of this work which focuses on the conversionary power of Scripture in the catechumenate.

The first fact in preparing a homily for these rituals is to acknowledge that Jesus is essential to the journey of faith. Like his Father, he calls forth and sustains all life. Jesus recreates the believer through the gift of faith and in doing so he relieves thirst, restores sight and brings new life into the world. Because Jesus was sent by the Father, He has the power to reveal the essential truth of the journey of faith.⁴⁵

The second fact is that the image of betrothal, which is a clear theme in the first scrutiny rite, is actually a theme in all three.⁴⁶ This theme implies a layer of mutuality in relationships and in life. Jesus is the first to call, to heal and to bring faith, but once he

⁴⁴ James Dunning, *Echoing God’s Word* (Arlington, VA: North American Forum on the Catechumenate, 1993), 178.

⁴⁵ Dunning, 179.

acts, he is faithful to the believer, especially in difficult times. But of course the faithful must also respond to the call of Jesus. It is not a one way street. This response is gradual as the person grows in faith. It does have a price, however. Discipleship is not free. With the call comes the sending forth to spread the word to others. This can be difficult and arduous at times but is a necessary part of the spiritual journey.⁴⁷

The third theme is one of realized eschatology. Jesus is here, yet distant and growing ever closer.⁴⁸ In the scrutiny readings Jesus is revealed as prophet, Messiah, savior of the world, Son of Man, and, ultimately the resurrection and the life. He is ever coming toward the disciple who is in turn coming into faith.

The homily of each week's reading should keep in mind these themes and should lead to a crescendo as the elect move toward reception of the Easter sacraments. The readings are so rich that it is impossible to completely exhaust their imagery in one homily. The homily will be most effective when it works in connection to the prayers from the scrutiny, filling out the gaps in these prayers. It is important for the effectiveness of the ritual that there is interaction between the gospel and the prayer texts.⁴⁹

The opening prayer for the third Sunday of Lent refers to Christ as the "second Adam." There is interplay between the material world and the spiritual world. The Samaritan woman goes from her physical need to a level of spiritual fulfillment. Her

⁴⁶ Christopher Renz, "A Liturgical Approach to Preaching the Scrutinies," *Catechumenate* (Nov 2000): 20.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 22.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

physical thirst gives way to her spiritual thirst. One can perceive this reality as the material world being redeemed by the Second Adam.⁵⁰

It is useful to compare the prayer texts with the gospel on several levels. The prayer opens by emphasizing the need for Christ in the journey of faith. The Samaritan woman's situation is to become that of the elect. She freely confesses her sin and she asks for help from this stranger whom she has never seen before. Like her, the elect must open their hearts, confess their faults and lay bare their wounds.⁵¹ The acts on the part of the elect are compared with the acts of Christ in the gospel reading. The prayer of exorcism implies that Jesus will work in the lives of the elect just as he did in the life of the Samaritan woman. The scrutinies seek to drive out sin, however, they also have a positive dimension of strengthening the good.

Finally the prayer ends with the reminder that the elect are on a journey to salvation. This is also a basic theme in all three of the gospels of John. The individual characters in the gospel stories are moving from sin and the power of Satan toward salvation. The scrutinies help them to realize this journey in faith.

From the comparison between the prayer texts and the story of the Samaritan woman it is clear that the theme of betrothal is neglected. This is an important point to note for two different reasons. Firstly, knowledge of this relationship offers comfort and strength to the elect as they proceed on a journey that will have temptations and pitfalls. Secondly, there is a sense of mutuality between the elect and Christ as they proceed on

⁵⁰ Renz, 24.

this journey. They have a desire for healing, but this desire carries with it certain responsibilities. The theme of betrothal highlights this interplay of roles.⁵²

In examining the prayers for the second scrutiny, one notices the overwhelming thematic of light and darkness which is in direct correspondence to the theme of the gospel. The elect are lead from blindness to light and true faith in Jesus. The second petition demonstrates the struggle of the blind man who endured challenges to his developing faith when questions were posed by the Pharisees and Jews. With those encounters he had the choice of either affirming or denying his faith.⁵³ He is willing to risk ostracism for the sake of his newly found faith and this is a sign of his conviction. The prayer to Jesus asks that the elect might have that same conviction as witnesses to the faith. This provides a vague connection to the theme of betrothal encountered in the first scrutiny.

The theme of being a fearless witness for Christ highlights an essential point of all three of the scrutiny gospels. The disciple of Jesus is always sent out to proclaim the good news. The prayer to Jesus reminds them that they have been chosen for healing. Like the blind man they must have the strength to go out and testify to their own healing.⁵⁴

It is interesting to note that the proper relationship between physical illness and the spiritual illness is clarified in the beginning of the prayer to the Father. As the blind

⁵¹ Renz, 24.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid., 25.

⁵⁴ Renz, 25.

man's healing brings about a spiritual insight that leads him away from the darkness of false values, so too the elect are healed in the power of freedom. This theme is also evident in the prayer to the Son in which there is a reference to enslavement by the father of lies. As one rejects the darkness of false values, one will be enlightened by the spirit of truth. What the blind man knows and proclaims on a physical level leads him to deeper and deeper spiritual insights. In contrast the Pharisees false insights lead them more into sin.

Christopher Renz, Dominican teacher and author, notes several points for the preacher in this comparison. One is that the emphasis on betrothal fidelity, notable in the first scrutiny, is missing. The man born blind is consistently faithful in proclaiming the truth of who is Jesus. Through this fidelity he is thrown out of the synagogue. Discipleship has risks and costs. But Jesus is always faithful to the disciple and this never fails. This assurance of the constant presence of the Lord is another theme of this second gospel reading. Jesus sought out the blind man after he had been thrown out of the temple and drew him into a deeper understanding of the Messiah.⁵⁵ The elect should take note of this and remember that Jesus will always seek them out in their times of challenge and distress. He will always be faithful and so should they.

Another point for the preacher is that the blind man's encounter is grace-filled, just as the elect's encounter with Jesus is in the scrutiny rite. This power is immediately tangible to them and is part of a promise of fidelity guaranteed to all Christ's faithful.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 26.

The third scrutiny, when properly prepared, is the highlight of the two previous rites. The goal of the rite is to provide the community with the clearest and most concise experience of Jesus as resurrection and life. The prayers for the Mass propers offer little assistance along these lines on this particular week. There is only vague reference to resurrection. The prayers of exorcism offer the homilist the possibility of more insights. Each of the prayers has strengths and weaknesses. The preacher will have to decide on which points to emphasize in his homily.⁵⁶

Option A emphasizes the danger associated with belief in Jesus. Satan wishes to wrest us away from Jesus and evil has a power that brings corruption and death, but the resurrection shows forth Christ's greater power. This option also makes an important connection between the sacraments of initiation and the role of sending or mission that issues forth from them. The elect need not fear the trials of their faith and the death it demands, because life in Christ will conquer.⁵⁷ Option B develops more fully the relationship between the resurrection and the Father's glory. The goal of the preacher should be to nourish the momentum of this last scrutiny rite towards the Easter sacraments. More than in the first two scrutinies, there is a very energetic prayer text to enhance the homily's momentum. The preacher is encouraged to create a lively exchange between the readings, the homily and the scrutiny. This leads to the most effective catechesis on the part of everyone present.

⁵⁶ Renz, 26.

The Perspective of Sin and Satan in the 1988 Rite

In comparing the medieval and present rites, the most obvious difference is the nature of the adjurations that were imprecatory in medieval times and of deprecatory today. It is clear through the prayers of the rituals that the church's perspective on the role of Satan in the world has changed. It is important to explore the understanding of sin and Satan in the 1988 rites in order to gain a proper perspective on how the change has affected the rituals.

Despite the modern view of Satanic possession and the role of the devil in sanctification, the Church was still dealing with the concept of possession when it took on the task of reforming the baptismal rite for both infants and adults. It was in 1962 that the first of a series of new rites for adult Baptism appeared. The Sacred Congregation of Rites published an optional version of the adult service divided into seven sessions which corresponded to the seven scrutinies of the old order.⁵⁸ A renunciation of Satan and profession of faith was included in the first session and repeated in the final one which took place on Holy Saturday.

It is interesting to note that the first set was eliminated in the first draft promulgated by the Second Vatican Council for the reform of the liturgy.⁵⁹ Change was set in motion when in 1963 *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (67) ordered that the rite of Baptism for infants be translated into the vernacular. The exorcisms in the rite implied that the

⁵⁷ Renz, 28.

⁵⁸ Sacred Congregation of Rites, "Additiones et variationes in Rituali Romano circa ordinem baptismi adultorum," 16 April 1962. *Acta Apotolicae Sedis* 54 (1962).

child was possessed by Satan. This became a source of concern. In Ireland they dealt with this problem by leaving the formulas in Latin.⁶⁰

The exsufflation ceremony at the beginning of the adult rite was made optional in the draft of October, 1965. Kelly notes that the explanation was that recent converts from agnosticism would not yet have an aptly developed faith so as to permit them to perceive the influence of spiritual powers and accept the sign of exsufflation.⁶¹ It was noted that others, however, such as converts from animism were truly in need of such an exorcism and would understand its form.⁶² As a result, the form for the rite was somewhat modified, but the devil was still addressed: “The Lord repels you, devil, by the breath of his mouth and orders you to depart, because his kingdom has drawn near.”⁶³ According to the accompanying explanation, this formula makes it clear that the Lord, whose kingdom has come, repels the devil, not the priest and certainly not his breath. The words “from him” were deliberately left out, lest one think that the person is possessed, however I believe that this is unclear and still implied.

It was believed that by the time the candidates were to be brought to the scrutinies, they were all to be adequately prepared to be told about the devil, and also to hear the devil addressed and denounced in formulas modeled on the traditional exorcisms. In this case the command to “go out and depart” was changed simply to

⁵⁹ Robert D. Duggan, “Conversion in the *Ordo Initiationis christianae adultorum*,” *Ephemerides liturgicae* 96 (1982): 57.

⁶⁰ Kelly, 262.

⁶¹ This fact was noted by Balthasar Fischer in the report of August 1965 “De initiation Christiana adultorum,” *Notitiae* 3: (1967), 55-70.

⁶² Duggan, *Ephemerides liturgicae*, 229.

“depart.’ This change was made so as to avoid the implication of actual diabolic possession. Again, I do not find this change sufficient.

The members of the Coetus came to the same conclusion: any sort of address to the devil would imply physical possession. Balthasar Fischer was the chief spokesman for the members of the Coetus and he later explained this view: “Such an utterance cannot but suggest the presence here – and practically speaking, that means in this candidate for Baptism, on this truly ‘innocent’ infant – of the Devil, who has to give way so that the Holy Spirit can enter.”⁶⁴

We do not know exactly what Augustine believed about the role of Satan in the lives of the elect. However, his plentiful works offer many clues. As stated earlier, I proposed that Augustine believed that Satan was somehow present in the life of the catechumen, or at least Satan had a much stronger role in their life before Baptism. According to the anthropology of Augustine, which we can see elaborated in the following quote by Harmless, there is an acknowledgement that Baptism makes the struggle with evil and Satan considerably easier:

In other words, for Augustine, baptism marked the forging of a new interiority. No longer would the *competentes* be so racked by this *agon* with Satan, by the chaos and disorder of earthly life. Rather, they would have the divine life implanted within their hearts; they would enjoy its power pulsing through their bodies; their hearts would no longer mirror only the tumult and transience of earthly life, but would begin to reflect the harmony and constancy of

⁶³ Duggan, *Ephemerides liturgicae* 96, 229.

⁶⁴ Balthasar Fischer, “Baptismal Exorcism in the Catholic Baptismal Rites after Vatican II,” *Studia Liturgica* 10 (1974): 48-55.

the upperworldly, that ordered procession of the stars and spheres of heaven.⁶⁵

Thus, the change in the modern rite from imprecatory to deprecatory is of considerable importance. Fischer summarizes this difference as follows: “We no longer speak to the Devil (considered as being present); we speak with God about the Devil (still seriously concerned as personal).”⁶⁶ Duggan says that the “more theologically correct” mode of the final form of the exorcistic rituals “refuses to envision the Devil as being present. The ‘myth’ of an actually present Devil has been substituted by a more reflectively aware form of expression.”⁶⁷

It may be inferred that Fischer does not wish to imply that the baptismal candidate may be indeed possessed by the devil. Thus he and the members of the Coetus may have erred on the side of caution, depending on one’s perspective. From his perspective, Kelly believes that because of these changes and the deprecatory nature, one can no longer call the formulas exorcisms in any traditional sense.

Fischer notes that the church has taken a middle of the road position between a traditionalistic taking over of the archaic formulae and a modernistic reduction to meaninglessness religious convictions.⁶⁸ By keeping addresses about Satan, and by keeping the renunciation, the church retains the idea that Satan exists as a person, not just as evil, but it realizes that Satan does not reside within the person.

⁶⁵ Harmless, 273-274.

⁶⁶ Ibid. 53.

⁶⁷ Duggan, *Ephemerides liturgicae* 96, 231.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 55.

The new ritual for adults was issued in Latin in the beginning of 1972. Like the ritual for infants, it suppresses the demonic aspects of the ceremony. The devil is no longer addressed and plays no part in the ritual except as someone who is talked about. The scrutinies follow the ancient form in giving a prominent place to exorcism. Kelly believes that the formula of the first scrutiny is not so much exorcistic as apotropaic. He sees the words much as the final statement of the Our Father. The provisional English version mistranslates, “Command the spirit of evil *to leave them*,” which Duggan claims is adding the sort of phrase that the authors of the rite were careful to delete.⁶⁹

In the second scrutiny, the celebrant asks Christ to deliver all those who suffer under the yoke of the father of falsehood, and in the final scrutiny, the elect seek deliverance from the death-dealing power of the malign spirit, from death itself and from the spirit of depravity.⁷⁰ The existence of Satan is still presupposed in these rites, as is his responsibility for original sin. But there is no longer the repeating confrontation with the Devil that was so prominent in the medieval rites. The fact that these literal exorcisms have been removed from the present rite may correspond to their inability to reflect a modern form of demonology. This is a discrepancy that Kelly believed that Augustine decided to live with. I do not see any discrepancy in Augustine’s thought.

The differences in demonology between the medieval and present rites outlined above are significant in terms of the catechesis of the rite. Even though words themselves are only part of the catechetical nature of a ritual, they are nevertheless an

⁶⁹ Duggan, *Ephemerides liturgicae* 97: 175-176.

important part. The fact that Satan is addressed directly in the medieval rite, the use of goatskin, and the whole attitude of the celebration are significant aspects of the ritual which catechize the elect about Satan, sin, and salvation. As Kelly notes, there is a level of dramatization in the medieval rite that is not present today. Whether drama is an asset or not remains to be seen, however, one cannot deny its presence. The context in which Satan is referred to in the present rite, is not only less dramatic, but it presents a totally different view of demonology.

