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Liturgical Catechesis as an Essential Dimension of Initiatory Catechesis in the
Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults Adapted for Children

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Liturgical Catechesis as an Essential Dimension of Initiatory Catechesis in the
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The *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA)* has been the normative document in the United States for the initiation of children of catechetical age since 1988, yet implementing the adapted rite, Part II, Chapter 1, has been problematic at the level of pastoral practice. *Journey to the Fullness of Life: A Report on the Implementation of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults in the United States* (USCC, 2000) documents significant challenges regarding the implementation of the *RCIA* for children of catechetical age, such as insufficient knowledge and implementation of the adapted rite among leadership, appropriate catechetical content, confirmation of child catechumens, and confusion between methods for initiatory and ongoing catechesis.

This study explicates the meaning of initiatory catechesis and liturgical catechesis in the context of the liturgical catechetical renewal of the Vatican II era, tracing the semantic evolution in catechesis in magisterial catechetical documents and pastoral literature. The study analyzes initiatory and liturgical catechesis in relation to the pastoral introductions and rituals in the adapted rite of the 1988 *RCIA*, which is an adaptation of the normative vision of *RCIA* Part I, a much fuller expression of the Church's vision of initiatory catechesis. In analyzing for the first time the rituals in the adapted rite in relation to the rituals designed for

adults using an integral, tripartite liturgical catechesis methodology of preparation for, celebration of, and reflection on the rites of the catechumenate, this study demonstrates the kind of initiatory and liturgical catechesis informed by the ancient catechumenate and demanded by the *lex orandi, lex credendi* of the adapted rite for children. The formative value of liturgy complements catechetical dimensions integral to the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* in the adapted rite and demonstrates that a tripartite liturgical catechesis constitutes a method that is constitutive and integral to initiatory catechesis. The study concludes that liturgical catechesis is an essential dimension of initiatory catechesis in the *RCIA* adapted for children and necessary to effect comprehensive catechesis that constitutes a process of formation and school of faith, both of which are integral to the vision of the catechumenate.

This dissertation by Diana Dudoit Raiche fulfills the dissertation requirements for the doctoral degree in Religious Education/Catechetics approved by Catherine Dooley, O.P. Ph.D., as Director, and by Lucinda Nolan, Ph.D., and Robert D. Duggan, S.T.D., as Readers.

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SELECT LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AG	<i>Ad Gentes Divinus (Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity)</i>
CCC	<i>Catechism of the Catholic Church</i>
CD	<i>Christus Dominus (Decree on the Pastoral Office of Bishops in the Church)</i>
CIC	<i>Codex Iuris Canonici (Code of Canon Law)</i>
ChL	<i>Christus Fideles Laici (The Vocation and Mission of the Lay Faithful in the Church and in the World)</i>
CT	<i>Catechesi Tradendae (On Catechesis in Our Time)</i>
DCG	<i>General Catechetical Directory (1971)</i>
DD	<i>Dies Domini (Keeping the Lord's Day Holy)</i>
DMC	<i>Directory for Masses with Children</i>
DV	<i>Dei Verbum (Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation)</i>
EN	<i>Evangelii Nuntiandi (On Evangelization in the Modern World)</i>
FD	<i>Fidei Depositum (On the Publication of the Catechism of the Catholic Church)</i>
GDC	<i>General Directory for Catechesis</i>
GS	<i>Gaudium et Spes (Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World)</i>
LG	<i>Lumen Gentium (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church)</i>
NA	<i>Nostra Aetate (Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions)</i>
NCCB	National Conference of Catholic Bishops
NDC	<i>National Directory for Catechesis</i>
RCIA	<i>Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults</i>

RM	<i>Redemptoris Missio (On the Permanent Validity of the Church's Missionary Mandate)</i>
SC	<i>Sacrosanctum Concilium (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy)</i>
SLF	<i>Sharing the Light of Faith (National Catechetical Directory)</i>
UR	<i>Unitatis Redintegratio (Decree on Ecumenism)</i>
USCCA	<i>United States Catholic Catechism for Adults</i>
USCCB	United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

CHAPTER 1

CONTEXT AND STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Introduction

The United States Bishops' study *Journey to the Fullness of Life: A Report on the Implementation of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults in the United States* (NCCB report) gives evidence that all is not as it should be regarding the implementation of the catechumenate adapted for older, unbaptized children of catechetical age.¹ The NCCB report highlights three factors that are especially relevant to this study: 1) the report acknowledges that unbaptized children of catechetical age belong in the catechumenate rather than in any other formational process for initiation; 2) it exposes that there is confusion not only regarding the catechesis for these children but also the rites to be celebrated during the catechumenate; 3) the report calls for "further study . . . regarding the extent of the implementation of the RCIA [*Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*]² with children and how it relates to their ongoing formation, especially in the areas of catechesis."³

¹National Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Journey to the Fullness of Life: A Report on the Implementation of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults in the United States* (Washington, DC: USCC, 2000), 56.

²International Commission on English in the Liturgy (ICEL) and NCCB Bishops' Committee on the Liturgy, *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* (RCIA) (Chicago: IL: Liturgy Training Publications, 1988).

³*Journey to the Fullness of Life*, vi, 41.

This dissertation addresses the call for “further study” through the lens of liturgical catechesis as an essential dimension of initiatory catechesis in the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* adapted for children. The purpose of Chapter One is to identify and contextualize deficiencies frequently encountered in the implementation of a catechumenal process for children of catechetical age. Before providing a summary of the NCCB report together with a critical reflection of its findings, it is necessary to attend to two tasks: 1) establish working definitions for both initiatory and liturgical catechesis, and 2) highlight several pertinent realities that influence the implementation of the Rite adapted for children in a contemporary context.

Initiatory and Liturgical Catechesis

It is necessary to present working definitions of two terms which permeate the entire work: initiatory catechesis and liturgical catechesis. Just as these concepts were critical to the initiatory practices of the patristic era, so are they foundational to a proper understanding of the restored *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, which drew so much inspiration from the Church Fathers. Working definitions are presented here because they are woven throughout Chapter One. A clear understanding of initiatory and liturgical catechesis cannot be taken for granted and are integral to and essential dimensions in the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* adapted for children. As such, one cannot discuss the Rite without referring to these forms of catechesis, for they constitute significant aspects of the intended catechesis in the whole catechumenal process. Initiatory catechesis will be developed further in Chapters Two

and Three. Liturgical catechesis will be developed in a more expansive manner in Chapter Four.

Both the *General Directory for Catechesis* (GDC) and the *National Directory for Catechesis* (NDC) distinguish initiatory catechesis from ongoing catechesis, clearly regarding the former as a distinct form of catechesis worthy of separate consideration.⁴ Initiatory catechesis is precisely the form of catechesis that is required for catechumens, persons from another Christian tradition who want to embrace the Catholic faith, and Catholics who need to complete their initiation, such as children and the young.⁵ It is a requirement for the sacraments of initiation. The GDC characterizes initiatory catechesis as “the necessary link between missionary activity which calls to faith and pastoral activity which continually nourishes the Christian community.”⁶ The NDC asserts that it is “a basic and essential formation” that “incorporates those who are preparing for the sacraments of initiation into the Christian community that knows, lives, celebrates and bears witness to the faith.”⁷

Liturgical catechesis, too, is a distinct form of catechesis, characterized in the GDC as an “eminent kind of catechesis” that “explains the contents of prayers” and the “meaning of

⁴Congregation for the Clergy, *General Directory for Catechesis* (Washington, DC: USCC, 1997), no. 69; United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *National Directory for Catechesis* (Washington, DC: USCCB, 2005), no. 19, 58-59.

⁵NDC, no. 17.

⁶GDC, no. 64.

⁷NDC, no. 19.

signs and gestures” as it “educates to active participation, contemplation and silence.”⁸ The NDC notes that liturgical catechesis includes reflection upon ritual celebrations.⁹ According to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC) liturgical catechesis “aims to initiate people into the mystery of Christ (It is a ‘mystagogy.’) by proceeding from the visible to the invisible, from the sign to the thing signified, from the ‘sacraments’ to the ‘mysteries.’”¹⁰ These preliminary definitions establish that both initiatory catechesis and liturgical catechesis are distinct, essential and constitutive of catechesis during the catechumenate.

Context for Implementing the Adapted Rite

Implementing the adapted rite for older, unbaptized children depends on a clear understanding of a proper relationship between the rite for adults and the adapted rite for these children. That is, the adapted rite for children of catechetical age is not separate from but rather is part of the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*. The catechesis and process of formation appropriate during the catechumenate for these children is described as well as prescribed in various documents.¹¹ As first catechesis leading toward full initiation into the Church, it is initiatory and ordered toward conversion to Jesus Christ and an embrace of the

⁸GDC, no. 71.

⁹NDC, no. 17.

¹⁰*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 1075.

¹¹The English translation of this Rite was prepared by the International Commission on English in the Liturgy (ICEL). The Rite, with adaptations for the dioceses of the United States of America, was promulgated for liturgical use in 1988. See also GDC and NDC.

Catholic faith. As formational catechesis that incorporates sequenced ritual steps, it is liturgical and relies on liturgical catechesis that is grounded in ritual experiences. This dual nature of the catechesis inherent in the Rite is affirmed in the GDC, which describes the catechumenate as “a process of formation and as a true school of faith.”¹²

However, in order for the conditions for the possibility of conversion to Jesus Christ to be in place for these older, unbaptized children in a catechumenal process adapted for their age and stage of development, parents, pastoral leaders, pastors, parishioners and persons in a position to make faith formation decisions on their behalf need a shared vision and understanding of what constitutes initiatory catechesis. It is adults who are responsible for this formation; it is they who determine whether the catechesis these children receive is truly initiatory and incorporates not only instruction in the faith but also a rich and powerful experience of the appropriate rites themselves. Such catechesis, of course, needs to be coupled with a corresponding age-appropriate liturgical catechesis, which is also inherent in a catechumenal style of catechesis.

This formative aspect of the liturgy is especially important in the adapted rite for children of catechetical age. The significance of a child catechumen’s participation in the rites belonging to the catechumenate cannot be underestimated. The NCCB report confirms that a state of confusion exists regarding catechumenal catechesis and suitable methods

¹²GDC, no. 91.

necessary for initiatory catechesis especially with children of catechetical age.¹³ It also affirms that the liturgy itself has a formative dimension.¹⁴

The formative nature of the liturgy is summarized in the phrase *lex orandi, lex credendi* (that is, the law of prayer governs the law of belief). Alexander Schmemmann, a prominent Orthodox Christian priest and scholar, contends that one must understand this famous dictum in relation to the essence of the liturgy or *lex orandi*. He insists that liturgy is “nothing else but the Church’s faith itself . . . the manifestation, communication and fulfillment of the faith.”¹⁵ Indeed, the church’s theology is revealed through the liturgy, which is why liturgy is called first theology. It is in this sense that one can say that as one prays, so also one believes.

Historical evidence demonstrating that both heretical and orthodox communities altered liturgies and prayers to coincide with their particular theological interests supports the concept that liturgy forms our believing and acting based on those beliefs.¹⁶ In explaining the origin of the dictum (*lex orandi, lex credendi*), for example, liturgical scholar Paul de Clerk traces its development and application against the Semi-Pelagians in the fifth century, during

¹³*Journey to the Fullness of Life*, 49. See also Gilbert Ostdiek, “Liturgical Catechesis,” in *The New Dictionary of Sacramental Worship*, ed. Peter Fink (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1990), 170.

¹⁴*Journey to the Fullness of Life*, 52.

¹⁵Alexander Schmemmann, “Liturgical Theology, Theology of Liturgy, and the Liturgical Reform,” in *Liturgy and Tradition: Theological Reflections of Alexander Schmemmann*, ed. Thomas Fisch (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1990), 3-39.