As was mentioned above, exactly what St. Augustine believed about the true presence of Satan in the person of the elect cannot be known with certainty.

Suppositions, however, can be made. There is a strong possibility that the dramatic nature of the rite catechized the elect in a manner that assumed that Satan was actually present in some form. The scrutiny ritual, accompanied by the exsufflation, was made up of powerful symbolic acts that must have had a considerable effect upon the spirituality of the elect.

Another quote by Harmless helps us to understand how Augustine viewed the dynamic:

Here again, Augustine speaks of the body as the locus of the war. As he saw it, Satan might use the *competentes*' own bodies against them as if they were an armory still under his control. Thus by their asceticism the *competentes* would try and wrest their bodies from the possession of Satan and return them to the armory of God. For this, they

⁷⁰ Duggan., 78.

needed to muster formidable powers to counteract those of Satan.⁷¹

In the present rite, Satan does not hold center stage, even though he is mentioned in the three scrutinies. Conversion is the operative word today. The elect are encouraged to examine their own lives and the life of society to see where sin exists. The catechumenate process is placed in the context of “journey.” In this portion of their journey, the elect are encouraged to reflect on the power of sin in their lives, more so than on the author of sin, Satan. Thus they are catechized about the relationship of sin in the journey of conversion.

Sin, Journey and Conversion in the 1988 Edition of the Scrutinies

As Catholic Christians we are all on a journey of conversion. How transformative that journey is depends largely upon our openness to the power of grace. The persons who enter the catechumenate process and eventually become catechumens and elect, are hopefully experiencing conversion. One cannot talk about the catechumenate process without talking about conversion. The process of preparation for and experiencing the scrutinies can be a particularly powerful time of conversion and grace.

Conversion can be defined as “the transformation of the way that we experience ourselves, others, the world and the universe.”⁷² Those who undergo conversion shall never be the same again. They are completely changed by the power of the Holy Spirit.

⁷¹ Harmless, 271.

⁷² Edward Braxton, “Dynamics of Conversion,” in *Conversion in the Catechumenate*, Robert Duggan, ed. (Ramsey, New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1984), 110.

During the catechumenate process, the catechumens ideally journey through several different forms of conversion including religious, Christian, ecclesial, moral and intellectual. Perhaps the form of conversion that is the most relevant to the scrutiny rituals is that of Christian conversion. Through the process of Christian conversion, one's relationship with Jesus moves from being someone that is present only in stained glass windows, to someone who walks with you each day on one's Christian journey.

Even though there is a considerable amount of focus in the scrutiny rituals on sin and Satan, these are obstacles to coming to know the true person of Jesus Christ through the grace of the Holy Spirit. The elect are on a journey that will lead them to an actual encounter with Christ in the sacrament of Baptism. The scrutiny ritual seeks to free them from the powers of sin and evil which can come between their souls and the person of Christ. As Christ becomes more and more real to them, the power of sin and Satan will be diminished. The scrutiny ritual is an important step on that journey of conversion.

Of course moral conversion is also extremely important and related to the scrutiny rites. Through the catechumenate the catechumens learn that morality is not just about following certain rules and regulations, but it is about fully putting on Christ. Moral conversion is about living outwardly the values that are inscribed in one's heart.⁷³ There is and always will be a struggle along these lines, but the scrutiny ritual seeks to strengthen the elect to win that battle. As the elect turn toward Christ through the power of grace, they turn away from sin and its control in their lives.

The journey of conversion does not end for the elect with the celebration of Baptism. As was mentioned earlier, we are all on a journey of conversion. The scrutiny rituals offer opportunities for conversion for the assembly as well. As mentioned by Duggan, “Conversion is a gift of grace mediated to a particular individual, through a particular community and both aspects deserve their proper attention.”⁷⁴ There is a revolving dynamic at work here. The elect are strengthened on their journey of conversion through the faith and witness of the community and the community is strengthened on their journey of conversion through the power of the witness of the elect. Grace has the power to triumph over sin and the scrutiny ritual celebrates that victory.

Excursus: For Whom is the Modern Scrutiny Rite Intended?

In the present catechumenate process there are questions to be asked and issues to be raised and addressed that did not pertain to the medieval catechumenate. In attempting to discuss some of these concerns, one can also demonstrate how the modern rite attempts to form and transform in its own unique manner.

It was clear for whom the medieval rite was intended. It was for the elect who had made a decision to become Christian. Coming before the Protestant Reformation, there was no question of people coming from other Christian denominations. While there was a question of rebaptism of heretics coming back into the faith, this was discussed and

⁷³ Braxton, 114.

⁷⁴ Robert Duggan, “Sociological Perspectives on Conversion,” in *Conversion and the Catechumenate*, 138.

resolved in a manner that was outside the realm of the catechumenate in general and the scrutiny rite in particular.

Today the situation is quite different and it offers challenges to the minister on a pastoral level. Sometimes families come to a parish with mixed situations. Perhaps the father is Roman Catholic and the mother is Protestant. The children who are all over the age of seven years old have not been baptized. One could come up as many scenarios as there are families. The point is that these situations have caused ministers to examine what exactly is the nature of the scrutiny rite and how does it form and transform. Is it only appropriate for the unbaptized? What does that say to the remaining members of a family? Could a form of the scrutiny rite include the already baptized? What does the rite say about sin, conversion and repentance depending upon how and with whom it is celebrated? In this section of the chapter I will attempt to address some of these questions, focusing particularly on how these issues pertain to the catechetical nature of the rite.

Michael Marchal has written a considerable number of articles about the scrutiny rites and for whom they are celebrated. In one article in the 1993 issue of *Catechumenate*, he reflected that the different parts of the present scrutiny called the elect to repentance and conversion. He agrees that the current rite presumes that the scrutiny rites are for the unbaptized only. He wonders, however, whether the candidates for full communion should be included even though they have their own penitential rite on the Second Sunday of Lent. He also wonders about the penitents involved in the

Remembering Church process and those adult Catholics who slipped through the cracks.⁷⁵

Marchal seeks guidance from our past, but cautions that we are dealing with new situations that did not exist in the past and we must not attempt to canonize that past. Leaving aside the adapted and combined rites, the basic core of the *RCIA* has clearly been reworked. Rituals that were part of the celebrations have been eliminated. The drink of water and honey and milk at the Easter Vigil are gone. As was demonstrated in Chapter 3 above, there are many differences that existed between rituals for the scrutiny rites in different parts of the world. Each church adapted to local circumstances and customs. Some of the Sundays were different and even the gospels used were different in Milan. Thus, even though the medieval world did not face our modern challenges, the way that the scrutinies were celebrated was certainly not uniform throughout the world. It is true, however, that a broad spectrum of churches placed an emphasis on the scrutiny rite sometime during the last four weeks of Lent.

In the medieval world, the Church was faced with two similar circumstances. First, similar kinds of people were presenting themselves for initiation. Many came from a Mediterranean culture where slavery was regarded as an economic essential, where various types of marriage existed, divorce was obtained easily, and adultery was condoned for men. These are only some of the moral challenges that existed for the catechumenate ministers of that time. Carried back in time we can perhaps see the

⁷⁵ Michael Marchal, "A Different View of the Scrutinies: Whom Are They For?" *Catechumenate* (January

imprecatory exorcism as appropriate and probably regard many of the catechumens as moral monsters.⁷⁶

A second point that Marechal makes is that in approaching the scrutiny rite of medieval times one needs to appreciate the nature of the membership of the church those catechumens were preparing to enter. It was composed significantly of those who had been through the same initiatory process. Adult conversion was the norm. Ordinary Christians were quite different from their neighbors. Unlike the situation in our Western culture, many people were pagans and engaged in pagan practices. Thus one can see that the churches placed an emphasis on some form of scrutiny because they had to pray for those who were coming over from a sinful world.

In contrast, the situation today is quite unique. We now face a number of people who have shared in one, two or three of the sacraments of initiation in various Christian denominations. Thus, very distinct pastoral decisions have to be made regarding the people asking for initiation. Marchal suggests that this goes beyond sorting out who has been through which ritual and which ritual one needs to participate in.⁷⁷

Because of the influence of Christianity on Western society for so many centuries, most people who present themselves are basically decent human beings. Generous, kind, and hard-working, many of them present themselves to the Church because of an emptiness they feel, a sort of hunger for a deeper relationship with God. Many of these

1993): 20. Remembering Church is a process somewhat similar to the catechumenate process which exists for Catholics who have been away from their faith and wish to return to the Church.

⁷⁶ Marchal, 22.

⁷⁷ Marchal, 22.

people, it is sure, are subtly enmeshed in the sinfulness of the culture. The initiation process challenges them to engage in reflection and repentance on their journey of conversion. The heavy work of conversion has already been done as regards basic morality. They do not need to learn about basic decency, but they need to hear the gospel and receive the strength of the Spirit in their lives.

The second challenging change mentioned by Marchal is the differing character of the membership of the Church. Most members are now cradle Catholics. We come with varying amounts of knowledge about the faith and varying degrees of commitment toward it. But whatever the case, catechesis for most people today is postbaptismal. We, too, need to hear the gospel and be empowered by the Spirit as adults. We are all in need of catechesis by and through our rituals of initiation. Marchal thus suggests that perhaps scrutinies could be meaningful and useful not just for those preparing for initiation but for all believers marked on Ash Wednesday.⁷⁸

He describes his imagined scenario as follows: On the three Sundays in Lent after the homily, the presider would invite any of the “special” people present (those asking for any form of initiation) to come forward with their sponsors. Then all the faithful would be invited to be aware of their common sinfulness and together to kneel down and pray. The individual intentions and the refrain for the intercessions would be in the first person plural rather than the third, not “for them” but “for us.” Even the concluding prayer could be adapted to include those present. Only the strictly exorcistic prayer

⁷⁸ Marchal, 23.

would focus on the elect. This is an interesting scenario. As Marchal states, the Lenten journey might start on Ash Wednesday for the ordinary faithful and on the First Sunday for the catechumens and candidates, but the entire church needs to walk that journey together. “After all, we all have the same destination: the renunciation of sin and the profession of faith before we all experience the water of rebirth in some way at the Easter Vigil.”⁷⁹

Liturgy and liturgical practices are continually evolving. Whether or not a scenario as described above will become a norm in the Church someday remains to be seen. It is interesting to explore, however, in terms of catechesis. The above scenario teaches something much different than the current one. The elect are not singled out to the same degree, but are already observed as having something in common with all of the faithful, which they do. Transformation takes place or has the goal of taking place on a more uniform level throughout the congregation.

The current rite certainly has the goal of catechizing the whole congregation, not just the elect, but in the above detailed scenario the message is more direct and all encompassing. The church has two sacraments to deal with sin, namely Baptism and Penance. The way the situation is now, the elect deal with sin through the scrutinies and through the waters of the font; the already baptized deal with sin through the Sacrament of Penance. The same kind of reflection that enables all members of the community to share in the scrutinies does not propose the neglect of the Sacrament of Penance. It just

⁷⁹ Ibid., 23.

puts sin and conversion in a different Lenten context. In the second form of the Sacrament of Penance the community has a role in the process. Whether the second form of penance is used or not, there has been a communal nature to sin since the times of the early church. The liturgical rites since Vatican II, including the scrutinies seek to restore this communal aspect. This statement leads to another issue that is being discussed among pastoral leaders that also pertains to the catechetical nature of the rite: what is the relationship between scrutinies and confession?

One of the changes that has occurred since the revival of the catechumenate process is the way that the faithful perceive sacraments and sacramentality. In the past sacraments were often considered a means to sacralize secular life.⁸⁰ A new perception of sacraments has developed from the pastoral experience of the catechumenate process. In that process, ritual events are celebrated at various times, not just at one time. They occur in steps, not all at once. They are celebrated in one's journey of conversion in a community of faith. The goal is not just the reception of the sacrament, not just membership in the Roman Catholic Church, but also the conversion that takes place before, during, and after the sacramental moment. What one learns from this process and how one is formed and transformed is more developed and complete. People are formed who are not looking forward to a special "moment" but who are called to be apostles and witnesses to the world.⁸¹ They celebrate this calling at the Eucharist and it is the Eucharist which is the highpoint of the process for the catechumens: "The

⁸⁰ James Lopresti, "Scrutinies or Confession," *Catechumenate* (March, 1987): 14.

catechumenate, then, equals whatever it takes to gather new apostles and witnesses at the Eucharist.”⁸²

One of the gifts of the restoration of the catechumenate is the rediscovery of a deep sense of sacramentality that strongly characterized the early Church. Human life and worship were bound up with one another in ways that were strangely lost as the Church proceeded into the Middle Ages. James Lopresti, a liturgist and initiation scholar, acknowledges this but he claims that there is a retreat from this understanding of sacramentality as regards baptized, uncatechized adults. The ritual process is adjusted for them throughout the process, but Lopresti sees a significant awkwardness developing during Lent when “penitential services should be arranged in such a way as to prepare these adults for the celebration of the sacrament of penance.”⁸³

Lopresti asks the question of whether or not the scrutinies are sufficient pastoral practice for everyone. This is an interesting question, given the analysis that we engaged in above. Some would claim that the scrutinies are the present-day form of the classical prebaptismal exorcisms. If this is the case, then the scrutiny rite would not be appropriate for the already baptized. As was explored above, however, the scrutinies are far more penitential and less exorcistic than the ancient rituals. “True, they are prayers addressed to God for release from the bonds of sin, but must they strictly refer only to the prebaptismal experience of sin?”⁸⁴ This is worth further exploration. Lopresti claims

⁸¹ Lopresti, 15.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ *RCIA*, no. 384.

⁸⁴ Lopresti, 17.

that most parishes adjust the scrutinies, wording them to fit the circumstances of the already baptized candidate. While this may well have been the case in 1987 when his article was written, I do not believe it to be the case today. The question is still valid however, as RCIA teams still struggle with this pastoral issue.

Lopresti goes even further and questions what the purpose of the sacrament of penance for the candidates is. The Rite of Penance says that “individual, integral confession and absolution remain the only ordinary way for the faithful to reconcile themselves with God and the Church.”⁸⁵ One can wonder whether the situation of candidates for full communion is “ordinary.” In fact, theirs is a once in a lifetime event. He suggests that one could consider replacing the otherwise required form of the sacrament of reconciliation with a scrutiny rite worded especially for these candidates. It is important to remember, however, that the candidates are baptized and that Baptism is significant, placing them in a different category from the elect.