¹⁶Rebecca Lyman, “Lex Orandi: Hersey, Orthodoxy and Popular Religion,” in *The Making and Remaking of Christian Doctrine: Essays in Honor of Maurice Wiles*, ed. Sarah Coackley and David A. Pailin (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 131-41.

the liturgical movement in the nineteenth century, and in the apostolic writings and Modernist thought during the twentieth century. In his 1947 Encyclical on the liturgy, *Mediator Dei*, Pope Pius XII interprets the adage in two directions: first, that the liturgy makes clear dogmatic teaching, and second, that the Magisterium regulates the liturgy. Our modern-day understanding of *lex orandi, lex credendi* accommodates Augustine's broad sense of the phrase that the prayers of the Church express her faith.¹⁷

Notwithstanding nuances attributed to the adage over the centuries, prayer is not only efficacious in the order of grace, spiritually, but also at the human level, psychologically and physically. Louis Marie Chauvet's description suggests the deep level at which this formative dynamic in liturgy operates:

The liturgy thus creates a *symbolic disconnection* which places the assembly in another, non-utilitarian world. As a consequence, there is symbolically room for God; there is a space of gratuitousness where God can come. The believers effect with their bodies—through the arrangement of the place, the type of language and objects they use—what they say in the confession of faith: the risen Christ, the active Spirit accompany them on the road of their life and communicate with them in an ever-surprising way. Thus, the confession on the lips becomes the confession of faith in action.¹⁸

Given the crucial role that ritual experience plays in the understanding of how faith is formed in these examples, it is clear that failure to nurture the active and intentional participation of children in the ritual steps that are integral to the adapted rite for them puts the entire

¹⁷Paul de Clerk, "Lex orandi, lex credendi: The Original Sense and Historical Avatars of an Equivocal Adage," trans. Thomas M. Winger, *Studia Liturgica* 24 (1994): 178-200.

¹⁸Louis-Marie Chauvet, "The Language of the Rite," in *The Sacraments: The Word of God at the Mercy of the Body*, trans. Madeleine Beaumont (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2001), 106. The book was first published in French in 1977 by *Les Editions de L'Atelier*, Paris.

catechumenal enterprise at risk and undermines initiatory catechesis with consequences for the Church at large.

The Restored Catechumenate

The modern catechumenate, restored during the liturgical reform of Vatican Council II, drew its inspiration from the patristic period. In looking back to the fourth and fifth centuries for models, the Conciliar reform of initiation refocused attention on initiatory catechesis and reinvigorated an ancient process for facilitating conversion to Jesus Christ. It is in that sense that liturgical scholar Aidan Kavanagh calls the catechumenate the ecclesial and liturgical structure within which “conversion therapy” is carried on.¹⁹

With its renewed focus on conversion, the modern catechumenate has challenged assumptions about both catechesis and liturgy and, in a particularly striking fashion, about initiatory catechesis with older, unbaptized children. Truly, the restored catechumenate is “essentially gradual” and “eminently Christocentric.”²⁰ Recent catechetical directories have made the Christological aspect of all catechesis abundantly clear.²¹ However, the gradual nature of catechesis called for in the catechumenate struggles to find its rightful place in practice. Recalling how conversion was fostered and supported through the early

¹⁹Aidan Kavanagh, “The Reforms of the Second Vatican Council: The Rites of Adult Initiation,” in *The Shape of Baptism: The Rite of Christian Initiation*, Studies in the Reformed Rites of the Catholic Church 1 (New York: Pueblo Publishing Company, 1978), 128.

²⁰GDC, no. 89.

²¹Ibid., no. 98; NDC, no. 19b.

catechumenate, liturgist Mark Searle reminds modern-day pastoral ministers that Christian initiation or “christening” is a gradual process through which a person becomes “transformed into a new creation, modeled in the likeness of Christ himself.”²² When focusing on the making of Christians, the church is doing what it has done for centuries: its essential work of evangelization – that is, carrying the Good News not just to the ends of the earth, but also into the hearts of humankind to renew the human race.²³ But the process of conversion is not complete until the evangelized person becomes a Christian through the sacraments of initiation: baptism, confirmation and eucharist. Thus, the catechumenate is at its core a liturgical as well as a catechetical experience. All other sacraments flow from this essential sacramental initiation.

Because the restored catechumenate drew so heavily from the experience of the patristic period, the theological and pastoral legacy of the Fathers of the Church can serve as an exemplar, informing a contemporary understanding of how initiatory and liturgical catechesis can function in the context of the restored catechumenate. Notwithstanding documented diversity that existed in the early catechumenate, Mark Searle has rightly observed that it is the high quality of the Fathers’ preaching and teaching about the sacraments which gives the patristic age the right to be called the classical era of Christian initiation. From the mid-fourth through the mid-fifth centuries, the Church benefited from these extraordinary preachers who were pastors, teachers and theologians unparalleled in any

²²Mark Searle, *Christening: The Making of Christians* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1980), 1. The title of the book is taken from Tertullian’s phrase: “Christians are made, not born” (*Apol.* xviii).

²³GDC, no. 46.

other period in history: St. Athanasius, St. Cyril of Jerusalem, St. Basil, St. Gregory of Nazianzen, St. Gregory of Nyssa, St. John Chrysostom, Theodore of Mopsuestia, St. Ambrose of Milan, St. Augustine of Hippo, and Pope St. Leo the Great. The writings and sermons of these saints, doctors of the Church, and bishops constitute a “magnificent” and uncommonly pastoral response to the people entrusted to their care.²⁴

Cyril of Jerusalem’s example is particularly relevant for our time, as he ministered in the period following the first Ecumenical Council at Nicea (325), when the Arian heresy threatened Christian unity in the context of a pagan society.²⁵ Indebted to Egeria, a nun and a pilgrim to Jerusalem from either the south of France or from Spain, modern scholars have a written account of the liturgies Cyril celebrated in Jerusalem during Holy Week and Easter week. Cyril’s sermons, which fall into two groups, are a rich source for a retrieval of the constitutive elements and practices associated with the early catechumenate. The first group consists of the *Procatechesis*, given to those who were preparing to be baptized, and the *Catecheses*, delivered during Lent of the same year; the last fourteen of eighteen catecheses in the first group form a commentary on the Creed. The second group, a set of five post-baptismal homilies known as the *Mystagogical Catecheses*, was delivered during the octave of Easter to the *neophytes*, who had been baptized at the Easter Vigil. The witness of Cyril’s work, paralleled by the other Fathers referenced above, presents an important record of

²⁴Searle, *Christening*, 11.

²⁵Edward Yarnold, *The Awe-Inspiring Rites of Initiation: The Origins of the R.C.I.A.*, 2nd ed. (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1994), 67.

fourth and fifth-century theology, liturgy and pastoral practice, which informs both initiatory and liturgical catechesis in the landscape of the modern catechumenate.²⁶

The GDC gives further credence to the importance of the Fathers' understanding of initiatory and liturgical catechesis for the contemporary restoration of the catechumenate. In the patristic period, formation in the catechumenate was effected through three types of catechesis: 1) biblical catechesis, which was a recounting of the history of salvation; 2) doctrinal catechesis, which included explaining the Creed and the Our Father together with their moral implications as immediate preparation for baptism; and 3) mystagogical catechesis, which followed the sacraments of initiation and assisted the newly baptized in their effort to interiorize their sacramental experience and more deeply incorporate themselves into the Christian community.²⁷ Regarding the concept of mystagogy, the GDC reminds us that "this patristic concept continues to illuminate the present catechumenate and initiatory catechesis itself."²⁸

The NDC holds up conversion as a necessary element in the initiatory catechesis required for the catechumenate.²⁹ The NDC also supports the restored *Rite of Christian*

²⁶See F. L. Cross, *St. Cyril of Jerusalem's Lectures on the Christian Sacraments: The Procatechesis and the Five Mystagogical Catecheses* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1977); and Enrico Mazza, *Mystagogy: A Theology of Liturgy in the Patristic Age*, trans. Matthew J. O'Connell (New York: Pueblo Publishing Company, 1989).

²⁷GDC, no. 89.

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹NDC, no. 19d.

Initiation of Adults through its insistence that practitioners pay careful attention to other key elements that make up the catechumenate:

Implementation of the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* in many dioceses and parishes in the United States has emphasized the need for a catechesis based more directly on the baptismal catechumenate. In this context, catechesis aims to achieve a more integral formation of the person rather than merely to communicate information. The restored catechumenate seeks to foster a committed conversation through a systematic catechesis based upon a more thorough integration of Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition, through liturgical catechesis, proper pastoring, and insertion into the parish community. These four aspects lead people to a life of faith in Christ, hope in his promises and charity toward those in need. This life of faith, hope, and charity is nourished through communion with Jesus in the Liturgy, above all in the Eucharist.³⁰

These documents establish that the restored catechumenate not only brings new focus to initiatory catechesis with a renewed understanding of initiation based on conversion, but also that it names liturgical catechesis as one of the four aspects that are essential to the catechumenate.

Adaptation of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults for the USA

Emerging as a fruit of the liturgical reform's theological shift toward the primacy of adult baptism connected to conversion to Jesus Christ,³¹ the *Ordo Initiationis Christiane*

³⁰NDC, no. 3. The use of the term "conversation" in this passage is questionable. Mary Elizabeth Sperry at the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops confirms, however, that the term conversation appears in the original text that was approved by Rome, while the context in which this section appears would lead one to think that the term "conversion" may have been intended.

³¹Aidan Kavanagh, "The Reforms of the Second Vatican Council: The Norm of Baptism," in *The Shape of Baptism: The Rite of Christian Initiation* (New York: Pueblo Publishing Company, 1978), 105-106.

Adultorum was a response to the directive in the first of the four Constitutions of Vatican Council II, *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (SC):

The catechumenate for adults, divided into several stages, is to be restored and put into use at the discretion of the local Ordinary. By this means the time of the catechumenate, which is intended as a period of well-suited instruction, may be sanctified by sacred rites to be celebrated at successive intervals of time.³²

The work to accomplish this task began in September 1964, and a provisional text of the rite was completed by 1966. After further revisions, Pope Paul VI approved the *editio typica* on January 6, 1972 (the Solemnity of the Epiphany), and a provisional English translation was released in 1974 for the English-speaking world by the International Commission on English in the Liturgy (ICEL). This edition was published by the United States Catholic Conference as the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults Provisional Text (Study Book Edition)*.³³

In order to foster a careful adaptation of the *Ordo* for the pastoral needs of the United States, the Bishops' Committee on the Liturgy established the Christian Initiation Subcommittee in November 1984. Its purpose was to formulate proposals for how best to adapt the Rite for the dioceses of the United States and to assist in the implementation of the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, "especially in view of the impending release of the

³²Vatican Council II, *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (Sacrosanctum Concilium)* (SC) (Boston, MA: Daughters of St. Paul, 1963), no. 64.

³³Known as the "green book," this edition was published in 1974 by the United States Catholic Conference in a beige cover for interim use in the Dioceses of the United States of America by the Bishops' Committee on the Liturgy and the Executive Committee of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops and confirmed by the Apostolic See.

‘white book’ (final translation) of the Rite.”³⁴ In 1986, an interim edition of the “white book” incorporated minor changes as a result of the 1983 *Code of Canon Law* and the “Christian Initiation, General Introduction,” an English translation of the *Praenotanda de initiatione christiana*, which appeared in the emended second edition of the 1974 translation.³⁵ On November 11, 1986, the United States Bishops approved the final “white book” translation together with pastoral adaptations recommended by the Christian Initiation Subcommittee; this translation was subsequently confirmed by the Apostolic See on February 19, 1987. The bishops of the United States promulgated this version under the title *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults with complete text of the rite together with additional rites approved for use in the dioceses of the United States of America* as mandatory in all dioceses as of September 1, 1988. Considered the norm for adults and children of catechetical age who seek to become Catholic, no other English version was to be used after that date.³⁶

To ensure appropriate implementation of their pastoral adaptations, the bishops also approved a national plan to encourage implementation. Desiring the broadest reach possible, the plan incorporated a multifaceted approach, which included 1) regional workshops for diocesan leaders; 2) the publication of a pastoral commentary on the rite as well as the

³⁴Ronald Krisman, NCCB Liturgy Secretariat, Memorandum of Invitation, 8 August 1985 (unpublished minutes), United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Washington, DC.