Throughout the history of the Church, the Christian community has utilized many different forms to effect reconciliation. Lopresti lists several, such as pilgrimage, fasting, almsgiving, the recitation of Lord’s Prayer, the participation in the liturgical seasons, confession to God alone, public canonical penance, spiritual direction under the care of holy men and women, and death-bed reception of the Eucharistic bread. After the Council of Trent, one ritual was identified as the full embodiment of reconciliation. However, all of the above ways, including private confession and absolution, are

⁸⁵ *Rite of Penance*, (Washington DC: United States Catholic Conference,), no. 31.

essentially ways back to the Eucharistic table. As the Rite of Penance says: reconciliation “is finally expressed in a renewed and more fervent sharing at the Lord’s Table, and there is great joy at the banquet of God’s church over the son who has returned from afar.”⁸⁶ Thus, the rite of penance is a way back to the Eucharistic table. However, the candidates for full communion have never come to the community’s table. Some have, however, participated at the community table of their former or soon to be former Christian denomination. They are being welcomed as Catholics for the first time. It is not a question of return but of approach. Lopresti thus sees it as awkward to ritualize return when one means welcome.

While it may seem that I am going beyond the study of the scrutiny rite, I am not, for Lopresti suggests that the scrutiny rite may be the modern way to assist these faithful to approach the table of the Eucharist. “If the Christian community gathers in prayerful assembly to ask God to ‘free (our brothers and sisters) from the slavery of sin’ (first scrutiny), or ‘enable them to pass from the darkness to light’ (second scrutiny), or ‘place them under the reign of your beloved Son’ (third scrutiny), dare we say God does not head the church?”⁸⁷ He further questions if the scrutinies are efficacious. He does not claim that the candidate should not be allowed or encouraged to take advantage of the sacrament of penance if they wish, yet he questions if this should be the norm. He also suggests that more care and creativity be put into the formulation, preparation, and execution of the scrutinies. This certainly is important.

⁸⁶ *RP*, no. 64.

Just as one could rightly say that the scrutinies are a prelude to Baptism for the catechumens at the Easter Vigil, so they might be an appropriate prelude to the reception of the candidates for full communion. The point is, however, that the catechetical nature of the scrutinies relates to questions such as these because it causes one to ask what are we really accomplishing here, what is the goal of the ritual, whom and how does the ritual transform. The rite claims that the scrutinies have a twofold purpose; revealing anything that is weak, defective, or sinful in the hearts of the elect, so that it may be healed, and revealing what is upright, strong and holy, so that it may be strengthened. These statements do not claim that the scrutiny frees the person from sin; that takes place in the actual rite of Baptism. It *reveals* and *highlights* what is sinful so that it may be healed.

Lopresti makes a valid point that if we accept that the scrutiny rite as it was celebrated in antiquity is anachronistic, a different perspective may be taken. Whether that perspective takes us too far afield from what the scrutiny rite is in and of itself and what it is expected to signify remains to be seen. The point is that those who participate in the scrutiny rite largely determines what the catechesis is and to whom it is directed. There is no question in the present catechumenate process that the rites are expected to catechize the whole community of the faithful.⁸⁸ If the “principle” participants are the elect, or are the elect and the candidates for full communion, a different message comes forth from the rite. The rite certainly can highlight what is sinful and weak for all the

⁸⁷ Lopresti, 18.

community present. In doing so it takes a further step away from the classical scrutiny rite. This quandary illustrates a vivid example of *lex orandi, lex credendi*. It is not the place of individual pastoral ministers to adjust the rites to their own beliefs and purposes, as valid as they might be, but it is through the lived experience of the community that rituals do change and evolve as does their catechesis.

Another side of this question is undertaken by Diana Dudoit Raiche. Raiche is the Executive Director of Religious Education at the National Catholic Educational Association (NCEA). She notes that the distinction between unbaptized catechumens and baptized candidates was not present in the 1971 provisional text. When it was originally written, the main concern was the cultural situation of the Third World countries. Eventually, however, this distinction became a key concern especially for expanding the provisional text for the church in the United States.⁸⁹ After much discussion, the issue was resolved by adapting all of the rites for a combined version except for the scrutiny rites. The theological argument for this was the dignity of Baptism. As was noted with Lopresti writing in 1987, there was a period of pastoral experimentation that preceded the promulgation of the 1988 ritual text. Parishes in the United States were encouraged to make various adaptations for a combined rite of scrutiny. The fact that this was even allowed to take place says something about the catechesis that the rite effects. The unevenness of the pastoral experience, however, led the subcommittee to move away from a combined rite of scrutiny. This focused on two issues. One was the maintenance

⁸⁸ *RCIA*, no. 4.

of the dignity of Baptism and the other was ecumenical sensitivity. There was some concern for the appropriateness of these rites for those who are baptized.

Even though the decision was made against a combined rite, experimentation continued after the final decision was made. There were and are pastoral ministers who believe that excluding candidates from the scrutinies was not required because they, as well, benefited from the ritual as it was written. These ministers viewed the sin that was being exorcised as being global and societal in addition to being “original” and personal.⁹⁰ Both candidates and catechumens are subject to sin as interpreted in this manner, and would profit from the scrutinies with the distinct purpose that was outlined above. Pastoral ministers viewed the level of conversion as the key element that distinguished the two groups (catechumens and candidates) and they grouped them together according to their level of conversion and instruction.⁹¹

In attempting to come to some conclusion about this matter, it is helpful to examine the scrutiny rites themselves as well as the Penitential Rite (scrutiny) in part II, section 4D. In her article, Raiche attempts to discern the differences between the rituals and why they are considered mutually exclusive. The scrutinies of part one are the model for the penitential rites for the baptized in part two. They follow the same basic outline.

⁸⁹ Diana Dudoit Raiche, “Toward an Understanding of the Rite of Scrutiny and the Penitential Rite (Scrutiny) in the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*,” *Catechumenate* 23(2) (March 2001): 9.

⁹⁰ Paul Turner, “Forlorn Yet Privileged: The Case of Candidates,” *Forum Newsletter*: II, No.1 (Winter 1994): 4, cited in Raiche, 1.

⁹¹ Robert Duggan, “Implementing the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults: Pastoral-Theological Reflections,” *Living Light* 17 (Spring 1980): 33.

It is interesting that the instruction for the penitential rite for adult candidate called it “a kind of scrutiny, similar to the scrutinies for catechumens.”⁹²

The structure of the penitential rite is as follows:

INTRODUCTORY RITES

Greeting and Introduction
 Prayer
 Readings
 Homily
 Invitation to Silent Prayer
 Intercessions for the Candidates
 Prayer over the Candidates

It is not surprising that structurally the rites are very similar. There is no dismissal of the candidates and the penitential rite may be celebrated at a non-Eucharistic liturgy. These are slight differences given that the core structure including the invitation to silent prayer after the homily, intercessions and prayer over the elect or candidates are the same. As Raiche states, “The similarity in structure and ritual action plus the reference to scrutiny in the title may contribute to some confusion and to the inclination to dispense with the penitential rite and combine catechumens and candidates for the rite of scrutiny.”⁹³

The scripture readings for both rituals draw upon the Lenten gospels. The reading for the second Sunday of Lent is used for the penitential rite which is distinct from the classic three Johannine readings of the scrutiny rites. The penitential rite (scrutiny) for

⁹² *RCIA*, no. 159.

⁹³ Raiche, 10.

the candidates normally reflects on the gospel of the Transfiguration of Jesus. All of the readings, however, offer the focus for their particular week and they are each centered on conversion. The scriptures of the scrutinies bring the remaining portions of the ritual into focus. These scripture readings are a central element of the catechetical nature of the rite. Raiche notes a lack of cohesion between the word proclaimed and the intercession in the penitential rite.

Below are the intercessions for the penitential rite:

Celebrant:

My brothers and sisters, let us pray for these candidates. Christ has already ransomed them in baptism. Now they seek the forgiveness of their sins and the healing of their weakness, so that they may be ready to be (Sealed with the gift of the Father and) fed at the Lord's table. Let us also pray for ourselves, who seek the mercy of Christ.

Assisting minister:

That these candidates may come to a deeper appreciation of their baptism into Christ's death and resurrection, let us pray to the Lord:

R. Lord, hear our prayer.

Assisting minister:

That these candidates may embrace the discipline of Lent as a means of purification and approach the sacrament of reconciliation with trust in God's mercy, let us pray to the Lord:

R. Lord, hear our prayer.

Assisting minister:

That they may grow to love and seek virtue and holiness of life, let us pray to the Lord:

R. Lord, hear our prayer.

Assisting minister:

That they may renounce self and put others first, let us pray to the Lord:

R. Lord, hear our prayer.

Assisting minister:

That they may share with others the joy they have found in their faith, let us pray to the Lord:

R. Lord, hear our prayer.

Assisting minister:

That they may accept the call to conversion with an open heart and not hesitate to make the personal changes it may require of them, let us pray to the Lord:

R. Lord, hear our prayer.

Assisting minister:

That the Holy Spirit, who searches every heart, may help them to overcome their weakness through his power, let us pray to the Lord:

R. Lord, hear our prayer

Assisting minister:

That their families also may put their hope in Christ and find peace and holiness in him, let us pray to the Lord.

R. Lord, hear our prayer.

Assisting minister:

That we ourselves in preparation for the Easter feast may seek a change of heart, give ourselves to prayer, and persevere in our good works, let us pray to the Lord:

R. Lord, hear our prayer.⁹⁴

When one examines the intercessions in the two different rites, one notices that the scrutiny has two options for intercessions and the penitential rite (scrutiny) only offers one choice. In both cases, however, the church intercedes on the behalf of the elect or candidates. The placement and structure of the intercessions are the same in both rites. In the scrutinities, the intercessions are directly connected to the gospel reading for that particular Sunday. This is very effective liturgically and catechetically. It is not the

⁹⁴ *RCIA*, no. 469.

case in the penitential rite (scrutiny). The intercessions are disconnected from the gospel and appear to be more like an examination of conscience for sacramental confession.⁹⁵

There are additional internal consistencies in this rite. The introductory prayer for the rite seeks to deepen the appreciation for Baptism, yet the intercessory prayers bring forth images of personal sin. The themes do not flow together. The intercessions do not appear to offer the comforting message that was spoken about in the instruction for the ritual. If one looks at the intercessions as a sort of preparation for the sacrament of penance, the “second Baptism” perhaps they make more sense.

Raiche makes an interesting connection to the teaching of Augustine as regards the Donatists. Augustine firmly held that the heretics were not to be rebaptized, because their Baptism was valid, but they were separated from communion with the Church:

To enjoy full communion with the Catholic Church they needed only to be reconciled by having hands laid on them. The penitential rite in Part II, section D employs the laying on of hands (as advocated by Augustine) and intends to reconcile the candidate who is coming from a “separated ecclesial community.”⁹⁶

It is Raiche’s opinion in light of the above quote that the penitential rite for the candidates is more appropriate in light of their Baptism. The rite acknowledges their ongoing conversion and ritualizes the reality of their situation in a suitable way.

⁹⁵ Raiche, 10.

⁹⁶ Raiche, 14.

As far as the exorcisms and prayers over the candidates, the structures are identical, the content is different. Below is the choice A for the prayer over the candidates:

Lord God,
in the mystery of the transfiguration
your Son revealed his glory to the disciples
and prepared them for his death and resurrection.

Open the minds and hearts of these candidates
to the presence of Christ in their lives.
May they humbly acknowledge their sins and failings
and be freed of whatever obstacles and falsehoods
keep them from adhering wholeheartedly to your kingdom.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.
R. Amen.

*Here, if this can be done conveniently, the celebrant lays hands on each one of the candidates
Then with hands outstretched over all of them, he continues:*

Lord Jesus,
you are the only-begotten Son,
whose kingdom these candidates acknowledge
and whose glory they seek.
Pour out upon them the power of your Spirit,
that they may be fearless witnesses to your Gospel
and one with us in the communion of love,
for you are Lord for ever and ever.
R. Amen⁹⁷.

In the scrutiny rites, there are Trinitarian overtones throughout and the prayers relative to the Johannine texts are clearly baptismal and the elect are addressed by name. In contrast, the prayer texts for the candidates are concerned with the personal transgressions of the candidates and the mercy of God, depending upon which one is

used. The baptismal exorcisms from the ancient world have not been abolished in name, but the texts have been so emptied of meaning, all that remains is a protest against evil.⁹⁸

Raiche suggests that since the exorcism prayer is interpreted as a mutated exorcism that does not function to expel Satan from the catechumens, then perhaps it can accommodate the baptized. She reminds us, however, that Baptism alone does not automatically lead to effective church membership or conversion. In the catechumenate, the community reminds candidates of what it means to live out their baptismal call. They themselves must scrutinize their lives for all that is contrary to the gospel message.⁹⁹

Again, my concern is not with arguing the pastoral questions that arise because of the present situation. My concern is how these rituals are catechetical and how they catechize the particular participants involved. Raiche firmly feels that the scrutiny is solidly planted in the initiation model where formation drives information. I would agree. The many images that abound in both rituals contribute to this form of catechesis: “The penitential rite (scrutiny) calls upon themes and images rooted in information, instruction and repentance similar to an ongoing catechetical model.”¹⁰⁰ Some of the images that she notes are repentance, self-searching, uncovering, healing, strengthening, deliverance, protection, self-knowledge, self-examination, purification, enlightenment, living water, light of the world, resurrection and life, and freedom from the effects of sin

⁹⁷ RCIA, no. 470.

⁹⁸ Fisher, 48-55.

⁹⁹ Raiche, 15.

¹⁰⁰ Raiche, 16.

and from the influences of the devil.¹⁰¹ All of these images are placed within the conversion journey of the catechumen or candidate and serve to further form and transform them. They have learned about some of these images in the form of information and now they experience them in a ritual moment which is transformational. This moment of transformation leads them forward on their journey to Baptism or reception in the Church.

As Raiche asks at the end of her article, should the scrutiny be reserved only for the unbaptized? The ritual text gives us an answer through implication. Catechumens and candidates may be combined in every other rite except the scrutiny. Despite pastoral experience which may dictate otherwise, this directive adheres to the traditional teaching that Baptism alone changes a person's status so completely that the baptized and unbaptized may not celebrate this ritual together.¹⁰²

This idea takes me to the core of our reflection on ritual. In asking who the ritual is for one comes to an essential question of transformation. The images used in the scrutiny rite for the elect are distinct from those for the candidates. This reflects an important reality about their path of transformation. What does the ritual say? What does the ritual mean? Who interprets the ritual and determines these factors? Each of these questions pertains to the catechetical nature of this particular ritual and the catechetical nature of all ritual. Even though the "exorcisms" in the present day scrutiny rite are deprecatory instead of imprecatory, a message comes forth about the power of sin

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 18.

and Satan that cannot be mistaken. Baptism is not “magic” but it does transform the person ontologically and the ritual respects that reality.