³⁵ICEL, *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* (White Book) (Washington, DC, 1985), vii.

³⁶See the U.S. Decree promulgating the RCIA, v. See also Annibale Bugnini, “Christian Initiation of Adults,” in *The Reform of the Liturgy: 1948-1975*, trans. Matthew J. O’Connell (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1990), 584; and Paul Turner, “Balthasar Fischer: Educator and Chair,” in *The Hallelujah Highway: A History of the Catechumenate* (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 2000), 157.

catechumenate; and 3) a convocation for national organizations (that dealt with evangelization, ministry formation, and catechesis) and major publishers (that published catechumenate-related materials). Finally, the plan specified that there was to be a “research project in about 1991” to report on the implementation of the Rite.³⁷ Delayed beyond the specified date, that research project, which was conducted between 1997 and 2000, helps to inform one key argument put forth in this study:³⁸ that liturgical catechesis, which is so essential to initiatory catechesis, is more often than not neglected in relation to initiatory catechesis in the adapted rite for children of catechetical age.

Adaptation of Rite for Children

From the earliest Latin edition of the ritual book, consideration was given to children of catechetical age who are not baptized as infants. The incorporation into the Rite of provisions for children of catechetical age is due in large part to Balthasar Fischer, a pioneer in the liturgical movement in Germany and world-wide. His influence in this area may be attributed to his understanding of and pastoral sensitivity to children’s spiritual needs in a changing Catholic world. He was involved in drawing up the rite of infant baptism (1969) and served as chair of Study Group 22 that was charged with the revision of the catechumenate (1972). He chaired the working groups which produced the *Directory for*

³⁷Joseph P. Delaney, Chairman of the Bishops’ Committee on the Liturgy, Letter of Invitation, 30 June 1987 (unpublished minutes), United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Washington, DC.

³⁸See *Journey to the Fullness of Life*.

Masses with Children (1973) and the three eucharistic prayers for children (1974).³⁹ It is no surprise, then, that Chapter V entitled, “Rite of Initiation for Children of Catechetical Age” appears in the 1972 *editio typica*.⁴⁰ The rationale for the inclusion of this material at this early stage of the document’s development is noted by Annibale Bugnini, who was himself involved in the process for adapting all of the revised rituals of initiation:

The situation of a child differs from that of an adult because a child is still under the authority of its parents, who take part in the liturgical rites. In addition, the instruction and rites must be adapted to the age of the candidates. This rite represents the first time in history that such an effort of adaptation had been made.⁴¹

The inclusion of a chapter on children in the *editio typica* and Annibale Bugnini’s calling attention to the fact that it was the “first time” in history that such an “adaptation had been made” both attest to the important place this pastoral adaptation for children of catechetical

³⁹Turner, *Hallelujah Highway*, 156-59. A testimonial after the death of Professor Fischer by John H. McKenna attests to his love for and understanding of children, <http://www.naal-liturgy.org/memorials/bfischer.html> (accessed 17 November 2009).

⁴⁰See NDC, no. 36a, which speaks of canon law: “For the purpose of Christian initiation, children who have reached the age of reason, generally understood as seven years of age, are considered adults in a limited sense.” The age of reason is presumed to be the age at which a child has the ability to make judgments about right or wrong. Canon 852 states, “What is prescribed in the canons on the baptism of an adult is applicable to all who are no longer infants but have attained the use of reason.” See also John Hesch, “Orthopraxis in the Sacramental Initiation of Unbaptized Children of Catechetical Age: A Canonical Perspective,” *Worship* 67 (1993): 214-19, in which he discusses the equivalent meanings of “age of reason” and “catechetical age.” “Catechetical age” in the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* when used to describe these children has become synonymous with the canonical “age of reason.” From the trained religious educator’s perspective, catechetical age is also associated with a child’s ability to participate in and learn according to the age and stage of development typical of a preschool religious education setting—usually four or five years of age. While some children at the age of five or even six years of age are sometimes baptized according to the Rite of Infant Baptism, some pastors will guide parents who seek baptism for a child of this age to enroll the child in the parish catechetical pre-school program, if one is available, as suitable evangelizing catechesis for the Period of Evangelization and Precatechumenate, which takes place before admittance to the Rite of Acceptance in the Order of Catechumens.

⁴¹Bugnini, *Reform of the Liturgy*, 594.

age occupied in the minds of those responsible for bringing the restored rites of the catechumenate to fruition.

But the adaptation for children, historic though it may have been, was part of a larger effort at pastoral adaptation that characterized the entire process of developing the restored rites. Adaptation in the liturgy is a process by which the prayer of the Church is modified to make it more suitable, appropriate and meaningful to a given group of people in a given context. Through this kind of adaptation, the theology of the liturgy is more easily grasped and has an opportunity also to influence the culture.⁴² While the term “liturgical adaptation” is a relatively new expression, it is not a new phenomenon, for the method has been used throughout history in an attempt to engage a culture.⁴³ Those responsible for drawing up the restored *Ordo* had learned, for example, from the experiments of missionaries in Africa who adapted early rituals for the catechumenate to local contexts.⁴⁴ The development of the chapter on children in the United States adaptations was part of this larger pastoral effort to develop liturgies responsive to the pastoral needs of the people who would celebrate them.⁴⁵

⁴²Mark R. Francis, “Liturgical Adaptation,” in *The New Dictionary of Sacramental Worship*, ed. Peter E. Fink (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1990), 14-15. See also SC, nos. 37-40, on liturgical adaptation.

⁴³See Anscar Chupungco, “The Inculturation of Liturgical Catechesis,” in *Liturgical Inculturation: Sacraments, Religiosity and Catechesis* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1992), 132-74.

⁴⁴Robert D. Duggan, “Conversion in the *Ordo Initiationis Christianae Adulorum*: An Analysis and Critique” (S.T.D. diss., The Catholic University of America, 1980), 12.

⁴⁵Unpublished Memorandum with Final Outline to the *Pastoral Companion*, 24 April 1987 (unpublished minutes). The memorandum incorporates points from a discussion that took place at a meeting of the Christian Initiation Subcommittee on 24 March 1987, as well as responses from various consultants. The outline included in the memorandum was completed on 21 April 1987.

To aid in this process of adaptation, the Subcommittee on Christian Initiation reorganized the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* into two parts. Part I is dedicated to the periods (or stages) and ritual steps appropriate to the process for unbaptized adults. Part II is dedicated to “Rites for Particular Circumstances” to accommodate the cultural context in the United States. The original Chapter V, bearing the title “Rite of Initiation for Children of Catechetical Age” in the 1974 provisional English translation, became Chapter 1, “Christian Initiation of Children Who Have Reached Catechetical Age” in the newly organized Part II of the 1988 edition. These adaptations, based on experience and thoughtful experimentation by knowledgeable pastoral ministers, simultaneously maintained appropriate continuity and change—that is, what SC called “sound tradition” and “legitimate progress.”⁴⁶ Innovations that became adaptations were not carelessly or haphazardly instituted. Rather, having sufficient time to be developed and monitored, the adaptations evolved in order to respond better to pastoral needs.

Relationship of the Rites that Make Up the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*

It is critical to note in any study of material from Part II of the Rite that Part I is normative for everything contained in the ritual book. That is, according to the structure of the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, the content of Part II is dependent on and must be interpreted in light of the theological and pastoral norms given in Part I. This means that all the ritual steps or rites that constitute Part I function as a kind of hermeneutic for the adapted

⁴⁶SC, no. 23.

ritual steps or rites in Part II.⁴⁷ While the focus of this study is Part II, Chapter 1 (“Christian Initiation of Children Who Have Reached Catechetical Age”), this chapter counts as only one among five chapters that addresses particular circumstances. Part II also contains three appendices, which includes National Statutes with sections pertaining to children of catechetical age.⁴⁸ Each chapter together with the appendices in Part II must always be read, interpreted, analyzed and implemented in light of Part I. For these reasons, principles that guide pastoral practice with and for adults in the catechumenate in Part I also guide pastoral practice with and for children in the catechumenate detailed in Part II, Chapter 1.

Significance of Catechumenate Language

The language used to speak of the catechumenate adapted for children of catechetical age is worth noting, for naming has the capacity to affirm or diminish inherent relationships. Theologian Bernard Lonergan’s analysis of ordinary, technical, and literary language is helpful here. Language in general, he notes, embodies a set of conventional signs in a way that molds developing consciousness and also structures the world in which we, as acting subjects, operate, while technical language is specific and incorporates words used by experts or specialists. When language develops from a commonsense to a theoretical understanding,

⁴⁷See Mary Collins, “Order for the Christian Initiation of Children: The Ritual Text,” in *Issues in the Christian Initiation of Children: Catechesis and Liturgy*, ed. Kathy Brown and Frank Sokol (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 1989), 17.

⁴⁸See RCIA, National Statutes, nos. 4, 11, 14, 18, 19.

the process for apprehending a given topic or set of circumstances advances to a new level.⁴⁹ In just the way Lonergan describes, the ancient technical language of the catechumenate brought into common use since the Second Vatican Council II, continues to develop the consciousness of those who are touched by it. Indeed, this technical language, which contains literary and poetic qualities, continues to reframe the ways in which practitioners think about and implement the catechumenate adapted for children.

The pastoral problems in implementing the rite with children of catechetical age noted in the NCCB report are exacerbated when language reinforces or facilitates an unhinging of the liturgical catechetical dimensions inherent in the Rite. Further, when language reinforces an unnecessary separation between adults and children, the adapted process with children can easily spin out of its intended orbit. Both of these problems are evident in several acronyms used to name the catechumenate.

The acronym RCIA is often used to delimit the catechumenate to a “program” of mere religious education or instruction that excludes participation in the ritual steps that are constitutive of the Rite. While it is customary for Roman documents to be identified with the first letters of their titles, the easily-understandable appropriation of the acronym for this document has unfortunately set the stage for a defective understanding of constitutive elements of the catechumenate and therefore their implementation. Some would prefer that an editor had not shortened the title of this ritual book of the Church to an acronym, but at this juncture, it would be difficult, if not impossible, to turn back the clock, for it is

⁴⁹Bernard Lonergan, “Meaning,” in *Method in Theology* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1971), 72-73.

commonly used in the literature with continuing influence. Equally troublesome is the spin-off acronym, RCIC. This false shorthand for the title of the adapted rite skews a key relationship between what occurs for adults and what should occur for children of catechetical age in the adapted rite. Such a separation of adults and children also signals a disassociation between the Rite adapted for children in Part II and its rightful relationship with the Rite in Part I.

In this study either the term Rite or ritual book will be used as appropriate shortened alternatives to the longer title *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*. Unlike the acronyms RCIA or RCIC, these alternative shortened forms do not introduce new concepts or relationships and maintain the place of the Rite as an order of carefully sequenced rituals that follow catechesis appropriate to a journey in conversion based on Part I. The phrase *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* adapted for children accurately reflects that Chapter I in Part II is an adaptation for the cultural context of children in the United States of the standard catechumenal practice for adults found in Part I. Therefore, the phrase “adapted rite for children” will be used in this study alone and with the full title. This phrase honors the rightful place of the adapted rite for children among the constellation of periods and sequenced ritual steps that accompany a journey in faith acknowledged as beginning at catechetical age. Furthermore, it communicates that children of catechetical age deserve the same level of attention to the catechesis appropriate to the periods of the catechumenate as well as participation in the ritual steps designed for the catechumenate that are expected for

adults.⁵⁰ Since the conventional acronyms RCIA and RCIC set up a defective understanding of the entire catechumenal process and have indeed been compromised and complicated by misuse, they will only be used in this study when necessary to reflect others' use of the acronyms.

A Liturgical Order

These questions of nomenclature also serve as background for a larger concern: namely, the proper term for a number of rites that constitute a single liturgical order or sequence of rituals. Liturgist Liam Walsh calls "rite" a useful generic word that allows one to speak of Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist together.⁵¹ Mark Searle puts the use of "rite" in the context of an *ordo*, which, in the history of the Roman liturgy, he describes as "a normative description of how a given rite is to unfold: rubrics in more or less narrative form."⁵² Recall, for example, the Order of Catechumens in the pre-Vatican II liturgy, the Order of the Mass with its series of rituals or the Order of Christian Funerals with a tripartite series of rituals. Mary Collins, former professor of liturgy at The Catholic University of America, notes that the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* is a liturgical order, that is, "a

⁵⁰I am indebted to Sr. Catherine Dooley, O.P., for this carefully nuanced use of the phrase "adapted for children."