The sacramental form of the sacrament of penance has changed throughout the centuries. Whether or not the sacrament of penance will continue to change its form in the future, we do not know, but for now the candidates for full communion are to celebrate the sacrament of reconciliation before they are received into the church. The penitential rite (scrutiny) connects with this sacrament in an appropriate way and “catechizes” in both word and ritual as to what it means to come into communion with the Church.

The Scrutiny Rite and Children

Another issue facing the pastoral minister is the question of children. There is a separate penitential rite (scrutiny) for unbaptized children. However, questions arise that are related to the discussion above about whether or not children should be included with the adults in the parish celebration of the three scrutinies. This point is further complicated if the children in question are the children of adult family members being baptized. It does not seem exactly appropriate to have the family separated for the scrutiny rites. There are reasonable arguments to be made on either side of the case. These arguments pertain to the catechetical nature of the rite. Rita Burns Senseman who

¹⁰² Raiche, 19.

is a team member on the North American forum for the Catechumene, outlines some of these in an article she wrote on the scrutiny rite for children.¹⁰³

The most important reason for using the penitential rite (scrutiny) for children is that the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* calls for it.¹⁰⁴ It is notable that the penitential rite (scrutiny) that is given for children is very different from the adult scrutinies. The most important point is that the ritual given for children is not a scrutiny but is a penitential rite that is similar to a scrutiny. “These penitential rites...are held within a celebration of the word of God as a kind of scrutiny, similar to the scrutinies of the adult rite.”¹⁰⁵ Although the ritual for children may be similar to an adult scrutiny, Senseman notes at least five ways in which it is different: 1) the prayers are different, 2) the exorcism is milder and shorter, 3) it is not celebrated within Sunday Eucharist, 4) the elect are combined with the baptized, and 5) the liturgy of penance is included.¹⁰⁶ These are five important points which make the two rituals considerably different and also affect how they catechize.

The first point is that the prayers are different. Below is an example of Prayer A:

God of pardon and mercy,
you reveal yourself in your readiness to forgive
and manifest your glory by making us holy.

Grant that we who repent
may be cleansed from sin
and restored to your life of grace.

¹⁰³ Rita Burns Senseman “The Penitential Rite (Scrutiny) for Children,” *Catechumenate* 21 (December 1999): 2-11.

¹⁰⁴ RCIA, Chapter 1 of Part 2.

¹⁰⁵ RCIA, n. 29.

¹⁰⁶ Senseman, 4.

We ask this through Christ our Lord.

R. Amen¹⁰⁷

This prayer and all the prayers of this rite are more oriented to children than are the prayers for the adults. How a child is formed and transformed depends on their individual understanding about what they are participating in. It also makes sense that the exorcism is milder and shorter. The children have most probably been catechized as to who Satan is and his role in the world. They have an understanding of sin. The stronger words of the adult scrutiny however, might seem menacing and frightening to a child of catechetical age. The penitential rite (scrutiny) uses images and wording that is much more appropriate for children.

The third point is that it is not celebrated within a Sunday Eucharist. This also is suitable for children who might be uncomfortable standing in front of the whole congregation for this particular ritual. The only exception that could be made on this point is if the children's parents are also participating in the rite. How much a child is transformed and how much they understand about a given ritual at least partially depends upon their comfort level with the situation. This point helps to alleviate any nervousness they may feel.

The fourth point is quite interesting. The elect can be combined with the already baptized who may be preparing for the Sacrament of Reconciliation. This takes us back to the discussion above about the adult catechumens and candidates and offers a point of

¹⁰⁷ *RCIA*, n. 296.

contention. If we must respect the Baptism of the adult catechumens, why must we not do so with the children? While the prayers of exorcism in this children's rite are less forceful, as was already mentioned, the point remains that the catechumens *are* unbaptized and combining them with the children who are preparing for First Reconciliation can be problematic theologically speaking. Are the catechumens who are children any less open to the power of sin and evil in the world? This point is a good one to ask the members of the Coetus who developed the rites. The message that the children receive from the rite, perhaps does not change, but the perception of the observer and the community is quite different.

The fifth point is that the liturgy of penance can be included. This relates to the fourth point. If some of the baptized children are to be included in the rite, the fact that they are going to receive the Sacrament of Penance makes sense. But where do the catechumens go? This is another awkward point. Who does it catechize? It certainly tells the elect that they are somehow different from the other children. And that is true. But is it necessary to ritualize it in this way? That is an important question. Each part of the rite and the circumstances of the rite say something important to the children who are participating in them.

As with some portions of the adult scrutinies, there are inconsistencies that warrant further consideration. These inconsistencies are both theological and catechetical. In order to shed more light on this matter, one can examine some of the reasoning behind using the adult scrutiny rite for children as well.

First of all, there is only one *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* and it is intended for adults and children of catechetical age. Children are to follow the “general pattern of the catechuemnite as far as possible.”¹⁰⁸ As Senseman notes, when the rite is celebrated separately, a different message is communicated to the community. Having people of all ages celebrating the rites together with the assembly signifies that we all journey together. “A unified celebration of the scrutinies reinforces the notion that there is one process of initiation for both old and young. There is only one way to the living God and that is through Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit.”¹⁰⁹ This can be a powerful argument. The scrutiny rite for adults as it is celebrated today is not as dramatic or potentially frightening so as to seriously affect a child in a negative way.

Secondly, in the rite for children, the children are delegated to a weekday service away from the Sunday assembly. While this might have certain advantages as noted above, the Sunday Eucharist is the manifestation of the body of Christ *par excellence*.¹¹⁰ What is the message that we are giving to the children and to the assembly when we separate the children out?

A third point is that the scrutinies for adults are a better rite than the penitential rite for children. The children’s ritual does not have the rich poetic language and the images present in the adult rituals. The children should be able to take advantage of all of this. Along these lines, “the guidelines given for the adult rite may be followed and

¹⁰⁸ *National Statutes*, no.18.

¹⁰⁹ Senseman, 5.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 6.

adapted for children.”¹¹¹ This appears to give pastoral ministers the option of doing as they see best. There are many particular situations with a given group that call for adjustments to be made.

The important point in making these distinctions is to come to a better understanding of how children are catechized by the two different rituals. I believe that there is a consistency in having the children present with the adults for the scrutiny rite. Both are unbaptized. I do not see the point of combining the baptized children with the unbaptized when this is not done for the adults. The message in the scrutiny rite is different from the sacrament of penance about sin and reconciliation. Most of the points that could be made for the opposite practice would concern the comfort of the children. I am more concerned with what is being presented to them and how they are transformed by the ritual. Children of catechetical age are from the ages of 7-18. This is a large age span and can be taken into consideration in making these decisions.

Children learn differently from adults. In general, they are impressionable and are tactile, kinesthetic, visual and auditory learners. Even though the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* calls for a separate rite for children, I believe that this is theologically and catechetically inconsistent and is not the best practice. One pertinent reason is that it does not incorporate the learning styles of children.

Dooley agrees with the separation of the two rituals in an article which discusses many of the above points. She holds that just as baptized adults participate in the

¹¹¹ RCIA, n. 291.

scrutiny ritual if they are unbaptized and the penitential rite if baptized, so too should be the case for children, “The liturgical rites underline the ecclesial dimension of the sacrament...”¹¹² This respects the reality and the dignity of Baptism.

In her article, Dooley spends considerable time discussing the “group of companions” who are to accompany the unbaptized children on their journey.¹¹³ It is not entirely clear who these companions are. She indicates that there are many possibilities, but the important point is that the children have their own “community” with which to travel on their path to Baptism.

Summary and Integration

Through this path of study regarding the content and related issues pertaining to the present scrutiny rite, several points are salient as regards catechesis. Firstly, it is interesting to note the history of the development of the present rite and the degree to which the delegates and scholars went to develop a ritual that was faithful to the ancient rite, but yet meaningful to a modern audience. The difference between imprecatory and deprecatory exorcism prayers is the most obvious example. This difference is a notable source of catechesis to the elect and the faithful as regards our modern conceptualization of Satan and his role in our faith journey. The Coetus sought to strike a meaningful

¹¹² Catherine Dooley, “Catechumenate for Children: Sharing the Gift of Faith,” in *Readings in the Christian Initiation of Children*, Font and Table Series, Victoria Tufano, ed. (Chicago: The Liturgical Press 1994), 75.

¹¹³ *RCIA*, n. 254.1.

balance to maintain the integrity of the scrutiny rite, yet not to offend the sensibilities of the faithful as regards an accurate concept of sin and evil in our modern world.

It was noted that the rite of 1988 is very catechetical as regards its introductions and explanations throughout the ritual. While this is helpful of course it is the ritual itself which is the principle form of catechesis. Each portion of the ritual has its own ability to be an enlightening factor in the conversion journey of the elect. The very important role that the homily plays in connecting the readings with the prayer texts was emphasized. It is essential that the readings be proclaimed well and that the preacher takes the time and energy to thoroughly prepare a homily which is faithful to the message of that particular week. While the structure of the scrutiny rite is simple it can be a very powerful witness to both the elect and the community if it is performed well.

The structure of the rite is basically the same for all three weeks, but as noted the prayers of certain weeks are more effective in connecting with that week's theme. The Trinitarian nature of the ritual is obvious as regards the prayers to both the Father and then the Son. This catechizes the faithful on the role of the Trinity from eternity in salvation history.

As was noted, it is important that the elect be properly prepared as well. They should be lead in appropriate reflection upon the readings so that they will understand and experience their full ability to form and transform their lives as they enter this final stage of their journey before initiation. It was mentioned that they may actually

participate in writing the prayers of the litany, or at least offering topics from their reflection on the power of sin both personal and social.

Just as the ancient scrutiny rite differed in its implementation from Rome to Milan, so too the present rite faces challenges of implementation. Faced with the variety of types of situations that families and individuals bring to the door of the pastoral minister, at times difficult decisions must be made. How the rite forms and transforms is reflected in the result of these decisions. How to deal with the baptized candidates and how to deal with the role of children are key points. If baptized candidates are allowed to participate in the scrutiny ritual, there is an entirely different message that is conveyed. While all the faithful deal with the power of sin and evil in our lives and in our world, there is a basic difference between the baptized and the unbaptized. I believe that it is important that this difference be reflected in the participation on the rite. The basic message of the three gospel readings in relation to the ritual changes in this case.

As far as the challenge of children, the ritual, as noted offers a separate rite. I believe that this distinction is not a difficult one because we are still dealing with the unbaptized. While certain phrases of the adult ritual may be somewhat harsh, they should not be frightening to most children. Placing the children in the context of a ritual which includes other already baptized children, again offers a mixed message. While situational decisions must be made by pastoral ministers, it is usually best to go with the ritual as written. In this case, however, I disagree.

As has been noted throughout the chapter, the key different in the two rituals is the understanding of demonology. There are scholars on the right and on the left of this issue. Some, like Kelly believe that it is no longer an exorcistic rite. In a world of black and white, this may be true. The modern rite, however, does not deny the inherent power of sin and evil in the world, which are fruits of the Devil. One cannot deny that both rituals bring the elect face to face with this demonic power. One ritual works in a dramatic manner, one accomplishes its goal in a more solemn manner. Both are inherently catechetical in nature.

Through this study of the modern rite, which is quite faithful in structure to the ancient rite, it can be seen that this historical ritual is a means of catechesis by both what it says and what it does. As with all rituals, it must be performed well in order to achieve its greatest effect. As with rituals that are performed in a Roman Catholic Church which purports local diversity, there are pastoral issues to be dealt with that affect what is taught and how transformation and formation take place. Through this Lenten ritual, the elect are scrutinized by the three Johannine gospels and come to advance spiritually on their journey of conversion to the Easter sacraments. Lent is a rich period of transformation and grace with this simple but effective ritual.

CHAPTER FIVE RITUAL AND CATECHESIS

In the preceding four chapters I have explored ritual according to Catherine Bell and I have discussed the liturgical and theological implications relative to both the medieval and present scrutiny rites.

The first chapter was an exploration of the relationships between theology and liturgy; liturgy and catechesis; and ritual and catechesis. Through that relational study, I demonstrated that these are three strong and pivotal elements of the catechetical nature of ritual. In this chapter I also explored the nature of catechetics and how the baptismal catechumenate is perceived as the basis for catechetical models today and in the past.

The second chapter focused on the medieval rituals. The *Old Gelasian* was emphasized with mention of the *Ordo XI*. The rubrics of the medieval Roman scrutiny rite were presented and discussed. After this emphasis on the ritual, the studies of Antoine Chavasse and Dominic Serra were included to offer further insight on the text of the scrutiny rite.

The focus of chapter three was the theological sources. The role of demonology according to Henry Ansgar Kelly was explored in depth. The rest of the chapter focused on what we know about the medieval scrutiny rite according to Ambrose of Milan, Augustine, Quodvulteus, and John the Deacon. While none of these sources gave us the exact wording and context of the ritual, through all of their writings I was able to make pertinent conclusions about how the scrutiny ritual was celebrated in Milan, North Africa and Rome.

The present scrutiny rite was discussed in chapter four. The provenance and content of the *Ordo Initiationis Christianas Adultorum* was detailed, as was the evolution to the 1988 edition of the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*. The rubrics of the rite were presented with commentary. Certain pastoral concerns as regards the baptized and the unbaptized and the role of families and children were explored.

In this chapter I will integrate this information to show how the scrutiny ritual in both the medieval and present forms is a source of catechesis through which people are formed and transformed at the same time. I will approach this task by applying the ritual structure of Catherine Bell to both of the scrutiny ritual texts. Then I will proceed to discuss how these texts as rituals are catechetical.

The Ritual Framework

In studying ritual according to Catherine Bell, several salient points are notable. The first of these is that ritualization is not about embracing or resisting change, as many of her contemporaries contend. She holds a social-analytical approach to ritual dynamics, unlike Turner and Geertz who are concerned with the historical value of change. The second is that ritual is a way of acting. As a way of acting, ritualization distinguishes certain ways of acting from others. Ritualization is itself a matter of drawing strategic contrasts between the acts being performed and those being contrasted or mimed. Third, the schemes established by ritualization are impressed upon

participants as deriving from a reality beyond the activities of the group.¹ I will look more closely at these points as regards the scrutiny rite.