⁵¹Liam G. Walsh, "Rites Called Sacraments," in *The Sacraments of Initiation* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1988), 21.

⁵²Mark Searle, "Semper Reformanda: The Opening and Closing Rites of the Mass," in *Shaping English Liturgy: Studies in Honor of Archbishop Denis Hurley*, ed. Peter C. Finn and James M. Schellman (Washington, DC: Pastoral Press, 1990), 59.

series of rites and periods that taken together celebrate and resonate the one mystery of our salvation in Christ.” She cautions that the adapted rite for children is “a variant, not a separate order.”⁵³ As evidenced in pastoral practice, however, this reality still has not fully taken root in the consciousness of catechists who work with children in the catechumenate. In order to grasp what is meant by the term “order” and what is called for in the adapted rites in Part II, Chapter 1 (RCIA, nos. 252-330), it is necessary that one know well the prefatory material, General Introduction or *Praenotanda*, the “Introduction” to the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, and the introductions to the four periods of the catechumenate together with their ritual steps appropriate to Part I (RCIA, nos. 1-251).

The term *ordo*, which was introduced to practitioners in an attempt to correct an unfortunate association of the RCIA acronym with the term “RCIA program,” has posed additional challenges regarding the adapted rite for children. The term “RCIA program” is problematic in that it describes a practice of developing instruction and education preceding the sacraments of initiation, which are disassociated from the type of catechesis appropriate during a particular catechumenal period and the liturgical catechesis following the corresponding ritual step to close that period. Instead of grasping what is meant by an order of rituals, some pastoral ministers began adopting the term OCIC (Order of Christian Initiation of Children) as synonymous with RCIC (Rite of Christian Initiation of Children) to distinguish the catechumenate with children from the catechumenal process with adults. These creations clearly point to a failure to grasp what is meant by an order of rituals, and in

⁵³Collins, “Order for the Christian Initiation of Children,” 16-18.

fact, compounded difficulties in understanding, undercutting a proper grasp that *ordo* means that the rites of initiation are a unit. There is not an order for adults and a completely separate and disconnected order for children of catechetical age, as though the adapted rite for children has no connection with the rites for adults.

While there is no hard and fast rule for separating children from adults or keeping them together in the catechumenal process, there are norms for honoring the catechumenal periods and ritual steps with both age cohorts. It is acceptable for children and adults to experience some elements of the catechumenate together and some elements in the catechumenal process as a separate cohort. Prudence and common sense should guide judgments about when specific age groups are brought together. Separation of children and adults is troublesome when those responsible for a catechumenal process with children of catechetical age are oblivious to the integrity of the initiation process laid out in Part I. It is necessary to grasp what is contained in Part I before working with the chapter on children of catechetical age. Without that understanding, it is too easy to overlook the critical periods and omit the sacred rites that are constitutive of the process in the adapted rite for children. Not to be missed in Part II, for instance, are the three appendices: a) Additional Combined Rites; b) Acclamations, Hymns, and Songs; and c) National Statutes for the Catechumenate (which, having the force of liturgical law, are not optional).

When language continues to reinforce the separation of adults and children such that the adaptations in Chapter 1 of Part II are disconnected and disassociated from the principles in Part I, pastoral practice has shown and the NCCB report corroborates that departing from a

truly catechumenal process with children often follows. Eliminating the periods and ritual steps in the catechumenate is a sure sign that foundational catechumenal principles no longer guide conscious attention to the integrity of the conversion process for children. Once this occurs, the stage is set for catechetical leaders to develop a kind of liturgical amnesia that makes possible the emergence of a separate “process” or “model” for children that looks like a sacrament preparation program divorced from the true meaning and intent of the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* adapted for children. Notwithstanding attempts to remedy the misuse of the terms OCIC and RCIC, these acronyms, prevalent today on the Internet, in parish bulletins, and in conversations of parish catechetical leaders across the United States, contribute to the ongoing distortion of the catechumenal process intended for children.

While the pastoral tensions around catechesis that the adapted rite for children may have introduced could not have been foreseen, the universal church considered older, unbaptized children too important to leave out when retrieving the catechumenate in the liturgical reform.⁵⁴ The church offers these children “a structure for celebrating redemptive relationships”⁵⁵ together with words, symbols and gestures that help them make sense of the world that is at once graced and fractured.

Consider the opening words of the General Introduction (*Praenotanda*), which guides the periods and ritual steps for Parts I and II:

⁵⁴Collins, “Order for the Christian Initiation of Children,” 17.

⁵⁵Ibid., 16.

In the sacraments of Christian Initiation we are freed from the power of darkness and joined to Christ's death, burial, and resurrection. We receive the Spirit of filial adoption and are part of the entire people of God in the celebration of the memorial of the Lord's death and resurrection.⁵⁶

This opening statement from the General Introduction invites a catechesis that communicates profound mystery, from which children of catechetical age need not be protected. They are old enough to know and experience darkness and separation through divorce, disease and death. They are aware enough to delight in and long for a place to belong. Given an appropriate catechesis that includes catechesis for initiation and liturgical catechesis that flows from the ritual steps, these children are capable of becoming immersed in and reflecting upon the paschal mystery, which liturgist Rita Ferrone advances as “the central theological concept of the liturgical renewal advanced at Vatican II.”⁵⁷ Ferrone goes on to suggest that “if what we enter into in the liturgy is Christ's Passover from death to life, we participate in a transforming event.”⁵⁸

It is possible for even a young child to experience a transforming conversion to Jesus that effects an authentic change of mind, heart, attitude and behavior. Here are the words of an eleven-year-old Chinese-American girl after her full initiation into the Church in 1994:⁵⁹

⁵⁶RCIA, no. 1, quoting Vatican Council II, Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity *Ad gentes*, no. 14.

⁵⁷See Rita Ferrone, *Liturgy: Sacrosanctum Concilium* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2007), 23.

⁵⁸*Ibid.*, 25.

⁵⁹ See an excerpt of this original full-length reflection in Diana Dudoit Raiche, *Confirmation: Anointed and Sealed with the Spirit, A Journal for Younger Candidates* (Denver, CO: Living the Good News, 1997), 35.

Since I was baptized and welcomed into the church community, I have felt like another person. The teachers at Sunday school have taught and encouraged me to act like Christ. For example, when my friend Sara asked for a drink, I gave her my juice box, because I remembered “to give drink to the thirsty.” She needed it more than I did. Christmas means more to me now. Before Christmas was a holiday where relatives came over, we had a big dinner and I opened presents. Now the holiday has me remembering His importance and His birth. Easter too. Easter was when I was baptized. I try to remember Christ’s story about how he died on the cross. If asked my religion, I can now say Roman Catholic, not like before where there was nothing to say. In the future I would like to help with Christmas food drives for the hungry and visit retirement homes. A guardian angel sits on top of my clothes shelves to remind me of my religion.

This young girl gives evidence and testimony for what the NDC affirms and makes abundantly clear:

[T]hese children are capable of receiving and nurturing a personal faith. They are also capable of a conversion appropriate to their age. They can receive a catechesis that is suited to their circumstances. The process of their initiation must be adapted to the ability to grow in faith and their capacity to understand the faith. Their initiation should proceed through the same steps that the initiation of adults does. While the process may take several years before they receive the sacraments, their condition and status as catechumens . . . should not be compromised or confused, nor should they receive the sacraments of initiation in any sequence other than that determined in the ritual of Christian initiation.⁶⁰

Again the Directory guides pastoral ministers that the

Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults sets forth directives to be followed through the process of initiation of adults *and children of catechetical age* [emphasis mine] into the life of the Church . . . their formation should follow the general pattern of the ordinary catechumenate . . . They should receive the sacraments of baptism, confirmation and eucharist at the Easter Vigil, together with the older catechumens . . . Their initiation should proceed through the same steps that the initiation of adults does.⁶¹

⁶⁰NDC, no. 35a.

⁶¹Ibid., no. 35c.

Notwithstanding the recurring affirmation of the restored catechumenate in the documents of Vatican II and the value of a catechumenate style of catechesis,⁶² this kind of insistence on the integrity of the entire catechetical-ritual process vindicated catechumenal ministers who had labored appropriately in reading, interpreting, and implementing the adapted rite in the face of apathy or opposition. Consistency of the pastoral practices utilized in the implementation of the adapted rite with those called for in the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* is an ongoing pastoral challenge in spite of this official, unambiguous affirming direction from the Church.

Contemporary Context for the Rite Adapted for Children

In its renewed form, the modern catechumenate is a clarion call to adults: that is, to the children's parents and guardians as well as to the adults who assist the children in their journey toward a mature faith in Jesus Christ. It is the responsibility of these adults to ensure that the children's catechesis is in accordance with the mind of the Church. In light of this reality, attention must be given to the intended audience for the adapted rite for children and to the contemporary contexts that influence parents, children and the pastoral ministers who serve them in ministry.

⁶²In addition to the aforementioned sections in the GDC and NDC, there are several relevant sections found in the Conciliar documents: SC, no. 64; the *Decree on the Pastoral Office of Bishops in the Church* (*Christus Dominus*), no. 14; the *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church* (*Lumen Gentium*), no. 14; and the *Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity* (*Ad Gentes*), no. 14. See also the following excerpts from post-Conciliar documents: the *General Catechetical Directory*, no. 130; the *National Catechetical Directory* (*Sharing the Light of Faith*), nos. 115, 117, 119, 227; *On Catechesis in our Time* (*Catechesi Tradendae*), nos. 18, 23, 33, 37, 43, 45; and the Introduction to the *Rite of Confirmation*, no. 3.

Chief among these contextual elements is the practice of infant baptism. While some Catholic parents do present their infant children for baptism according to the Rite of Infant Baptism, the number of adults who do not seek baptism for their infants has been increasing since the late 1960s.⁶³ While a lower birth rate may account for some of the decline, other societal factors also influence parents not to seek baptism for their infant child or to seek Christian initiation for their older unbaptized child through the catechumenate.

Among these societal factors is the reduction in the number of Catholics who attend Mass regularly. According to a study by the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) called “Sacraments Today: Belief and Practice among U.S. Catholics” the “frequency of Mass attendance is a strong indicator of the general importance of Catholicism in a person’s life and of his or her level of commitment to living out the faith.” This study shows that only 23% of all adult Catholics on average attend Mass every week. While some 31% of Catholic adults may attend Mass with some regularity, on a weekly basis 8% of these are not in attendance.⁶⁴ Further, the study reveals that 56% of adult Catholics rarely or never attend Mass.⁶⁵ Comparing the data in the CARA study with data on Sunday Mass attendance collected over the past six decades, the shift looks even more dramatic. In 1945, 75% of adult Catholics attended Mass weekly; twenty years later in 1965, that number had dropped to a

⁶³*Bishops’ Committee on the Liturgy Newsletter* (Chicago, IL: Liturgy Training Publications, 1996): 52.

⁶⁴Mark M. Gray and Paul M. Perl, “Sacraments Today: Belief and Practice Among U.S. Catholics,” (Washington, DC: Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate, 2008), 2, 161.

⁶⁵*Ibid.*, 20

70% attendance rate; twenty more years later in 1985, 53% were in attendance, a 17% drop; only a decade later in 1995, the rate dropped an additional 10% with 43% of adult Catholics attending Sunday Mass; and in 2005, the rate was only 34% attending Sunday Mass.⁶⁶

Between 2005 and 2008 Sunday Mass attendance among Catholics dropped by an additional 11%, resting at a low of 23%. The steady decline in Sunday Mass attendance mirrors the decline in the number of Catholic parents who opt to seek baptism for their infant child.

The low level of Sunday Mass attendance in the United States is not without consequences for the faith, the faithful, or the catechumenate adapted for children. The absence of adults from the Sunday assembly also influences the degree to which children (who are dependent on their parents for their education in the faith) receive any faith formation and preparation for or follow-up participation in the sacraments. Reaching out to the global Church in his 1998 Apostolic Letter *The Day of the Lord (Dies Domini)*, Pope John Paul II highlights the significance of Sunday beyond that of mere obligation to attend Mass. “When its significance and implications are understood in their entirety, Sunday in a way becomes a synthesis of the Christian life and a condition for living it well.”⁶⁷

Other societal factors contribute to the reduction in the number of infant baptisms and

⁶⁶William V. D'Antonio et al., *American Catholics Today* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2007), 55.

⁶⁷John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Dies Domini*, no. 81 (Boston, MA: Pauline Books and Media, 1998).

an increased number of children seven years of age and older in the catechumenate.⁶⁸ One or both parents, for instance, may object to attending the infant baptism preparation sessions offered or required by a parish. Promises made to raise their children in the Catholic faith when marrying in the Church are sometimes not kept. A couple in an irregular marriage, especially, may be reluctant to approach the Church for their child's baptism. Presented with a case involving an irregular marriage, a pastor may ask a couple to delay the baptism of their infant child until the marriage is regularized, for the Church is looking for evidence that the parents will raise the child to practice the faith. Other factors which may influence the presentation of a child for infant baptism include divorce, living in a foreign country with little or no access to a Catholic priest or parish, or a serious illness on the part of a child, parent or other family member which upsets the rhythm of life to such a degree that baptism of an infant gets delayed significantly. Cultural and linguistic differences may become obstacles to the practice of infant baptism, or even Sunday Mass attendance itself. Such family circumstances and concerns undermine a practice which was once assumed as the norm: that is, that children born to families where one or both of the spouses are Catholic would automatically be baptized in infancy and begin practicing the faith within the family. These circumstances have contributed to the number of older, unbaptized children that rightly belong in or actually enter into a catechumenal process of faith formation leading to

⁶⁸See <http://www.usccb.org/evangelization/appendix.html> (accessed 29 October 2009). The following aggregated data are based on responses to surveys the U.S. Bishops' Conference received by March 1998. Appendix E supports the study *Journey to the Fullness of Life*, 17. Four hundred unbaptized children of catechetical age were fully initiated; 9,600 baptized children of catechetical age were brought into full communion.

full initiation. Such a catechumenal process intends that children of catechetical age participate in the sacred rites of *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* adapted for children.

National Conference of Catholic Bishops' Study

To gain perspective on the state of the catechumenate in the United States since the promulgation in 1988 of the standard edition of the ritual book, including but not limited to its application to children of catechetical age, the National Conference of Catholic Bishops (NCCB)⁶⁹ commissioned the first comprehensive study of the implementation of the catechumenate in 1997. In 2000, the findings were published in *Journey to the Fullness of Life: A Report on the Implementation of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults in the United States* (NCCB report).⁷⁰ Recognizing that pastoral assumptions and conversations needed to be tested, the Office for Evangelization at the NCCB convened a task force in April 1997 to conduct the study.⁷¹ In order to ensure as comprehensive an approach as possible, the NCCB opted for an interdisciplinary approach, inviting collaboration among the offices of the bishops conference: Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs, Education, Liturgy and Pastoral Practices. An ad hoc advisory committee from the archdioceses of Washington,

⁶⁹Formerly the National Catholic Welfare Conference, the name of the U.S. Bishops Conference changed in 1966 to the National Conference of Catholic Bishops and the United States Catholic Conference. These two entities merged to become the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops in 2001.

⁷⁰*Journey to the Fullness of Life*. See Paul Turner's critique of the use of the acronym RCIA throughout this document in "Pondering the Journey: A Review of the Report 'Journey to the Fullness of Life,'" *Catechumenate: A Journal of Christian Initiation* 23, no. 3 (May 2001): 25-32.

⁷¹Based on the unpublished minutes of the Subcommittee on Christian Initiation, this is the study that was originally scheduled to begin in 1991.

D.C., and Baltimore; the dioceses of Arlington, Virginia, Richmond, Virginia, and Wilmington, Delaware, together with the Washington, D.C.-based North American Forum on the Catechumenate provided helpful input.⁷²

Dean Hoge, then director of the Life Cycle Institute at The Catholic University of America, and Robert J. O'Donnell, director of the Paulist Institute for Religious Research, served as consultants for the project, assisted the task force and authored executive summaries of the report.⁷³ The key findings from the NCCB report about the RCIA⁷⁴ in the United States bring into sharper focus the issues associated with the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* adapted for children in the current study, as well as its connection to liturgical catechesis as an essential dimension of initiatory catechesis.

Respondents to the NCCB Report

The intent of the NCCB report was to invite and guide reflection by all those involved in the RCIA. Information was received from five groups. 1) All diocesan RCIA coordinators received information forms with 55% of them responding to the surveys. 2) Eight regional

⁷²*Journey to the Fullness of Life*, 1. The author was part of the North American Forum on the Catechumenate team that served as facilitator and recorder working with staff from the Bishops' Conference and collecting data on the practices with children in the catechumenate in three locations: Baton Rouge, LA; Baltimore, MD; and Chicago, IL.

⁷³Ibid. Dean Hoge contextualizes the report by acknowledging that there was only a 46% response rate, which suggests that the findings may include a disproportionate number of more-educated whites and persons currently more active in parishes. An attempt was made to include more participants in ethnic and multicultural parishes, but the ethnic groups, particularly Latinos, had a low return rate of questionnaires and are, therefore, underrepresented in the findings.

⁷⁴The RCIA acronym is used throughout the NCCB Report. While acknowledging the legitimate critique of its use, this study will use the acronym when it is used in the report. One can only assume that RCIA refers to an authentic catechumenate with appropriate catechesis and ritual celebrations.

consultations in forty-six dioceses elicited information from 152 diocesan leaders, 496 parish leaders, two bishops, and seventy-five priests and deacons. Diocesan personnel invited diverse types of parishes to these regional consultations: urban parishes with and without schools, suburban parishes with and without schools, rural parishes, multicultural parishes with more than one language group, ethnic parishes, parishes without a resident pastor, parishes with missions, recently merged parishes and other parishes that a diocese thought would make a unique contribution to the study. 3) The task force received 352 surveys from persons whose catechumenal formation provided fewer than three weeks of mystagogy and 348 or 46% from a second group who experienced three or more weeks of mystagogy. 4) Several individuals conducted 107 telephone surveys in English and Spanish with persons who did not complete the RCIA formation process. 5) The NCCB Committee on Evangelization prepared and mailed a survey to all bishops in the United States as well. Ninety-four percent of Latin diocesan bishops responded. Bishops of the Eastern Catholic dioceses did not respond since RCIA is not the process primarily used for initiation of Eastern Catholics.⁷⁵

Leadership

In addressing the role of leadership regarding the catechumenate, the NCCB sent a survey to bishops in 1999. In their responses, bishops stressed the importance of pastors'

⁷⁵*Journey to the Fullness of Life*, 2-4.

support, understanding, and implementation of RCIA in their parishes.⁷⁶ Yet, training opportunities for clergy dealing with initiation issues with children of catechetical age were present in only about 60 to 66% of the dioceses responding.⁷⁷ The report did not expound on the scope of the training, the level of clergy participation for such training, or the initiation issues with children that such training was to have addressed. Thirty-nine of the responding bishops indicated the greatest challenge was associated with the training of clergy.⁷⁸ In addition to these concerns for clerical training, the bishops also noted the challenge posed by the limited availability of qualified catechists.⁷⁹

Children of Catechetical Age

The NCCB report indicates that 41% of the respondents had no initiation process at all for children of catechetical age. Of those parishes that did attend to the initiation formation needs of children, 8% of all parishes reported having a full-year initiation model, about 27% of parishes had a nine-month model, 13% had a one-on-one model and about 10% reported having some other model.⁸⁰ The term “model” is not defined in the Bishops’ study, but the above descriptions are themselves inconsistent with a process of formation according

⁷⁶*Journey to the Fullness of Life*, 26.

⁷⁷*Ibid.*, 37.

⁷⁸*Ibid.*, 3 The task force received 166 surveys from 177 Latin Rite dioceses.

⁷⁹*Ibid.*, 38.

⁸⁰*Ibid.*, 28.

to the model inherent in the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* and its adaptation for children of catechetical age.

The NCCB report acknowledges that non-Catholic or unbaptized children who are enrolled in Catholic schools and who come forward for initiation in the Catholic Church need full parental support and engagement in order for their children to participate in the catechumenal formation process.⁸¹ Some significant contextual details are missing from the report in relation to these children. What, for instance, are the characteristics of the model with non-Catholic children in Catholic school? There is no indication that the children participate in a parish-based catechumenate with their peers. Nor is there any data about whether the faculty at a Catholic school facilitate a true catechumenal process within the school community. Additionally, the NCCB report gives no indication regarding the children's participation in celebrating the ritual steps appropriate to the Rite adapted for children with the Sunday assembly.

Confirmation of Children of Catechetical Age

One of the most problematic elements identified in the NCCB report concerns the sacrament of confirmation. The report reveals that only about 45% of parishes celebrated the sacraments of initiation (baptism, confirmation and eucharist) with children at the Easter Vigil,⁸² even though the Rite makes it clear that children of catechetical age are to receive

⁸¹*Journey to the Fullness of Life*, 34.

⁸²*Ibid.*, 28.

confirmation when they are baptized or received into full communion.⁸³ Given the directives regarding the integrity of celebrating these three sacraments together to maintain the unity and sequence of the sacraments in SC, the *Rite of Confirmation*, the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, the 1983 *Code of Canon Law* and the National Statutes for the Catechumenate, one can only wonder about what occurs in the practice in the other 55% of the parishes. On this the report gives no data. Did these children celebrate confirmation at a later time? Was the sacrament withheld with the intention of having the young people celebrate confirmation with their peers when they are adolescents?

The sacrament of confirmation within the context of the catechumenate adapted for children poses other serious challenges at the level of implementation. Delaying confirmation was recognized by diocesan directors in the report as a cause for concern because the practice of delaying confirmation is contrary to the RCIA, the U.S. National Statutes (nos. 11, 14, 18, 19) and the *Code of Canon Law* (canon 842.2).⁸⁴ Yet, the question about when children of catechetical age are confirmed was not asked directly.⁸⁵

Apart from the theological and pastoral issues surrounding confirmation, one of the challenges in confirming children of catechetical age involves the type of ongoing religious formation that needs to be in place after these children are fully initiated. What, for instance,

⁸³Steven Francis Callahan, "Canonical Considerations on the Requirements to Confirm Immediately Children of Catechetical Age Who Are Baptized or Received into the Church" (J.C.L. diss., The Catholic University of America, 1994), v.

⁸⁴*Ibid.*, 49.

⁸⁵*Ibid.*

is a parish expected to do with a fully initiated nine- or ten-year-old child?⁸⁶ The inference is clear: confirmation of younger children poses problems and questions about what to do with these fully initiated children after full initiation. It is possible, of course, that the sacrament is being deferred until a later age for pastoral reasons not clearly acknowledged or named. However, withholding confirmation based on fear of or inconvenience in having to adapt the current ongoing catechetical program for children to accommodate these fully initiated children of catechetical age is a practice without justification or foundation either in the Rite or other Church documents.

For all that the report does not do regarding questions concerning the sacrament of confirmation, it does succeed in uncovering tension about its being withheld. The report indicates that a diocesan policy of separating the confirmation of uncatechized Catholics and of children welcomed into full communion from the rites of initiation in the catechumenate was a cause for concern among diocesan directors of RCIA.⁸⁷ While the status of previously baptized adults and children who belong in the catechumenate raises questions that are not germane to this study,⁸⁸ the separation of true catechumens and candidates for full communion exposes dis-ease, tension, and possible conflict surrounding two differing sacramental paradigms regarding confirmation: one paradigm for initiation rooted in conversion prior to initiation and another for sacramental preparation rooted in faith

⁸⁶Callahan, "Canonical Considerations," 49.

⁸⁷Ibid., 19.