Ritualization and Change

Change is an interesting topic as regards both the ancient and modern scrutiny rites. There are considerable differences between the two rituals which reflect a basic evolution in perspective as regards the role of Satan in the lives of the unbaptized. Before exploring this particular change between the two rituals in depth, it is important to consider the medieval rite itself.

If one were to ask what the purpose of the medieval scrutiny rite is, the most concise answer would be that the word “scrutiny” was used for those occasions during the second stage of catechumenal preparation in which the catechumens’ hearts were scrutinized to determine whether they were freed of the snares of the devil and were rescued from the power of darkness. Thus, the medieval ritual is concerned overall with the power of Satan in the lives of the elect. As regards change, the diabolic dimension entered the church’s reality around the third century. Until that time, it was relatively obscure. The *Apostolic Tradition*, from the third century, refers to a scrutiny-like ritual.

We know that the scrutiny rituals were dramatic events in North Africa and Milan. We do not know how dramatic they were in Rome where we have liturgical, not descriptive evidence. From this liturgical evidence we are aware that the scrutinies

¹ Nathan Mitchell, 450.

changed from three rituals most likely on Sunday to seven rituals on weekdays. We also have an outline of the basic form of the ritual and what took place.

From these findings, we are able to ascertain that the ritual was open to adaptation that was practical for the needs of those being baptized and for the faithful. The fact that there were many more infants than adults presented for Baptism, prompted the move from Sundays to weekdays. There are various theories as to the reasoning behind seven scrutinies on weekdays, but the important fact in terms of ritual theory is that the church was willing to change to meet the needs of those they serve. We have no way of knowing, from the materials that are available to us, how the clergy or the faithful viewed these changes, because the evidence is largely liturgical. The facts we do have, however, lead us to believe that the church was open to changing to meet the pastoral needs of the time.

As Bell contends, the ritual itself is not about embracing or resisting that change.² As such the meaning of the ritual and its exorcistic nature stands. The fact that it continued to exist after Baptisms were largely for children attests to the fact that the church continued to believe and affirm the exorcistic nature of the rite. It had a meaning in and of itself, beyond an understanding of the world and of the human person, whether adult or child. Consistent with Bell's theory is the fact that the ritual maintained a consistent purpose and meaning even though the context changed. One cannot say that

² Bell, "Ritual, Change, and Changing Rituals," 33.

the scrutiny ritual was concerned with resisting or embracing change for the sake of change itself. It embraced change while holding on to its identity.

The scrutiny ritual in the church today is modeled after the medieval rite but has a different meaning and focus. While it still emphasizes the fact that the elect need to be protected from the power of sin and evil in their lives, it does not operate on the assumption that Satan actually was present within the person. The point is that the present ritual has adapted to change and has been redeveloped and reformulated for a different time. Again, the purpose was not to embrace change for change's sake, but to embrace basic adjustments that have occurred in anthropology, psychology, cosmology and theology of salvation throughout all of these centuries. An important perspective is the difference between "saved from" versus "saved for." The elect are saved from the power of sin and evil in order to be saved for a grace-filled life in relationship with Jesus Christ.

The fact that Coetus 22 of the Consilium went to great lengths to assure that the ritual was meaningful and practical for the church is clear from their extended efforts and the fact that the ritual was sent out to determine practical experience before it was finalized. Requested and necessary adjustments were made as they saw fit.

In the present rite, the exorcisms are addressed to the Father and to the Son who are implored to relieve these elect from the power of the prince of evil in their lives. As was noted above, Fischer maintains that they are no longer exorcisms.³ Be that as it may,

³ Duggan, *Ephemerides liturgicae* 96. 231.

the fact remains that their purpose is to protect the elect from the power of evil in all of its forms. Again, the purpose of the ritual in and of itself is not to resist or embrace change, but to prepare the elect for the wondrous coming of the Holy Spirit into their lives through the power of Baptism. It is a catalyst for action and has objective and subjective elements.

As was stated by Serra in an article in *Catechuminate*, Lent is called a period of purification and enlightenment for a purpose, and as such it is a joyful season. He notes that we would never have the courage to turn our backs to the west if we did not sense the light coming over our shoulders from the east.⁴

Thus, the exorcistic nature of the scrutiny is maintained in the present rite but it is continued in a different form that is reflective of the extensive amount of research and reflection that took place after the Second Vatican Council. These changes occurred in order to keep it as true as possible to its original form but reflective of today's sensibilities as concerns the devil and his relationship to our lives, including our world.

The present scrutiny ritual as such is not concerned with embracing or resisting change within the church or within the society in which the church exists. It is involved in preparing the elect to deal with the power of sin in a society in which perhaps most people are not individually possessed but in which evil and sin are as rampant as in any generation. Through this ritual the elect come to understand that not only are they themselves personal sinners, but they live in a world that struggles with sin and evil on a

moment to moment basis. By means of this ritual, the elect receive the strength to carry the Christian message to these situations and transform them from ones of darkness to ones of light and peace.

Thus, even though this ritual has changed in and of itself, the principle purpose and nature of the ritual has not. This dynamic is not about change. It is about the power of sin in a world that battles and has battled evil consistently throughout the centuries.

Ritual as Acting

The second aspect of Bell's theory is that ritual is a way of acting which is different from other ways of acting.⁵ This particular way of acting has characteristics and concerns which make it stand out as unique. Both the medieval and contemporary scrutiny rituals can be understood from this focus.

The medieval scrutiny ritual, as was noted above, was a very dramatic event. It involved standing on a goatskin and listening to adjurations that were strong and evocative in nature. The person had been engaged in fasting from food, sex, and bathing at the end of a long period of purification. It certainly was different from other ways of acting. It certainly was different from other forms of prayer. The symbolic nature of the goatskin, the oil, and the words used were profound. While the elect would have entered the church for other types of liturgical events, this was unique. The person was transformed by the powerful nature of the entire experience, the words, the smells, the

⁴ Dominic E. Serra, "The Scrutinies: Exorcisms That Make Lent A Joyful Season," *Catechumenate* 32, No. 2 (March 2010), 23.

⁵ Bell, "Ritual, Change, and Changing Rituals," 34.

position. This was unlike any other experience that they may have witnessed in or outside of the church.

Like Bell's illustration of the difference between normal eating and the Mass, in this situation we have a differentiation between normal prayer and imprecatory adjurations against the devil. It is important to note the verbal aspect and the nonverbal aspects, are reflective of matter and form. This differentiation gives an important element of drama which aids in the catechesis of the moment. The power of the devil is directly exposed and implied through the power of the adjurations.

In the present rite there are differentiations between ways of acting as well. The period of silence is an important contrast with sound and the spoken word. The fact that the elect stand alone before the altar separates them from the rest of the faithful, to which they are still united in faith. The laying on of hands is an important symbol which goes back to the early church and also sets the elect apart in a prayerful and powerful way. The intercessions, as has been mentioned before, are a key element in differentiating this Mass from other Masses. The intercessions focus on the needs of the elect, but also on those of the faithful, all of whom struggle daily with the power of sin and evil in the world. They make the connection not only between the elect and the rest of the faithful, but between the readings, the homily, and the ritual that is being witnessed by all.

Looking at it in this way, the present ritual is composed of contrasts. These contrasts are meaningful and serve as a tool for catechesis. Evil/good, silence/sound, darkness/light, blindness/sight, life/death are only some of the many contrasts that act in

the course of this ritual to spread a spiritual message, but also engage the faithful in the process of transformation. As in the contrast of the season of purification and enlightenment being a season of joy, in contrast to the penitential nature of Lent, so too, the seriousness of this ritual is contrasted by the joy of Easter to be celebrated in the weeks ahead.

Gordon Lathrop has written a book that focuses upon the process of juxtaposition in liturgy.⁶ This relates to the contrasts described above. For Lathrop the positioning of symbols next to each other enables participants to identify with the whole in a meaningful way. He notes that ordered patterns go all the way back to Paleolithic times in caves. It is a part of our human nature that patterns yield meaning to us. With rituals in general, and liturgy in particular there are several layers of implied meaning. When we come to the church for a ritual we enter into a social event that has its own specific order juxtaposed with the larger order of the modern world. Specific symbols within a ritual – water, wine, bread, light, oil are juxtaposed in specific ways through which they speak to us on an intuitive level.⁷ As regards the scrutiny rite, words are juxtaposed with silence, sin is juxtaposed with grace. The power of Satan is juxtaposed with the saving power of the risen Christ.

The scrutiny ritual demonstrates a different way of acting, a distinct manner of engaging in prayer which makes it unique and gives impetus to its ability to be called a ritual. It is an action which is distinct in and of itself, in which people, both the elect and

⁶ Gordon Lathrop, *Holy Things: A Liturgical Theology* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1993).

the celebrant, act differently from the way they normally do. As Bell emphasizes, this is what creates and invigorates ritual. It is a way of acting that has a specific meaning.⁸ This meaning is open to the interpretation of both the participants and the observers and may differ among them. This dynamic will be addressed below.

The scrutiny ritual makes contrasts between a particular activity and one that is being mimed or repeated. It makes a strategic contrast between the special readings that we read on these particular Sundays and the usual readings for the Sundays of Lent in Cycles B and C. The homily is unique for these particular Sundays and is connected to the lives of the elect in a pronounced way, but does not go beyond the experience of the faithful. The ritual actions that are taken between the procession forward, the kneeling, and the laying on of hands are all unique to this particular ritual. The intercessions unite all of the spoken word and all of the symbols into one message of profound conversion for all of those present.

Of course the entire Mass is ritual, a different way of acting, but this particular ritual differentiates itself even from the ritual of the Mass. It takes place as part of various contexts – the RCIA, Lent, the church, and the relative maturity of the individuals and the community involved. Contrasts are key elements of the manner in which the elect and the faithful are catechized about the meaning of the rite. Some of these are darkness/light, words/silence, and standing/sitting. These help the elect to comprehend the power of Satan, evil and sin in the church and the world and in our

⁷ Lathrop, 49.

ability to combat this power in a practical way. The differentiation helps in the process of both formation and transformation. It is only to the degree that the participants and the observers enter into this experience that this effort can be effective and fruitful. Both the medieval and the present scrutiny rituals are powerful experiences that depend on the church for their effective and evocative nature and their ability to differentiate from weekly liturgical experience.

Ritual as Participating in a Greater Reality

The third point of Bell as regards ritual is that the schemes established by ritualization are impressed upon participants as deriving from a reality beyond the activities of the group.⁹ This is certainly true in both versions of the rite. In the medieval rite, the rite pertains to the power of the devil in the lives of the elect and the world and the power of God to transcend that power and remove it from their being. The fact that the scrutiny ritual was retained even after Baptism became common for children demonstrates that the church believed that the power existed beyond the conscious mind of the individual who was participating in the ritual.

In the present ritual the same is true. The power of grace which is beyond the control of any human being is clearly active here. By imploring the Father and the Son to come to the aid of the elect and to help them resist the power of evil, there is definitely a power at play here which is beyond that of the group.

⁸ Nathan Mitchell, 450.

⁹ Bell, "Ritual, Change, and Changing Ritual," 34.

For Bell, the participants in the ritual action embody the themes of perception and interpretation and use them in their social world.¹⁰ Through the ritual itself, in this case the scrutiny rite, the participants are able to perceive and interpret their world in ways that are reflected in the process of the rite. Through the scrutiny rite, the elect adopt attitudes about sin and grace, evil and good, Satan and God that are useful to them on their Christian journey, and that transform their hearts and minds in an active way. This result is something that they share with the rest of the faithful, but is unique to them as individuals. Thus, as Bell states, ritualization is a type of creative socialization.¹¹ Through the scrutiny ritual, the elect proceed in a process of socialization through which they become fully initiated members of the church.

As she also states, socialization is most effective and most used in organizations that differentiate themselves from other groups based on their perception of reality.¹² Thus, in the case of the church, the ritual can be a more powerful vehicle of change than it would be for a secular group who may or may not be open to the power of transformation and might have less depth to their rituals than a religious organization.

Bell also notes that ritualization can function either to accommodate history or to deny it.¹³ In the case of the scrutiny ritual, the Coetus 22 of the Consilium after Vatican II made a sincere effort to accommodate history as best they could and not to deny it. The main structure of the ritual is the same as is its principle focus. It was through the

¹⁰ Bell, "Ritual, Change, and Changing Ritual," 34

¹¹ Ibid., 35.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Bell, 35.

experience of those who utilized and participated in the rite that changes in the proposed ritual took place and were incorporated. The changes were not the results of haphazard adjustments or actions based on theory alone. They were based on lived experience. As Bell states, even when the rite is not conducted “appropriately” the participants have the power and ability to express their values by which the community orders and reorders their lives.¹⁴ Through the scrutiny ritual, the lives of the elect are ordered and reordered around the topics of Satan and evil, God and grace. Even if the ritual is not conducted in the best possible manner, the message can be transmitted and transformation can take place.

Even though Bell does not emphasize repetition as do Turner and Irwin,¹⁵ she does acknowledge that it is an element that can and does have a role in ritualization.¹⁶ In the scrutiny rite, repetition is important. First of all, there is the repetition of three rituals, not just a single celebration. This is significant because there is a progressive message that takes place and there is growth that occurs through this aspect of progression. From the woman at the well, to the man born blind, to Lazarus being raised from the dead there is a distinct spiritual and theological progression which leads the elect towards the possibility of a powerful conversion in their lives. The message reveals additional meanings but the structure is repeated.

There is also an element of repetition that takes place within each scrutiny ritual. The initial moments of silent prayer contribute to this effect. The deliberative aspect of

¹⁴ Ibid., 34.

the laying of hands upon the heads of each individual offers an effective symbolic act for participants and observers. A certain element of repetition can take place in the intercessions.

Socialization is an element that is important as regards the scrutiny ritual and the whole preparatory process for Baptism. Through this process, the elect come to an understanding of what it means to be a member of the church and to “be” Church. It is the role of the preparatory rituals to bring about this understanding. By participating in these rituals, the elect do not only learn about the church, they become an active participant in the reality that is that community. Through the scrutiny ritual and other rituals the faithful also deepen their understanding of church doctrines, but most importantly about what it means to belong to the Roman Catholic Church.

While we do not have an analysis of the scrutiny ritual by Bell herself, we have reviewed her core principle views on the formation and evolution of rituals. Through this study, we can ascertain that the scrutiny ritual is one that engages the elect actively in a ritual action which is meaningful for both participants and observers.

The Catechetical Nature of Ritual

The next question: how is ritual catechetical? Through the course of time, we can differentiate between two forms of catechesis, which Aidan Kavanagh calls “conversion-

¹⁵ Mitchell, 451. Both Turner and Irwin use the word repetition in their definition of ritual.

¹⁶ Bell, “Ritual, Change, and Changing Ritual,” 34.

therapy catechesis” and “religious-education catechesis.”¹⁷ We can differentiate the two also by referring to them as formation and information. In the medieval church sacramental preparation was intimately tied to catechesis: “The conclusion is inescapable that being catechized and sacramentalized were not separate enterprises, but one and the same process in the catechumenate.”¹⁸ Kavanagh notes that over time, particularly since the Middle Ages, catechesis has been deritualized whereas before it was deeply and profoundly tied to ritual. He believes that the Fathers understood catechesis to be a process that was completely designed by its final cause which was sacramental initiation.

Thus, it is not unusual at all that John the Deacon uses the word “catechize” to speak of the scrutiny ritual.¹⁹ It was a distinct act of catechesis. Ritual teaches. Rituals are not simply performed for the immediate purpose for which they are designed, but they have a deep ability to form and transform those who participate in them and those who observe them. According to Kavanagh, catechesis was sacramental in all its essence and the catechumenate was a sacramental structure in the church. Thus, it was a catechetical structure as well. As the catechumens were prepared for Baptism, they were engaged on many levels. More than any factual information that they may have received, they were transformed by the process in pronounced and noticeable ways.

The person who received the sacraments was by no means the same person that had entered the process up to three years before. Even the doctrine that they learned was

¹⁷ Aidan Kavanagh “Unfinished and Unbegun Revisited: The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults” in Maxwell Johnson, ed. *Living Water, Sealing Spirit* (Collegeville, MN.: The Liturgical Press/A Pueblo Book, 1995), 260.

¹⁸ Ibid.

given in the form of homilies in the liturgy of the word. This was done in public in the presence of the community, just as the scrutiny ritual was. Catechesis was not a personal affair. It was open to all of the faithful and through the rituals they were transformed as well.

As Kavanagh also notes, in the medieval church, catechesis was the connecting point between evangelization and mystagogy. Yet, one cannot draw distinct lines between each of these stages. One leads to another and one influences another in distinguishable ways. Kavanagh highlights this beautifully in the following quote:

Evangelization, catechesis, sacramental initiation, and mystagogy are co-penetrating functions of each other, a single economy within which an ecclesiology is born, a pastoral theology is generated, and the unity of the Church is secured in faith.”²⁰

The church has a tradition in which the main purpose of catechesis is to bring people to the moment of sacramental initiation. To ask whether any particular ritual is catechetical was an unusual question because the connection is so profound. In order to further explore this dynamic in the medieval church and the medieval rite, a description that was quoted in chapter three is helpful.

In the eerie light of the first dawn the candidates stood barefoot on the coarse animal skins, naked and with head bowed. Invoking the power of Christ and the Trinity, voicing vituperative biblical condemnation of Satan, and imposing hands the exorcist hissed in the face of *competentes*, peremptorily commanding the evil one to depart. There followed a physical examination to

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Kavanagh, 261.

determine whether the *competentes* showed evidence of disease, which signaled the continued inhabitation of Satan. Granted that they passed scrutiny, each in his or her own voice, then renounced Satan, his pomps and his service.²¹

The quote begins “in the eerie light of the first dawn.” This simple statement sets the stage for the catechesis to follow. The elect have been up the whole night praying and fasting. They are physically weak, yet spiritually strong. The first dawn marks a contrast between night and day, darkness and light. The fact that it is noted as eerie enhances the effect of mystery surrounding the whole night and the ritual itself. The elect know not what to expect. They are inquisitive and perhaps a bit frightened. The long night is about to end and a ray of light shines forth from the east.

They stand barefoot on animal skins, naked and with head bowed. How vulnerable they are! Their whole being is standing on the animal skin, without clothing, without guile, with innocence of those who have nothing to hide. Just as they physically hide nothing from the world, so too are they spiritually vulnerable, vulnerable to the ritual that they are about to experience of which they are not familiar. They can hide nothing from others, nothing from themselves and nothing from God. They are about to come face to face with the power of grace, a power which has the strength to evict the power of the evil one from their lives.

This is so dramatic and the catechesis is part of the drama, it is intertwined with it like a cord. Who could experience this dramatic sacramental event without being

²¹ Johnson, *The Rites of Christian Initiation*, 187.

transformed in some way in both mind and heart? Who could live through this orchestrated event without learning something about the power of evil and the power of grace?

Their heads are bowed, as if giving consent to what they are going to experience, as if acknowledging the power of grace and relinquishing the power of evil. It is a position of submission, and also a position of respect and reverence. In this vulnerable position, they hear the resounding voice of the exorcist, invoking the power of Christ and the Trinity and repudiating the power of the evil one.

How intense this experience must be. The walls must resound with the force of the imprecatory statements, for surely Satan does not depart with slight rebuke. Perhaps the elect shiver a bit in the cold and shudder under the powerful, booming words of the exorcist. The hissing in their face causes them to take a step back and overwhelms them as they know not exactly what this means. This is catechesis. This is transformation. What could be a more powerful teaching about the power of Satan, than living through this ritual at first dawn in the way that it is described here? Surely not sitting in a classroom and listening to tales about the devil and his power, surely not even by listening to stories of his domination in the context of a homily in the liturgy of the word. Although the scrutiny is ritual in church, surrounded by family and friends, which is also a safe environment, this scarcely detracts from the powerful nature of the medieval experience.

This is more powerful and transformative because the elect actually experience what it means to be face to face with the power of Satan. They experience the power of grace as it encounters the satanic power and wins. The catechetical and sacramental nature of this experience is clear.

The physical examination which follows ascertains that there are no traces of demonic possession and is humbling and transparent. This is what it means to pass scrutiny. The elect are not exactly sure what it means but they are grateful when they pass this test to make sure they are “clean.” Now that they have passed this test, they are capable with their own will of renouncing Satan.

The scrutiny depended on the power of the exorcist and the power of grace to relieve the elect from Satan and evil; in the renunciation of Satan the elect speak in their own voice which corresponds to their own conscious act before their Baptism. This same Satan whom they have come to know particularly in the ritual at dawn is the one whom they will renounce firmly with all of his works and all of his power.

As far as the animal skin is concerned, it was mentioned how Augustine made the connection with Adam and Eve and original sin. We do not know if this connection is exactly the reasoning behind the goatskin. The symbolism is appropriate, however, as the elect vulnerably stand on this skin as they face the spiritual powers of the world.

In further examining the catechetical nature of the medieval rite, John the Deacon is informative:

Catechesis is the Greek for “instruction.” (Catechumens) are instructed through the church’s ministry, by the

blessing of the one who places his hand (on their heads), in order that (they) may realize who (they) are and who (they) are to become—in other words, that from being numbered among the damned (they) may become holy, from (being numbered) among the unjust, they may appear among the just, and finally from (being numbered among the) servants they may become son(s and daughters).²²

He began by citing catechesis as instruction. The word “instruction” is an interesting one. We could take it to mean training by the use of words, in which case it is much more limited. But through what he wrote, we can ascertain that John was referring to catechesis in the full sense of the word, that which goes beyond mere words. John placed catechesis side by side with the church’s ministry, which is accurate on many different levels.

The laying on of hands, so traditional from the early church, was a key element. John spoke of this action as one which clearly transformed the elect. Through this simple, yet profound action they came to realize who they were and who they were to become. This statement is a clear exposition of the power of transformation. He proceeded to explain that they were converted from the state of being among the damned to those who were holy.

It is important to note, however, that in this process of transformation, it is not only a true spiritual movement from damned to holy that takes place. It is a transformation in the head and the heart of the elect as to exactly what that means. While they will not come to a clearer understanding of this meaning until they undergo

²² John the Deacon, *Epistola ad Senarium*, ed. Andre Wilmart, *Analecta reginensia*, SeT 59 (Rome 1933) 170-179, cited in Whitaker, 209.

the process of mystagogia, through this ritual, and the simple laying on of hands, they have been changed in their understanding of the power of sin and grace.

John distinctly implied that through this laying on of hands, the elect came to a new understanding of themselves and of their status within the church. The ritual as a whole was catechetical and that portion of the rite, that simple action of the laying on of hands was catechetical. John again used many contrasts to illustrate his point and to highlight the transformation that takes place. Damned/holy, unjust/just, servants/sons and daughters were all used to emphasize the change that occurred through a modest ritual. While we can infer the connection between ritual and catechetical transformation throughout the above study, it is only in the words of John that the very direct and explicit connection is made.

John described the scrutiny as follows:

We thoroughly test their hearts concerning faith to determine whether, since the renunciation of the devil, the sacred words (of the creed) have become fixed in their minds, whether they acknowledge the coming grace of the Redeemer, and whether they confess to believe in God the Father Almighty.²³

While this statement is somewhat confusing in terms of the reference to a type of examination instead of a pure and simple ritual, John still referred to the transformation that takes place through it. He implied a form of mental transformation, not just the learning of facts. The fact that the words of the creed had been fixed in their minds went

²³ John the Deacon, *Epistola ad Senarium*, ed. Andre Wilmart, *Analecta reginensia*, SeT 59 (Rome, 1933) 170-179, cited in Whitaker, 209.

beyond whether or not they understood the words of the creed. If they were fixed in their minds, a process had taken place which allowed them to live out those words and all that they implied and meant. It is significant that he used the words “we test their hearts” and did not use the words “we test their minds” or their knowledge. What he referred to is a different sort of knowledge, it is experiential and sacramental knowledge.

While as noted above, we do not have extensive information about how the scrutiny rite took place in the city of Milan, we do have the Harmless’ summary which was cited in chapter three as well. “First to speak to the uninitiated about the sacraments would be to betray rather than portray them; second, the rites themselves had an inherent pedagogy, not so much in the visible play of symbols as at the inner light which ‘infuses itself better in the unsuspecting.’”²⁴ Here we see the essence of liturgical catechesis. How could any modern scholar say it any better? “The rites themselves had an inherent pedagogy.” Rituals teach; rituals catechize in and of themselves.

What Harmless is saying here is that the ritual itself teaches, as do the scrutiny ritual and the sacramental ritual alike. When Ambrose said that to speak about the sacraments was to betray them, he made a sharp statement about catechesis, specifically catechesis in the age of the catechuminate. To use a catechesis that focuses on words is not only inaccurate, but is a disservice to the elect. They learn by doing, they learn by feeling, they learn by acting and being acted upon. And in so doing they are transformed.

²⁴Ambrose, *De mysteriis* 2, trans. Deferrari FC 44:5.

As Ambrose noted, it is not only the symbols themselves, but the “inner light” which comes forth from the sacramental experience. By saying that this light infuses itself better in the unsuspecting, Ambrose concluded and reinforced the idea that the sacramental experience is actually more powerful when the elect or the candidate knows not what to expect. Today we avoid practicing for the Easter Vigil. The power of the sacramental experience itself is a catechetical agent which transforms the candidate on numerous levels, most especially the spiritual.

This is not to say that the neophytes are not exposed to the intellectual side of catechesis through mystagogy. Ambrose used numerous examples from both Scripture and church tradition and teachings to connect with the actual experience that these same neophytes have had through the sacramental experience. The experience comes first, the reflection comes after. The reflection only contains as much meaning as allowed by the transformation that takes place in the experience. This is why Ambrose referred so often to “mystery.” Mysteries inevitably deal with the unknown and the unknown is never fully realized. One comes to a basic understanding of the mystery, however, through experience first and reflection upon the experience second. There is always an aspect of the scrutiny rite that remains “mystery.”

As regards Augustine, the transformative power of the scrutiny rite was one which depended upon the efforts of the elect as well as the exorcist. It is not only the elect who were transformed through this catechesis. Augustine was fond of noting that the catechist was transformed himself through the catechetical process:

So great is the power of sympathy, that when people are affected by us as we speak, and we by them as they learn, we dwell in the other and thus both they, as it were, speak in us what they hear, while we, in some way, learn in them what we teach.”²⁵

Thus, there is a two-way nature to the process that is enriching for all involved.

Augustine does not mention the role of the faithful in attendance, but there is a strong possibility that they are catechized as well. One would imagine that through the witness this powerful ritual one might be somehow transformed or changed in the process.

Augustine viewed the Christian life as a battle with Satan that does not end in this world. The scrutiny ritual embodies that reality, brings it forth and makes it clear. While Augustine did not refer to the scrutiny ritual or to liturgy in general as catechesis in the direct manner of Ambrose, it is clear through his methods of teaching and explaining the rites that he firmly believed in the power of transformative catechesis.

Turning to the present rite, there are also important catechetical elements. As discussed by Kavanagh above the manner in which sacraments have been separated from catechesis is a reality that has developed over several centuries. Even though the catechumenate has been received with considerable success in many parishes, liturgical catechesis, which finds its source and its base in the catechumenate, still requires some growth when compared to medieval times.

As noted in the fourth chapter, the rubrics for the present rite are very catechetical. They tell the story of the ritual and what the church intends the rite to

²⁵ *De catechizandis rudibus* 12.17, trans. Harmless, 264.

signify. They are helpful and necessary in a culture that might not appreciate their true significance. Perhaps one of the reasons that we do not have such introductions and instructions for the medieval rite is that the rite itself was powerful example enough of what it signified. In any case, the rubrics for the present rite are helpful and formational. The whole ritual experience is multivalent, rituals always communicate more than words.

With the exception of certain dramatic aspects, such as standing on the goatskin, the present rite is very similar in form to its predecessor. The implications of imprecatory versus deprecatory adjurations which have been discussed above, are the principal differences in the substance of the rite's significance. This may be attributed to modern sensibilities, which rely predominately on the spoken word. This is the principal difference in the substance of the rite's significance. I believe that it is because of our modern sensibilities that the modern rite relies more on the spoken word. Perhaps the faithful who were present at the medieval rite understood the meaning of the adjurations, the meaning of standing on goatskin and the laying on of hands. Because the meaning of some of our modern symbols is less powerful and less understood, the Liturgy of the Word is more important than ever.

Through the readings which are so carefully chosen, the faithful are catechized on the core of the message of the scrutiny. And it is through the progression of these readings on three consecutive Sundays that the elect are lead to conversion and transformation. It is customary to focus on the gospel readings as the core of the ritual;

however, each of the readings contribute significantly to the transformative power of the ritual. There is so much to discuss and to unfold in the gospel readings themselves and perhaps this is the reason that they receive the principal focus. The first two readings on each of the Sundays are also catechetical and can be studied by the team and the elect if they are not unfolded on the actual Sundays of the rituals.