⁸⁸See RCIA, chapters 4 and 5, on previously baptized adults.

knowledge as a prerequisite for conferral of sacraments that may or may not assume prior conversion to Jesus Christ.

This revelation by diocesan directors about separating the confirmation of individuals according to their baptismal status, even for ecumenical reasons, also raises questions about peer companions for children in the catechumenate. As previously documented, the true child catechumen, who is an unbaptized child of catechetical age, should receive the initiation sacraments all at once and preferably at the Easter Vigil according to the Rite. Referring to the child catechumen, RCIA, no. 256, states that

before the children are admitted to the sacraments at Easter, it should be established that they are ready for the sacraments. Celebration at this time must also be consistent with the program of catechetical instruction they are receiving, since the candidates should, if possible, come to the sacraments of initiation at the time that their baptized companions are to receive confirmation or eucharist.⁸⁹

What is being implied here? Is readiness for confirmation based on conversion? Is readiness based on how much the children know about the sacraments and the Catholic faith? What constitutes the “program of catechetical instruction they are receiving” noted above if not the journey in faith through the catechesis appropriate to the four periods coupled with the ritual steps? Do the unbaptized, named here as candidates although they are truly catechumens, receive the sacraments at the same time and location as the baptized companions? If the child catechumens and peer companion children are celebrating together at the same time at the Easter Vigil where the conferral of the three sacraments of initiation takes precedence over conferring the sacraments in any other order, it seems reasonable to conclude that the

⁸⁹See RCIA, nos. 256, 8.

baptized peer companions could receive their sacraments of initiation at the Easter Vigil together with the unbaptized catechumens. These baptized peer companions do not need to be interpreted as the entire peer cohort, but could instead be a smaller group of children who serve as companions to the unbaptized children in their faith journey and catechesis. Though rare, the full initiation of these peer companions has been known to occur. The fact that diocesan leaders expressed concern in the report about separating the confirmation of children welcomed into full communion from catechumens being confirmed at the Easter Vigil underscores a central reality: if an individual requires and deserves initiatory formation through the catechumenal process according to the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* then participating in the rites or liturgies belonging to the Rite is constitutive of this truly initiatory process.

If, on the other hand, the confirmation of the unbaptized child catechumens is withheld, separating the confirmation of these children from their baptism and first communion and delaying confirmation to an older age in accordance with diocesan policies for the confirmation of adolescents between the ages of twelve and eighteen, then child catechumens are not being fully initiated according to the intention of the Rite. This aberrant practice is a warning sign exposing deeper issues related to failure to grasp the significance of both initiatory catechesis and liturgical catechesis. If a clear understanding of what constitutes initiatory catechesis is lacking, liturgical catechesis as an essential dimension of initiation drops off the radar and out of consciousness when the ritual steps appropriate to a true catechumenal process are ignored. The bishops overwhelmingly affirm that the RCIA

“has the power to transform parishes when implemented as the rite is intended.”⁹⁰ That the surveys on which the NCCB report draws data failed to pose sufficient questions regarding this troublesome area is baffling. How and when older, unbaptized children of catechetical age are confirmed was then and remains now a problem in current practice with theological and pastoral implications.

Mystagogy

Mystagogy is described in the NCCB report as the “weakest aspect of the RCIA.”⁹¹ Yet, the report describes a mystagogy that does not reflect “a period as envisioned by the Rite either in length or content.”⁹² It sidesteps the intended nature of mystagogy as a period with a purpose and a time frame and does not address mystagogy with children of catechetical age directly. Paragraph 244 in Part I of the Rite also guides the implementation of the period of mystagogy with children of catechetical age as well as adults. The Rite describes mystagogy as

. . . a time for the community and the neophytes together to grow in deepening their *grasp* [emphasis mine] of the paschal mystery and in making it part of their lives through meditation on the Gospel, sharing in the eucharist, and doing the works of charity.

Paragraph 330 on mystagogy in the adapted rite refers to a “period arranged by an adaptation of the guidelines given for adults (nos. 244-251).” Deepening one’s grasp of anything takes

⁹⁰*Journey to the Fullness of Life*, 25.

⁹¹*Ibid.*, 39, 47-48.

⁹²*Ibid.*, 48.

time and certainly more time than one or two sessions, merely social gatherings, or even one to three months of a so-called “mystagogy” as described in the NCCB report.⁹³

That the category of mystagogy and children is not adequately addressed in the NCCB report points to the larger problem: namely, a failure to understand what constitutes initiatory catechesis coupled with a failure to recognize that mystagogy is only the reflective component of a three-part process that constitutes liturgical catechesis. The practice of delaying the reception of the sacrament of confirmation treated in the previous section is symptomatic of these larger issues.

The NCCB report shows that the full implementation of the RCIA adapted for children has been less than robust, and indeed, less than true to the Rite itself. It is reasonable to infer from these findings that for the majority of parishes responding instructional models and formational methods predating the 1988 ritual text took precedence in practice during the decade after the Bishops’ Committee on the Liturgy called for research to uncover how the 1988 Rite was being implemented. Beyond questions around the Easter Vigil, there are no data on the ritual steps children celebrated to mark their progress in conversion through the catechumenate. It is regrettable that more comprehensive questions were not asked (that could have been asked) to give a more complete profile about the implementation with children of catechetical age. This omission suggests a lack of consciousness regarding initiatory formation in the catechumenate for children of catechetical age. It is also revealing

⁹³*Journey to the Fullness of Life*, 48.

in relation to mystagogy, which the report calls the weakest aspect of the RCIA,⁹⁴ and liturgical catechesis, which the CCC defines as “mystagogy.”⁹⁵

The NCCB report does not demonstrate a well thought out approach to the queries regarding the Rite adapted for children, and it also reveals a fragmented conceptualization of not only what constitutes initiatory catechesis for full initiation for these children, but also of what constitutes ongoing faith formation beyond initiation or post-baptismal catechesis. Except when whole families are coming into the church, there is attention given neither to the celebration of sacred rites with these children nor to any mention of liturgical catechesis.

Separating Adults and Children in the Catechumenate

The NCCB report brings to light that between 1997 and 2000, in order to accommodate interests and abilities of children in the catechumenal process, formation and instruction of unbaptized and uncatechized children of catechetical age occurred most often in an initiation process separate from adults.⁹⁶ It is unknown if the separation was due to 1) differing understandings of initiation and initiatory catechesis, 2) lack of collaboration among catechumenal ministers responsible for the two separate groups (children and adults), or 3) an inequality with regard to training, human resources, or material resources given to those who lead the adult process compared to those who are responsible for the catechumenal process with children. No matter what the cause, however, such separation signals more than a matter

⁹⁴*Journey to the Fullness of Life*, 39.

⁹⁵CCC, no. 1075.

⁹⁶*Ibid.*, 11.

of convenience in working with a homogeneous age cohort. As demonstrated, it can often mean that the catechumenal process adapted for children is also separated from the original pattern and intent of the Rite to the extent that it bears little to no resemblance to the catechumenate as a “a process of formation and a true school of faith.”⁹⁷ The NCCB report does not provide information on why this separation was the practice or specify what benefit the children enjoyed as a result of the separation. That this separation of adults and children is reported in itself suggests that it is worth noting, for such separation begs the question of whether there is full understanding regarding how the Rite in Part I for adults is integral to understanding the adapted rite for children. Does it suggest that there is a strong bias in favor of religious education instruction over against initiatory catechetical instruction in concert with one of the four periods of the catechumenate punctuated by sacred rites that mark one’s journey in conversion to Jesus? Separating adults and children in the catechumenate is not a problem as long as that separation does no harm and does not spin the adapted rite with children out of its foundational orbit with the rites for adults.

Participation in the ritual steps during the catechumenate adapted for children marks progress in the faith journey in the context of the larger community and ushers children into the liturgical practice of an ever more mature faith. Ultimately, practice of the faith is a worthy goal, for it continues to nurture even nascent faith and has the potential to lead one to desire a deeper understanding of the faith through faith knowledge. Reflecting on the ritual steps or liturgies of the Rite through liturgical catechesis enriches a child’s faith knowledge

⁹⁷NDC, no. 35D quoting GDC, no. 91.

in the context of the practice of the faith. The hermeneutical circle is completed and begins again.

Related Religious Education Research

Research by John Convey and Andrew Thompson, which employed data from the religious education assessments for Catholic students in both Catholic schools and parish-based religious education programs, sheds light on the roles of both religious practice and religious knowledge in Catholic formation⁹⁸ that informs pastoral practice with children of catechetical age in the adapted rite. In their 1999 research, Convey and Thompson found that religious practice is a slightly more important predictor of religious knowledge than religious knowledge is of religious practice. Religious knowledge alone does not guarantee practice of the faith, which includes regular attendance at Sunday Mass. Following up on this research in 2009, Convey found even clearer evidence that Mass attendance leads to a better knowledge of the faith.⁹⁹ These students are more familiar with the parts of the Mass, benefit from catechetical instruction obtained through homilies, and generally have greater reinforcement from their families who are taking them to Mass.

⁹⁸See John Convey and Andrew Thompson, "Predictors of Religious Knowledge and Religious Practice," in *Assessment of Catholic Religious Education: Weaving Christ's Seamless Garment* (Washington, DC: National Catholic Educational Association, 1999), 97-108.

⁹⁹John Convey, "Summary, Conclusion and Recommendations," in *What Do Our Children Know About Their Faith: Results from the ACRE Assessment* (Arlington, VA: National Catholic Educational Association, 2010), 110, 117-31. While maintaining the same acronym, ACRE, the Assessment of Catholic Religious Education name changed to Assessment of Catechesis Religious Education in 2001 when the tool was revised.

Convey identifies the five most important predictors of faith knowledge among fully initiated Catholic students: 1) the program of catechetical instruction (parish or school), 2) Sunday Mass attendance, 3) belief in Jesus' miracles, 4) praying the rosary, and 5) the positive influence of teachers and catechists. While this data concerns baptized Catholic students who have been engaged in faith formation for two years or more in a Catholic school or parish religious education program, there are lessons in Convey's findings which can be applied to older, unbaptized children who are becoming acquainted with Jesus and the faith life of the Church through the catechumenate adapted for them. The outcome for both groups of children is the same: faithful, practicing Catholics with mature faith who are fully committed to building the reign of God because of their conversion to Jesus Christ.

Looking at these predictors in relation to the catechumenate adapted for children is relevant to the catechumenate with children because when the Rite adapted for children is implemented as intended, it provides a "process of formation and a true school of faith"¹⁰⁰ that encourages faith knowledge through Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition. Such a catechumenate forms children not only through Sunday Mass attendance, but also through knowledge of and participation in various aspects of the liturgical life of the Church through various ritual steps in the formation process. Its *raison d'être* is to bring these children into contact and communion with Jesus Christ and to help uninitiated children establish a strong relationship with Jesus and his miracles. Constitutive of the catechumenal process is a familiarity with and practice of a variety of prayer forms including praying the rosary (a

¹⁰⁰NDC, no. 35D quoting GDC, no. 91.

mini-course in the birth, life, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus—the paschal mystery).¹⁰¹ Finally, the catechumenate adapted for children links with Convey’s five predictors of faith knowledge in its dedication to relationship building on multiple levels: establishing a relationship with Jesus, building close bonds with those who teach the faith as catechists, and nurturing bonds with those who model the faith in the parish community.

NCCB Report on the Potential of Catechumenal Formation

Through the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* and the adapted rite for children of catechetical age the church is in the process of making new Catholics and renewing its own life in the United States.¹⁰² In considerably higher numbers than that of the Catholic population at large, it is worth noting that some 64% of newly initiated Catholics attend Mass on a weekly basis, according to the NCCB report.¹⁰³ While this percentage is not broken down by adult or child categories in the report, it is nearly three times higher than that of practicing Catholics who were formed in the sacrament preparation system. Acknowledging that children are under the authority of their parents and dependent on an adult to participate at Sunday Mass with them and encourage them in the practice of the faith, the adapted rite organizes catechesis around the ritual step experiences and nurtures parents and guardians together with the children in the catechumenal process.