As was discussed above, the homily is a key catechetical element which draws the whole experience together and makes the appropriate connections for the faithful and for the elect. While many of the faithful may have witnessed these rituals over the years, there are many who are not familiar with them. The readings are potentially fruitful and offer so much material for the homilist to choose from and to treat in his homily. If the celebrant is unprepared to preach on the readings for cycle A, this is a true catechetical loss for everyone involved. Ideally the preacher is well prepared and familiar with the significance and importance of the ritual and the homily.

The intercessions, which also consist of words in dialogue, are also very important as regards the catechetical power of the ritual experience. They must be chosen with care, and ideally they will be coordinated with the message of the homily and with the needs and concerns of the elect. While the elect need not actually prepare the intercessions, as was indicated above, it is a powerful experience if they can contribute ideas as regards the power of sin and evil in our world and how they are affected by them. When the elect hear the intercessions read or sung, it is an important witness and a means of catechesis for them and for the faithful.

In the modern world we have to balance the matter of how much we “practice” with the participants in our rituals. Ideally they experience the ritual first, as they did in medieval times, without being overly informed about what it does or should mean. For persons in our modern world, however, a certain amount of catechesis is helpful and perhaps necessary for the participants to obtain the best possible affect. This is relative to who we are today and how we assimilate knowledge. It also relates to practical truths that if the elect are too nervous about what they are to do and how they are to move, they will not be open to appreciating the rite for all it is intended to be. This is a balancing act that must be addressed on an individual basis. Over practicing is never a good thing as far as catechesis goes

In the present rite, the elect stand before the congregation facing the altar, in the manner of an ordination. In this way they are set apart from the rest of the congregation. Not for the sake of setting them apart, but for the fact that they are the elect, they are preparing to become one with us through the sacrament of Baptism. The fact that they do stand before us and do not remain in their pews is catechetical. They are on a journey. They are in a stage of becoming - a stage of becoming one of us.

The elect hold a position of kneeling or standing with their heads bowed. Like in the medieval rite this is important. It is a state of reverence, perhaps one could say reverence and awe. This position shows the willingness of the elect to come before their God and to stand vulnerably before his grace and power. They are not naked as they

were in medieval times, but they are vulnerable nevertheless as they stand before the celebrant and before the community in prayer.

The period of silent prayer is very important. It is perhaps as significant to modern sensibility as the vociferous adjurations were to those in the medieval times. Silence is seldom observed today. There is always speaking, music, or technology. It is as if we are afraid of silence, afraid of standing in the void without something going on to move us forward to the next thought, the next movement, or the next assignment. It has been noted that young people who are growing up in today's world appreciate silence when they are offered the opportunity to enjoy it. These young adults who almost always have something attached to their ear or their hands actually appreciate silence. This is worth noting. It is an important catechetical piece of the scrutiny rite.

We stand in silence, in silence before our God who knows our every thought. Perhaps this silence is more catechetical than the many words that are constantly used in prayer and in the Liturgy of the Word. It teaches all to stand in awe and wonder before the God who created them, who is the source and summit of all they are and all they hope to become. For this reason it is important catechetically that the moments of silent prayer last long enough to be effective. The last thing that should happen is to rush through this ritual.

Lawrence Cunningham, a systematic theologian, speaks of the role of silence in ritual. He begins by speaking about silence and music. He states that "silence is the canvas on which the musician paints....we must hear the silence if we are to hear the

music.”²⁶ This analogy is very useful for understanding the role of silence in liturgy or in ritual in general. Without a background of silence, the words and the gestures are just cacophony. Periodic silence helps us to come into contact with the God within.

Cunningham differentiates between interior and exterior silence. Exterior silence is the absence of noise, but interior silence is deeper, it is where we encounter God. Silence in ritual enables us to prayerfully absorb the words that we have heard with our ears and the symbolic gestures that we have seen. What has taken place becomes real in the silence.²⁷

This reflection on silence is expressed very well in the following quotation of Karl Rahner found in Cunningham:

God presents itself to us in the mode of withdrawal, of silence, of distance, of being always inexpressible, so that speaking of it, if it is to make sense, always requires listening to its silence.²⁸

Silence is not only a backdrop for what takes place in ritual, it is a locus of communication with God.

The laying on of hands is another crucial part of the ritual that must be done slowly and deliberately to be truly catechetical. This ancient act possesses so much meaning. As the celebrant moves from one person to the next, they are reminded that each one individually is special and unique in God’s eyes. Each one of them is called to the faith and to membership in the community before whom they stand, humble and meek.

²⁶ Lawrence Cunningham, *The Catholic Experience* (New York: Crossroads, 1985), 68.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Karl Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith* (New York: Seabury, 1978), 64.

The prayers to the Father and to the Son are not the powerful imprecatory adjurations of medieval times, rather they are powerful as they call on God to free the elect and to free the community of from the power of Satan and from evil in our lives and in the world at large. The fact that they are separated by the intercessions is purposeful and effective.

Taken as a whole, this combination of words and symbolic action can be called nothing less than catechetical. The ritual is adjusted to modern understandings and modern sensibilities. When it is done well, when the participants fully participate and fully place themselves before God, transformation can result on many different levels.

The experience of the scrutiny rite and the details of exactly how it takes place are difficult to ascertain from the liturgical evidence in the *GeV* and *Ordo XI*. Nevertheless, we can verify certain liturgical elements. The announcement for the scrutiny was the most directly catechetical oriented portion as I noted above.

It is particularly important to note the following phrase: “Dearly beloved brothers, take notice that the day of scrutiny is at hand, when the elect are instructed in divine things.”²⁹ This phrase does not just refer to instruction in a classroom or religious-educational sense. It refers to catechesis through ritual. It continues to speak of the day when the devil and his retinue are destroyed and the heavenly kingdom is opened. These realities take place through the ritual action of the scrutiny and through these actions

²⁹ *GeV*, .XXIX.

specifically the elect and secondarily those who observe are catechized on the nature and power of the devil and the strength of holy grace.

Through the exact parts of the rite which are reproduced in the scrutiny rite of the *GeV*, we can make certain conclusions as to other ways in which the Roman ritual was catechetical. The giving of the salt was not only a symbol, but it catechized the elect on the meaning of the Christian spirit. Salt preserves food from decay; so does the power of grace. Later in the liturgy, the power of the Eucharist protected the elect from the snares of the devil and evil in general.

Again we must ask, what is at the core of ritual as catechesis? What is it about rituals themselves that form and transform? These questions take us back to the first chapter and the discussion about the nature of catechesis. When we spoke of catechesis in that chapter, one of the definitions that we used was from *Sharing the Light of Faith*, “Catechesis refers to efforts that help individuals and communities acquire and deepen Christian faith and identity through initiation rites, instruction and formation of conscience. It includes both the message presented and the way in which it is presented.”

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The definition in *Sharing the Light of Faith* expresses the core message of catechesis. Catechesis consists of rites, instruction and formation. Instruction is only one portion of the process. It is notable that catechesis consists of both the message presented and the way in which it is presented. One of the ways in which it is presented is through

³⁰ *Sharing the Light of Faith*, no. 32.

ritual. Ritual presents the message in a way that touches more than just the brain. It touches the heart and the psyche in such a way that the person is transformed.

In attempting to understand exactly how this transformation takes place, it is useful to examine an article by James Lopresti in which he speaks of both the religious and the psychological nature of ritual.³¹ He emphasizes that it is important to consider whether the ritual symbols are consistent with the community's tradition, but also whether there is a psychological appropriateness that exists between the ritual symbols and the participants. These ritual symbols can enforce adaptive and creative life schemes or they can encourage repressive and constricting ones.³² This differentiation is important as to how the participants and the observers are changed by the experience. In either case transformation may take place, but it may be a positive or a negative experience.

Lopresti notes that what one expresses in ritual is not simply a commemorative representation or a telling about an experience in symbols. Ritual is its own way of expressing or living the significance of an experience.³³ How does this apply to the transformation of which we referred to above? When the church celebrates the scrutiny ritual, it is not simply commemorating what it means, i.e. the repudiation of Satan from the lives of the elect. No, it is actually telling about that experience in symbols. It is actually effecting what it symbolizes. In the case of the medieval ritual, the church of North Africa or Milan truly believed that the power of Satan was removed from the lives

³¹ James Lopresti, "Rituals and Hopes," *Worship* 52, no. 4 (July 1978): 349.

of the elect. It was not the case of any empty symbol or representation of a belief. It was real and the transformation that took place in the lives of the elect was real as well.

In the case of the present ritual, even though we no longer believe that Satan resides within the elect, the significance of the experience that the church prays for the power of grace to work against the power of sin and evil in the world is real. In entering into this experience, the elect are transformed. Teaching about the power of sin and evil, God and grace in a classroom is less powerful than participating in the rite. Participants not only learn about the power of these elements, they experience it in a vivid and meaningful manner.

This reality goes to the core of what was said about symbols. Words in many ways are univalent. Even though they may have different meanings, usually they are specific in what they communicate. Symbols are multivalent. They pierce the core of who we are psychologically and spiritually and when we are pierced, we are no longer the same as we were before, we have been transformed. This is not to say that words are not important in the consideration of rituals. Context and tone of voice influence them. Used in different contexts, words do have different meanings and they offer an important element to ritual. Words work together with symbols to make rituals become significant. Without the words of Baptism, the water is just a bath, but the matter, water, combines with the form, the words, to create effective ritual, in this case a sacramental ritual. Thus, words do have power.

³² Ibid., 348.

As Lopresti states, in order for a ritual to be genuine, the experience must be part of the fabric of the human experience of the people involved in the ritual.³⁴ Each of the elect has personal experiences of sin and evil in their lives. Though these experiences are related to the ritual, they move beyond this experience to a new understanding of the power of sin and evil. Catechesis takes place.

Lopresti goes on to state that in ritual, the symbols of the world, relationship, time and space can intersect in ways that are freed from their usual or normal sequence. Ritual is a work of “the ideal” or “what can be:” in which that which is real and that which can be interact.³⁵ Lopresti emphasizes that this does not bring forth a difference between what is true and what is false. He quotes Paul Pruyser who states that ritual and symbols are neither pure fantasy nor objective, sensory reality.³⁶

We can see how this differentiation takes place in the case of the scrutiny ritual. In terms of the medieval rite, those who conducted the ritual were not living in a fantasy that they were able to remove the presence of the devil from the individual elect. They truly believed that through the power of grace, there was a capability of setting the elect free from this oppressive power in their lives. While the result is not a pure objective reality, a physical examination took place to confirm as best as possible that the devil had

³³ Lopresti 351.

³⁴ Lopresti, 351.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Paul Pruyser, “Phenomenology and the Dynamics of Hoping,” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 3 (1963): 86-96, cited in Lopresti, 358.

departed from the individual. This evidence was cursory at best. The presence of Satan or of any degree of evil in someone's life cannot be proven.

In terms of the present ritual, the dynamic is less focused. The goal is to strengthen the elect in combating the power of the devil and of evil in their lives and in the modern world. This is difficult to measure by any means. It is not impossible, however, to verify that transformation has taken place on a spiritual and or psychological level. The priest lays hands on the individuals and the community prays for them. This ritualistic action is catechetical because the elect are brought closer through grace to a state of readiness to receive the Holy Spirit in the sacrament of Baptism. They are not the same persons as they were before the ritual took place. If they are active participants they have grown closer to God and to the faith which they are soon to profess.

Thus the scrutiny ritual and the results of celebrating the ritual lie in this area between subjective and objective reality. It is in this open area where catechesis takes place. The goal of the medieval ritual might well be to free the elect from the power of Satan in their lives, but in so doing, both the participants and the observers are catechized in exactly what that power consists of, how it works in their lives and how it can be repudiated. If the ritual does what it claims, they are spiritually transformed, they are relieved of the power of Satan in their lives, but at the same time they are transformed in mind and in heart.

The Role of Observers and Intended Meaning

One of the topics that surfaced in this paper is that catechesis takes place on the level of transformation for both the participants and the observers. In defining ritual as catechesis, it is important to consider this dynamic.

It is relatively easy to see that the elect in the dramatic ritual of the medieval rite were somehow transformed. It would be difficult to actively participate in the ritual and not be somehow affected on a spiritual level. Hungry, tired, naked, and perhaps chilled they are in a particularly vulnerable state. The voices are loud and powerful and the elect have agreed to participate in this ritual as part of their preparation. Even if they are not spiritually open to the experience, it is difficult to imagine that they would walk out of this experience exactly the same as they walked in. Thus, as mentioned above, it is transformative on two different levels: the subjective and the objective.

How does the ritual affect those who observe it? The introduction to the ritual states that the celebrant should carry out the celebration in such a way that the faithful will also derive benefit and will participate in the intercessions. This benefit may be less direct, for they are not the elect, but it is present and valuable nevertheless. Depending on how many times the faithful have observed the rite and how open they are to the experience will determine their level of transformation. The effect that the ritual has upon the faithful is subjective and not objective, but it can still be powerful and meaningful in nature. It is as if the participants are once removed from the situation, however, through their ability to connect with the elect and to relate to their experience empathetically, they can be transformed as well.

As regards the present ritual, basically the same dynamic is in place. The degree that the faithful are formed and/or transformed is equivalent to the degree to which they allow themselves to be taken into the experience, to place themselves in the place of the elect and to recognize what their entry into the church signifies for all present. The degree of transformation of the participants depends on the degree that they place their hearts and souls into the ritual to receive the grace that it has to offer. While this ritual is not as compellingly dramatic as the medieval rite, by hearing the Word of God with an open heart, listening to the homily, absorbing the message of the intercessions which may be connected to their own discussions, the elect can be transformed in a powerful way, as can the faithful.

A key portion of this ritual, as has been mentioned, are the moments of silence. In today's world, silence has a power that may take the place of more dramatic circumstances in medieval times. Silence is powerful, transformative and catechetical.

Thus, the observers to ritual, unlike the participants are catechized on a second level as it were. Empathy plays an important role, as does their ability and willingness to enter into the experience, not just to observe it on a passive level.