¹⁰¹CCC, no. 1067.

¹⁰²*Journey to the Fullness of Life*, 56.

¹⁰³*Ibid.*, 54-55.

Given the cultural context in the United States and current faith formation practices, research indicates that, according to the measure of Sunday Mass attendance, the status quo is not bringing about a desirable faith practice outcome. Even when compromised and not implemented as intended, the NCCB report gives evidence that the RCIA “is renewing the life of the Church in the United States.”¹⁰⁴

The process of formation inherent in the Rite is held up as an “inspiration” and “model for all catechesis”¹⁰⁵ for good reason: it is sound, being modeled on ancient effective practice demonstrated in the patristic period, and it does what it intends to do in the making of Christians. This is so because it acknowledges what St. Augustine advanced in his treatise on *The First Catechetical Instruction (De Catechizandis Rudibus)*: one catechizes the whole person, appealing to both the cognitive and affective aspects of the human person. His treatise on how to catechize catechumens is still an example *par excellence* on teaching the content of the faith using sound principles of pedagogy and psychology.¹⁰⁶

Liturgical Adaptations in the NCCB Report

The NCCB report exposes some liturgical challenges and problems pertaining to the celebration of the rites with adults and children. Part II of the Rite, “Rites for Particular Circumstances,” allows for pastoral judgment and adaptation as long as the adaptations are

¹⁰⁴ *Journey to the Fullness of Life*, 56.

¹⁰⁵ GDC, no. 90.

¹⁰⁶ Augustine of Hippo, *The First Catechetical Instruction (De Catechizandis Rudibus)*, trans. Joseph P. Christopher (Baltimore, MD: J. H. Furst Company, 1946), 8.

consistent with directives and guidance found in the General Introduction, the introduction to the periods and ritual steps in Part I, and the National Statues.

During the consultation phase of the NCCB report, parishes and dioceses indicated that they found a need to adapt various rites but indicated they needed help in doing so. While the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* gives provision for some adaptation, for example, adaptation by Episcopal conferences in RCIA, nos. 32-33, by the diocesan bishop in RCIA, no. 34, and by the celebrant in some cases in RCIA, no. 35, pastoral ministers in parishes and dioceses were looking for further direction and assistance regarding the types of adaptations permitted or considered appropriate.¹⁰⁷ These requests suggest that pastoral ministers in the field were not clear about the guiding principles for making ritual adaptations. Such reserve may also demonstrate that a confident *savoir faire* had not yet taken root among those in a position to make ritual adaptations. In the case of the adapted rite with children of catechetical age, unless a rite is named as optional in the ritual book, for example the Rite of Election, omitting it is not considered an acceptable adaptation.

Summary of Concerns in the NCCB Report

Both initiatory catechesis and liturgical catechesis are constitutive of the catechumenal process. As such they are essential elements to incorporate when implementing the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* adapted for children of catechetical age.

¹⁰⁷ *Journey to the Fullness of Life*, 46-47.

Acronyms that have emerged to describe the Rite have set up misunderstandings about what constitutes the catechumenate. While at times the term Rite appears in place of the full title, *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, most often the NCCB report uses the acronym RCIA without acknowledging problems associated with it.

Introducing the term *ordo* to help remedy the problems associated with turning the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* into a mere sacramental preparation program complicated the issue further. It spawned new acronyms that further separated Part II, Chapter 1, from the theological vision in Part I. The adapted rite's migration out of the orbit of Part I of the Rite further exposed the need for better training for catechists in relation to liturgy and the appropriateness of liturgical formation.

The report admits that the implementation of the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* is somewhat uneven and names mystagogy as the weakest link. Yet, the report asserts that mystagogy needs to be “restored in practice” and used for catechesis that helps neophytes gain a deeper sense of the mysteries already celebrated.¹⁰⁸ Since the CCC clearly links mystagogy with liturgical catechesis and mystagogy falters in most parishes, then it would appear that this conclusion about mystagogy in the NCCB report implies that liturgical catechesis is not only *not* in the consciousness of the pastoral leaders who participated as respondents, but also that liturgical catechesis as a methodology inherent to the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* is neither recognized nor utilized. This reality sets up

¹⁰⁸ *Journey to the Fullness of Life*, 48.

difficulties not just for the period of mystagogy but also for the duration of the catechumenate.

Admittedly, there is very little about children of catechetical age in the NCCB report. Notwithstanding the failure to appreciate what is required in the Rite adapted for children of catechetical age in order to pose the appropriate questions at the outset, the report does acknowledge that children of catechetical age belong in the catechumenate. One assumes that the NCCB report is addressing situations with unbaptized children; this is not made clear, however, and only once is there a reference to children who are eligible for full communion. While the concerns associated with previously baptized children are not the focus for this study, it would have been helpful for the report to have made appropriate distinctions with reference to children, as it did with adults. However, the report exposes a demonstrated need to deal more effectively with unbaptized children of catechetical age, noting the presence of confusion about not only the catechesis for these children but also the rites to be celebrated.¹⁰⁹ The summary provided by the Bishops' Committee on Education in the report also calls for "further study . . . regarding the extent of the implementation of the RCIA with children and how it relates to their ongoing formation, especially in the area of catechesis."¹¹⁰

A changing cultural context in the United States regarding Sunday Mass attendance, infant baptisms, and the growing number of children who find their way into the catechumenate necessitates the implementation of the adapted rite according to the standards

¹⁰⁹*Journey to the Fullness of Life*, vi, 41.

¹¹⁰*Ibid.*, 41. The Committee on Education was chaired by Bishop Donald W. Wuerl.

laid out in Part I. Eliminating the periods or the liturgies of the adapted rite in favor of offering sacramental preparation catch-up classes is problematic.

The summary provided by the Bishops' Committee on the Liturgy admits that the study failed to ask whether "children of catechetical age are being fully initiated or whether they are baptizing children and admitting them to the Eucharist, but delaying their reception of the Sacrament of Confirmation until a later age."¹¹¹ Conferral of the sacrament of confirmation is the most challenging concern with children of catechetical age and the adapted rite. Delaying or withholding confirmation is a serious problem in the adapted rite, undercutting the theology of initiation and the unity and sequence of the initiation sacraments.

The NCCB report alerts readers that while children are almost always in a separate formation process, the children are usually integrated with the adults in the celebration of the rites when whole families are preparing to enter the Church.¹¹² According to the report, "further study seems to be needed regarding the extent of the implementation of the RCIA with children and the kind of adaptations that are occurring, as well as the need for some guidance and suggestions for appropriate adaptations."¹¹³ When adaptations emerge as a variant on the intended model of the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* adapted for children, then they cease to be adaptations and become aberrations.

¹¹¹*Journey to the Fullness of Life*, 49. The Committee on the Liturgy was chaired by Archbishop Oscar H. Lipscomb.

¹¹²*Ibid.*, 41.

¹¹³*Ibid.*, 49.

Pastoral leadership is essential for the adapted rite to be implemented as intended with liturgical catechesis functioning as an essential dimension of initiatory catechesis. The report calls for better leadership. It admits that training of pastors as well as catechists are key elements in implementing the catechumenate as intended.

Conclusion

In the years since the United States Bishops commissioned a study of the implementation of the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* and the NCCB report *Journey to the Fullness of Life* was released, no other such study specific to the implementation of *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* and its adaptation for children of catechetical age has been commissioned by the Bishops' Conference or any other national agency. Even without sufficient focused attention to questions about the adapted rite for children, the NCCB report provides an important profile of concerns, challenges and problems that have surfaced across the United States in the implementation of the Rite adapted for children.

From 1988, when the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* was promulgated as the norm for all Catholic parishes in the United States, to 1997, when the NCCB task force began the study, resistance to adopting a catechumenate according to the Rite as the normative process for bringing new Catholic adults into the Church has persisted. Resistance has overflowed into competing interpretations of the catechumenal process.¹¹⁴ Further, confusion

¹¹⁴Two associations with differing approaches to promoting and training pastoral ministers in the implementation of the RCIA are the North America Forum on the Catechumenate in Washington, DC and the Association for Catechumenal Ministry in Clinton, Maryland.

about what to do with older unbaptized children of catechetical age has been a recurring theme in pastoral experience and conversations.¹¹⁵ Pastors and catechetical leaders in some locales demonstrate ambivalence or reluctance in implementing a catechumenal process adapted for children that includes attention to the four periods in the Rite (precatechumenate, catechumenate, purification and enlightenment and mystagogy) together with full participation in the ritual steps belonging to the Rite.

Fully implementing a catechumenate adapted for children of catechetical age continues to be challenging in pastoral practice.¹¹⁶ A catechumenate adapted for children that is “a process of formation and a true school of faith”¹¹⁷ competes with a default position of sacramental preparation programs used as catch up classes for children who were not baptized according to the rite of infant baptism. While all catechesis is to have a catechumenal style of catechesis, understanding what that means in practice is still a work in progress. *Journey to Fullness of Life* exposes some of the more troublesome practices that

¹¹⁵From 1998 through 2001, the author participated in several online e-groups dedicated to the Christian initiation of children of catechetical age. Notwithstanding the theological foundations as well as pastoral guidance and direction available in documents and literature, online conversations revealed that catechists and pastors struggled with the same issues that surfaced in the NCCB report as they attempted to address the educational and formation needs of older unbaptized children. Since 1997 to the present the National Association of Parish Catechetical Directors (NPCD), a parish-based catechetical membership group of the National Catholic Educational Association, has hosted “dre-talk,” a Yahoo e-group for parish catechetical leaders. Practitioners who visit that site and work with older unbaptized children continue to describe problems similar to those highlighted in the NCCB report. “Dre-talk” conversations indicate that, while some progress has been made in the intervening years, catechetical leaders still struggle in interpreting what kind of catechetical instruction and formation process to use based on the *Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults* adapted for children.

¹¹⁶“Statement on the Pastoral Challenge of Implementing the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* for Children Who Have Reached Catechetical Age,” in *Readings in the Christian Initiation of Children*, ed. Victoria M. Tufano (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 1994), 172-75.

¹¹⁷NDC, no. 35d.

inform the rationale for liturgical catechesis as an essential dimension of initiatory catechesis in the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* adapted for children. Before turning attention to a focus on liturgical catechesis, it is necessary to attend to initiatory catechesis in Chapter Two.

CHAPTER 2

FOCUS ON INITIATORY CATECHESIS: AN EVOLUTIONARY PERSPECTIVE

Introduction

Initiatory catechesis is a relatively new term in the catechetical lexicon, having received heightened attention only recently in the two latest catechetical directories. The first of these directories, the 1997 *General Directory for Catechesis* (GDC)¹ brought together in a systematic and comprehensive manner the post-Vatican II catechetical documents. Its purpose was to arrive at a balance between two principal requirements: first, the contextualization of catechesis in evangelization envisioned by *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (EN),² and second, the appropriation of the content of the faith as presented in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC).³ The second of these directories, the 2005 *National Directory for Catechesis* (NDC),⁴ enculturated the message and thrust of the GDC for the Church in the United States. While the GDC (like its predecessor, the 1971 *General Catechetical*

¹Congregation for the Clergy, *General Directory for Catechesis* (Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference, 1997).

²Paul VI, Apostolic Exhortation *On Evangelization in the Modern World* (*Evangelii nuntiandi*) (Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference, 1975).

³GDC, no. 7. See *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC) (Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference-Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1994).

⁴United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *National Directory for Catechesis* (Washington, DC: USCCB, 2005).

Directory) is directed to the universal Church in order to provide “fundamental theological-pastoral principles drawn from the Church’s Magisterium,”⁵ the NDC expresses the pastoral care of the United States Bishops for catechesis and serves as a reference point for the formation of catechists and production of catechetical materials.⁶

Such new terminology does not just appear out of thin air. It has a genesis, a context, a story. The term initiatory catechesis has emerged from a deepening understanding of catechesis in general, as evidenced not only by reclaiming with greater clarity the relationship between liturgy and catechesis but also by a more integrated understanding of catechesis and evangelization. Both of these advances are manifest in the emergence of the modern baptismal catechumenate and a balanced attention to the catechesis for initiation of all age groups. Indeed, both the baptismal catechumenate and the term initiatory catechesis itself are situated within the context of the liturgical catechetical renewal of post-Vatican Council II. The GDC affirms that the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* (RCIA) “has proved especially useful for catechetical renewal.”⁷ The catechesis appropriate for formation through the Rite, then, is an initiatory catechesis, as defined and described in the two most recent catechetical directories. Such initiatory catechesis is, therefore, a constitutive form of

⁵GDC, nos. 9, 13.