Lopresti emphasizes that the ability to allow symbols to speak in fresh ways is very important. A ritual may be repeated several times, but if participants or observers close themselves off to the creative aspect of symbol- making and symbol- reading, the ritual may become truly repetitive in nature and empty of transformative power. Both the participants and the observers need to ask each other, what does this ritual mean? They

may do so on various unconscious and conscious levels, however, some type of reflection is important and necessary for meaning to take place. One can participate in exactly the same religious ritual two days in a row, but obtain a completely different message therein. This is because of the powerful evocative nature of symbol and the rituals they compose.³⁷

Another important element relative to the catechetical nature of ritual is the difference between intended and received meaning. The tradition of the scrutiny ritual in the medieval church developed over time and was the result of the evolving perspective of demonic possession and the role of evil in the life of the unbaptized. As this ritual evolved and was celebrated in different areas of the Christian world, it changed and transformed itself over and over again. The manner in which the church of the East perceived Satan and evil was different from that of the West and within the West differences are found in Milan and North Africa.

These rituals evolved to remain consistent with the perspective and the teachings of the church at that given time. *Quodvultdeus* and the descriptions of John the Deacon tell us details about the form and outline of the rituals, as was outlined in chapter three. Ambrose and Augustine offer references without a great deal of detail and we have the liturgical evidence that was discussed in depth in chapter two. These sources give a glimpse of the purpose of the medieval ritual. What the elect understood by the ritual is unknowable.

³⁷ Lopresti, 355.

Without personal accounts of the medieval experience, it can only be assumed that the experience was a powerful one in which the elect came to realize that the power of Satan was being expelled from their bodies and they were being freed from the influence of sin and evil. This is the intended meaning. Can we say, however, that any other meanings interpreted by the elect are “unintended?” We can claim so, but this takes away from the value of symbol and of ritual. All ritual and all symbols are multivalent. Through the mystagogical process, the elect come to understand the appropriate facts about Satan, sin and evil. But none of these teachings can equal the powerful experience they have just undergone on the night of the scrutiny. It would be boring indeed if we all had the same spiritual understandings, if all of us received the “intended” meanings and nothing more. That is the beauty of religious ritual. It connects us with hope on a deep human level and it connects us with our deepest human longings which are not the same for any of us.

Thus, it is valid to say that rituals do have intended meanings, but they are much richer than these meanings ever can be because they consist of many other layers, layers which are hidden in the human psyche. There is no such thing as an “accurate” symbol. If a symbol is only accurate then it is no longer a symbol, but it has become a sign. Each time the church engages in ritual, it is like the sending forth of a helium balloon; no one knows not where it will land. There is the intended landing place, but then there are as many other landing places as there are human beings who will interpret and absorb the message in many different ways.

The intended meaning is even less important as concerns the observers. Not directly involved in the ritual, they bring experiences and background to the ritual that may have been formed outside the church setting. Whether they will absorb the intended meaning is open to interpretation, but since this is a religious ritual, if they are somehow transformed in a positive manner, then the ritual has achieved an important purpose.

No ritual can guarantee that either the participants or the observers will accept and understand the ritual as it was “intended.” As noted by Bell, rituals connect people with a reality that is beyond themselves. Each person will not be connected in exactly the same way, nor will they perceive their connection according to the same criteria. The fact that in some way they have been carried beyond their “typical” mode of existence and of understanding themselves and the world is the important outcome.³⁸

Collective Subjectivity and Ritual

In attempting to better understand how ritual and specifically the scrutiny rite is catechetical it is useful to examine an article by Margaret Mary Kelleher. In this article, she explores liturgy as acts of meaning.³⁹ While I have previously ascertained that liturgy and ritual are not exactly the same, I believe that this article gives useful insights.

She begins by citing Yves Congar, the French Dominican cardinal and theologian, and his statement that the Christian community is the subject of liturgical action. He holds that the people of God and the body of Christ are subjects of the celebration

³⁸ Bell, “Ritual ,Change, and, Changing Rituals, 35.

because of their union with Jesus Christ who is the sovereign celebrant.⁴⁰ This union is a communion which originates through the power of the Holy Spirit who is one with Christ and in him with one another. His perspective is that any legitimate local assembly can be understood as the subject of liturgical action.⁴¹

Kelleher refers to Bernard Lonergan, the famous theologian-philosopher, in speaking of human subjectivity:

The human person is one who operates on different levels of consciousness and, in the process of moving from one level to the other, achieves various kinds of subjectivity. The experiential subject who is engaged in sensing, imagining, feeling is moved to ask such questions as “What is it?” “Why?” “How often?” These questions reveal an intelligent subject, one who inquires, understands and expresses that understanding. The desire for truth promotes the person to become a rational subject, one is engaged in reflecting and judging, one who is asking such questions as “is this so?” “Is this true?”⁴²

This person can be engaged in a variety of acts of meaning. One of these is a potential act of meaning. A potential act of meaning is one in which no distinction has been made between the meaning and what is meant. Kelleher notes that images and symbols play an important role in the operations of human subjectivity. There are images that are part of the human flow of experience, but there are also images that are created by the subject to capture what has been experienced. Images are an essential element of

³⁹ Margaret Mary Kelleher, “Liturgy: Ecclesial Act of Meaning,” *Worship* 59, no. 6 (June, 1995): 482-492.

⁴⁰ Yves Congar, “L’Ecclesia en communauté chrétienne, sujet intégral de l’action liturgique,” in *La Liturgie après Vatican II*, ed J.P. Jossua and Y. Congar (Paris: Cerf 1967): 241, cited in Kelleher.

⁴¹ *Ibid*, 256.

⁴² Kelleher, 484.

the formal acts of meaning which are associated with understanding. “Without images, insights are impossible.”⁴³

Kelleher reminds her readers of Lonergan’s definition of a symbol as “an image of a real or imaginary object that evokes a feeling or is evoked by a feeling.” By feelings, Kelleher says that Lonergan means intentional responses which recognize the presence of values in whatever is perceived, imagined or represented.⁴⁴

Kelleher describes collective subjectivity and then specifically examines subjectivity in terms of the Church. She states “The church can be understood as a community which is the outcome of the gift of God’s love or God’s Spirit, and the message of Christ.”⁴⁵ This community is in the dynamic process of self-realization. The subject of the liturgical action is this community which engages in the process of liturgy. According to Kelleher, liturgy can be understood as a social, symbolic process which has the ability to communicate and create meaning. Liturgy is a symbolic process and ritual symbols are “dynamic systems of meaning which originate in a community’s shared experience and common knowledge and are transmitted from generation to generation.”

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This understanding of liturgy and of ritual symbols gives us another framework in which to understand the catechetical power of ritual. The participants in the ritual celebration are in the process of “meaning-making.” They engage in this process on

⁴³ Bernard Lonergan, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding* (New York: Philosophical Library 1957), 612-616, cited in Kelleher, 484.

⁴⁴ Kelleher, 484.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 486.

several different levels but the most important of these is that of shared levels of meaning. Through the scrutiny ritual, which in its modern form has an official text, meaning is communicated and created by and for the church. This meaning is mediated by individuals and by the group. Kelleher views liturgy as a form of ritual communication.⁴⁷ It is through this communication that the church remains a collective subject and remains a community.

Through the celebration of the scrutiny rite, the elect enter into a community of meaning. In this particular case the meaning surrounds the reality of sin and evil in the world. Through participation in this ritual, the elect make certain assumptions that are communicated through its signs and symbols. These assumptions have meaning for them individually and meaning for the church as a whole

Kelleher also speaks of the church as a self-mediating body. Each of the members helps the others “become” Christ. Through the scrutiny ritual in particular, the elect advance in their preparation to become part of the body of Christ in an active way. In this process they not only contribute to the church as a whole, but they themselves are catechized in every sense of the word. They have new meaning in their lives and they live this meaning in a unique way through the power of grace.

This chapter has attempted to integrate all the material in the previous four chapters and to arrive at the essence about how ritual and specifically the scrutiny ritual are a means of catechesis. As was noted, symbols evoke feelings and feelings evoke

⁴⁶ Ibid, 488.

responses. The symbols and the words of the scrutiny ritual evoke feelings and meaning in the lives of the elect and the faithful who are observing the rite. These responses can be transformative in nature. One thing is sure, ritual has the power to form and transform and thus rituals in general, and the scrutiny ritual in particular are catechetical.

⁴⁷ Kelleher, 490.

CONCLUSION

The scrutiny ritual, which has existed in the church since the early Middle Ages, was a powerful and dramatic rite which engaged the participants - the elect - and the faithful who were present at the celebration of the rite. This ritual was reformed and revised after the Second Vatican Council to become a part of the church's modern tradition during Lent.

This study has focused on the scrutiny rite, as a ritual with all that entails and has sought to demonstrate that this medieval and modern ritual is indeed catechetical. To begin the study, I focused on three pertinent relationships: that of theology and liturgy, liturgy and catechesis and ritual and catechesis. Through the study of these relationships, it was shown that there is a deep connection in all three relationships, of which ultimately ritual and catechesis are the final result.

As was demonstrated, liturgy can be viewed as "first catechesis" and what catechists do as "second catechesis." The role of first catechesis is extremely important as far as the formation and transformation of the candidate is concerned. It is for this reason that the baptismal catechumenate has become the basis for all catechesis in the church. Like in the Emmaus story, religious formation is a gradual experience which does not take place immediately or suddenly. Through gradual and consistent exposure to the teachings of the church, through both word and symbol, those to be catechized are transformed in both heart and mind. This is a process which takes place through ritual and all the dynamics contained therein.

Catherine Bell's work contributed to this study. Unlike many of her contemporaries, she does not focus on ritual as a means of embracing or resisting change. Bell takes a social analytical approach to ritual. She looks at ritual as ways of acting that are contrasted with other ways of acting. She also notes that rituals participate in a reality that is beyond the group.

It was noted how the scrutiny ritual applies to each of these criteria, particularly that of participating in a reality beyond that of the group. Repetition is not a particularly important part of a definition of ritual according to Bell. However, it is referenced in the definitions of many others. It was shown that repetition is an important element in the scrutiny rite, both modern and medieval. The framework of ritual according to Bell enabled us to examine the scrutiny rite as a true ritual in every sense of the word. From that point it is possible to approach it in terms of catechetics.

There was a focus on the study of the liturgical evidence concerning the scrutiny rite in Rome as presented in the *GeV*. From the *GeV* and the extensive studies of Antoine Chavasse concerning this medieval document, certain conclusions were drawn as to how the rite was celebrated in Rome. In addition, the Gallican additions to *GeV* were presented and discussed.

Through this liturgical evidence one can make a fairly certain conclusion that the scrutiny rites in Rome were celebrated on the third, fourth and fifth Sundays of Lent. Little is known of the exact practices of the ritual, but we do know of the Mass prayers and that there was a laying on of hands and a giving of salt which is highly symbolic.

Through the writings of John the Deacon, we ascertained certain details about the ritual, but more than anything else we learned that at this medieval time, the ritual was viewed as being highly catechetical. Catechesis or instruction was correlated with the symbolism of the rite in an important manner that enhances the significance of the transformation that takes place through the ritual action.

The theological aspects of the rite were presented. Attention was given particularly to the role of Satan in the early church rituals and consciousness. The work of Henry Ansgar Kelly was a focus here. It was shown that it was not until the third century that Satan became a significant focus of church teaching and liturgy. The difference between repulsion, expulsion and repudiation was noted. It is important to note that the principal difference is in the agent of the action. Through the scrutiny ritual another person attempts to remove the power of the devil while in renunciation which takes place after this, except in the case of *Quodvultdeus*, the person makes a voluntary rejection of the devil.

In this discussion there was some discrepancy as to whether or not the early Church Fathers actually thought that demonic possession took place in terms of the elect. I disagreed with Kelly in believing that Augustine truly held that the candidates were possessed by the devil. The symbolic elements of the ritual and the forceful words and adjurations used, as well as Augustine's writings on the topic lead me to this conclusion.

The role of the scrutiny rite in Carthage with *Quodvultdeus* was explored as well, as was that of Ambrose in Milan. While Ambrose did not give us a specific description

of the rite as it took place in Milan he did speak of the rite considerably in his writings. Quodvultdeus gives an excellent description of the rite as it took place in his church and it is from this description that we have obtained the greatest amount of information as to the exact nature of the rite, at least in North Africa.

Through this study, it was shown that the elect are in a process of a profound struggle with the devil and his powers. It is through the scrutiny ritual that they are given the strength to resist in this struggle and not to succumb to the power of evil in their lives. The scrutiny ritual of medieval times was profoundly catechetical, largely as a result of the dramatic nature of the rite and its powerful effect upon the psyche of the individual elect. Due to the mystagogical nature of catechesis in the medieval ages, the elect experienced the rituals for all that they were before having an intellectual understanding of exactly what they signified. This placed rite and symbol at the core of catechesis.

A review of the catechetical nature of the present rite was presented. Due to an evolution in our understanding of demonic possession, a principle change in this ritual has been that the adjurations are now deprecatory instead of imprecatory as they were in medieval times. We no longer believe that the individual elect is possessed by the devil, but we do believe that all individuals are in a struggle with the power of evil and of sin in our modern world. The scrutiny ritual catechizes the elect and the faithful as to the nature and the power of this struggle.

The present ritual is simple yet powerful. The Coetus who spent a great deal of time and effort in developing the actual ritual tried to be as true as possible to the

medieval rite. The period of silence and the laying on of hands are two of the most moving and catechetical portions of the ritual. The readings, homily and intercessions are essential elements for drawing the synthesis between symbol and action. Today, perhaps it is more necessary to use the spoken word in coordination with symbols to achieve the desired effect.

The review also addressed some of the pastoral issues that are relevant to the rite that were not of concern in medieval times. The difference between catechumens and candidates and the role of children in the rite were the principle areas of concern. These issues also pertain to catechesis as they are determinative of the perspective of the candidate and the nature of their relationship with the church. Even though the adjurations are deprecatory and addressed to the Father and the Son, it is important to respect the fact that the candidates are already baptized.

The last section of this dissertation attempted to get to the core of the relationship between ritual and catechesis. The scrutiny rite definitely qualifies as a ritual of the Roman Catholic Church. As a religious ritual it contains symbolic words and actions of various types. The medieval church was very aware of the fact that rituals catechize. Through the restoration of the baptismal catechumenate, the modern church has made a valiant attempt to restore the relationship between sacralization and catechesis that existed in the early church. While this attempt has been quite successful to date, its full potential to become a source of personal and communal transformation in the church remains to be realized.

The scrutiny ritual from both eras teaches the participants and the observers of the ritual about the power of sin, Satan and evil in the world. It presents the grace of God as a meaningful force to counteract these significant influences on the individual and the world. As powerful means of transformation these rituals are without a doubt, effective means of catechesis through which all who are connected with them have the potential to grow, to learn and to change for the better. There is no question that rituals catechize. The scrutiny ritual is no exception and is a particularly important and influential force for formation and transformation.

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