⁶NDC, no. 5. The NDC does not supplant the Protocol for catechetical materials based on the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, which is definitive in guiding the selection of catechetical content. Page numbers are provided for the NDC and sometimes the GDC because some paragraphs cover more than one page.

⁷GDC, no. 3.

catechesis for the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, which includes the Rite adapted for children of catechetical age in Part II, Chapter 1.

While this new term is the fruit of positive catechetical developments, it is also tethered to tensions in catechesis that continue to be present in pastoral practice. These tensions are evidenced in the lingering debates regarding content–method, inductive–deductive, and instruction–formation dualities. An unfortunate result of these tensions is that initiatory catechesis is not yet fully understood in pastoral ministry, and its positive aspects are often lost in the din of debates. On the one hand, catechumenal ministers tend to emphasize liturgy and the liturgical year as an organizing principle for catechizing in the catechumenate. On the other, bishops advance that, as important as liturgy is and as much as liturgical education has been lacking,⁸ direct instruction on Catholic doctrine and Tradition through systematic catechesis is necessary.

Pastoral questions about what constitutes catechesis for initiation have fueled a long-standing, ongoing conversation in pastoral literature.⁹ Some prefer to organize catechesis during the catechumenate around an American-style, curriculum-based instruction rather than adopt a catechesis based on the Sunday readings.¹⁰ In the context of a child’s experience,

⁸GDC, no. 30: “Frequently however, the practice of catechesis testifies to a weak and fragmentary link with liturgy.”

⁹Sylvia DeVillers, “Initiation and Catechesis: Suitable Partners in Today’s Church?” *Catechumenate: A Journal of Christian Initiation* 29, no. 4 (July 2006): 9-19. See also Steven M. Robich, “Christian Initiation of Children: No Longer a Class or Grade Issue,” *Catechumenate: A Journal of Christian Initiation* 23, no. 1 (January 1989): 9-21.

¹⁰See Robert D. Duggan with Thomas H. Groome, “Lectionary-based Catechesis,” *Church* 8 (Spring 1992): 14-20.

such instruction is thought to be the most effective way to communicate doctrine, which, of course, is a fundamental catechetical component in the catechumenal process. Those who prefer the scripture-based approach, however, advert to the concept of catechesis advanced as a “ministry of the word” in the *General Catechetical Directory*.¹¹ Still others contend that catechesis is ineffective without a strong connection to the community of faith and the liturgy.¹² Experience has also shown that bringing people to Jesus through social justice concerns is an effective means of evangelization and catechesis.¹³ This kind of fragmentation in catechesis, which is all the more prevalent when catechetical leaders or catechists are not well steeped in the roots, purpose or tasks of initiatory catechesis, contradicts the comprehensiveness that initiatory catechesis advances. Such splintering of catechetical approaches undermines a holistic grasp of the catechetical enterprise. This presents problems for children of catechetical age who depend on others to provide a comprehensive initiatory catechesis that will serve as both instruction and formation. Emphasizing one aspect of catechesis at the expense of others only serves to fragment, confuse, and even diminish the full formation in faith of these children.

The fact that the GDC advances this new term, initiatory catechesis, gives evidence for a new horizon of integration, harmony and balance, which official catechetical documents

¹¹Margaret Nutting Ralph, “Breaking Open the Word and Catechumenal Catechesis,” *Catechumenate: A Journal of Christian Initiation* 30, no. 1 (January 2008): 12-19.

¹²Michael H. Marchal, “Ending the Divorce: RCIA and Sunday Worship,” *Catechumenate: A Journal of Christian Initiation* 31, no. 2 (March 2009): 10-18.

¹³MaDonna Thelen, “The Witness of Their Lives: Practical Reflections on Service as Part of the Initiation Process,” *Catechumenate: A Journal of Christian Initiation* 27, no. 1 (January 2005): 18-22.

now embrace.¹⁴ Representing an end point in the “semantic evolution” that the term catechesis has undergone over twenty centuries,¹⁵ initiatory catechesis contributes significantly toward a resolution of the aforementioned tensions and the promotion of a more balanced, integrated, and comprehensive approach to catechesis.

The GDC addresses the concern that “the practice of catechesis testifies to a weak and fragmentary link with liturgy,”¹⁶ and also clearly establishes that “catechesis is intrinsically bound to every liturgical and sacramental action.”¹⁷ Using the clear connection between liturgy and catechesis as a starting point, this chapter examines the constitutive elements of initiatory catechesis as a unified whole that children of catechetical age deserve in the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* adapted for them. This examination provides an appropriate context in which to address a key issue regarding the catechumenate identified in the GDC: namely, that “catechists do not yet have a full understanding” of “the conception of catechesis as a school of faith, an initiation and apprenticeship in the entire Christian life.”¹⁸ Indeed, more recent changes in the context of a restored catechumenate only serve to

¹⁴NDC, no. 20, refers to the six tasks of catechesis: Knowledge of the faith, Knowledge of the meaning of liturgy and the sacraments, Moral formation in Jesus Christ, Teaching Christians how to pray with Christ, Preparing Christians to live in community and participate actively in the life and mission of the church, and Promoting a missionary spirit that prepares the faithful to be present as Christians in society. “These six tasks of catechesis constitute a unified whole by which catechesis seeks to achieve its objective: the formation of disciples of Jesus Christ” (ibid.).

¹⁵GDC, no. 35.

¹⁶Ibid., no. 30.

¹⁷Pope John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Catechesi Tradendae* (CT) no. 30 (Boston, MA: Daughters of St. Paul, 1979).

¹⁸GDC, no. 30.

highlight the need to establish the intrinsic value that liturgy has as constitutive in initiatory catechesis. To bring initiatory catechesis into focus, this chapter will trace an evolution of catechesis-related terminology used in key catechetical documents, while also examining pertinent shifts that inform initiatory catechesis. Understanding these undercurrents helps advance appreciation for the initiatory catechesis that emerges in the GDC and NDC.

Semantic Evolution

All too often, one's interpretation of initiatory catechesis depends on which document one last read, the experience-base of the catechist, or the age group of the intended audience. Catechetical documents since the Second Vatican Council, however, cannot be read in isolation. First, these documents are a product of their time and must be read with an understanding of the historical context in which they were produced and the issues or concerns they intend to address. Second, it is important to name the presuppositions or assumptions that are just under the surface of the text, for what is not addressed is just as important as what is promulgated. Third, there is a cumulative effect in how insights and developments unfold across time, which can be missed by focusing on only one document in isolation. In that light, documents need to be studied in concert with one another, for initiatory catechesis is the fruit of developments across time and is situated within a constellation of historical contexts, a definitive body of doctrine, and six universal catechetical tasks. None of these are mutually exclusive. Initiatory catechesis neither proposes a business as usual approach to catechesis nor does it discard past best practices.

Since the close of Vatican Council II, documents on catechesis have appeared in rapid succession, each providing more finely nuanced language based on new insights.¹⁹ No fewer than thirty authoritative documents have emerged since the Council, contributing each in its own way to the “semantic evolution”²⁰ in catechesis and catechetical terminology.²¹ According to Berard Marthaler, Professor Emeritus of Religion and Religious Education at The Catholic University of America, “the post-Vatican II documents throb with a different spirit and expand the vision of the nature, tasks, and scope of catechesis.”²² In light of these developments the Second Vatican Council is as much a catechetical as it is a liturgical council. In its unique way, it has served to bring full circle a *rapprochement* between catechesis and liturgy that has also been evolving since the emergence of the liturgical and catechetical movements. These movements will be addressed in a subsequent chapter, for they are a link to the conditions that facilitated the new directions that made the production of these documents possible.

¹⁹GDC, nos. 1-13 highlights especially the *General Catechetical Directory* (1971), *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* (1972), *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (1975), *Catechesi Tradendae* (1979), and twelve encyclicals of Pope John Paul II that “themselves constitute a synthetic corpus of coherent doctrine” (ibid., no. 5) with special notice given to *Redemptor Hominis* (1979), *Dives in Misericordia* (1980), *Dominum et Vivificantem* (1986), *Redemptoris Missio* (1990), and the Apostolic Constitution *Fidei Depositum*, which presented the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (promulgated 1992, published in English 1994). NDC supersedes *Sharing the Light of Faith: National Catechetical Directory for the Catholics of the United States* (1979).

²⁰GDC, no. 35.

²¹Ibid., no. 35. See also Berard L. Marthaler, *The Nature, Tasks and Scope of the Catechetical Ministry: A Digest of Recent Church Documents* (Washington, DC: National Catholic Educational Association, 2008).

²²Marthaler, *The Nature, Tasks and Scope of the Catechetical Ministry*, 8.

As a relatively new term, initiatory catechesis represents a more finely nuanced apprehension of what we mean by catechesis for initiation or baptismal catechesis. Manifesting the insights of the aforementioned documents, the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* is oriented toward baptismal catechesis, which is named as the inspiration and model for all catechesis.²³ Initiatory catechesis then takes on the privileged place that is given to the baptismal catechumenate in the GDC, standing squarely within and advancing the ecclesial nature of all catechesis. It emerges from a context of a restored catechumenate that incorporates four elements: first, the proclamation of the gospel together with an education in the faith to arouse conversion to Jesus; second, the ritual steps to promote formation in Catholic word and sacrament; third, insertion into the Christian community to foster apprenticeship in the Christian life; and fourth, apostolic witness to the faith in the public square.

Tracing the Semantic Evolution

Several documents deserve attention in tracing a semantic evolution in catechesis: the *General Catechetical Directory* (1971), the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* (1972), *Evangelli Nuntiandi* (1975), *Sharing the Light of Faith* (1979), *Catechesi Tradendae* (1979), the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (1992), the *General Directory for Catechesis* (1997), and the *National Directory for Catechesis* (2005). Looking back across the decades, the task

²³GDC, no. 91.

is to identify the beginnings of initiatory catechesis in the aforementioned documents that have contributed to the evolution of initiatory catechesis as it is now defined and understood.

The Second Vatican Council called for a renewal of catechesis and to that end prescribed that a “directory be prepared dealing with fundamental principles . . . organizations, and the composition of books” on catechesis.²⁴ Emerging as a first answer to that call, the *General Catechetical Directory* (GCD) introduced the “directory” as a new genre to the field of catechesis. The function of this new form was to lay a foundation for making prudent pastoral choices related to catechesis based on theological and pastoral principles. This represented a shift away from the previous catechism genre’s summary of theology, sometimes in question and answer format, to an emphasis on catechesis as a “ministry of the word.”²⁵ As a groundbreaking document, the GCD named several forms of the ministry of the word: evangelization, catechesis, liturgical preaching, and theology. In addition to this significant shift in its approach to catechesis, the GCD treated catechesis in a comprehensive and systematic way, bringing together four signs of catechesis: the church, the bible, the liturgy, and Christian living.²⁶ This comprehensive convergence of naming forms and signs of catechesis is significant as an initial development in the semantic evolution.

²⁴Second Vatican Council, *Decree on the Pastoral Office of Bishops in the Church (Christus Dominus)* no. 44 (Boston, MA: St. Paul Books and Media, 1965). See also *Sharing the Light of Faith*, no. 2.

²⁵Sacred Congregation of the Clergy, *General Catechetical Directory* (GCD) no. 17 (Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference, 1971).

²⁶Marthaler, *Digest of Recent Church Documents*, 19.

Initiated by the Magisterium, the GCD (together with the Code of Canon Law) is a first step in a protracted series of steps that have charted a new horizon for a new catechetical map. This new map involves a process of reframing mental constructs about catechesis by first identifying individual aspects of the catechetical enterprise and then bringing them together as an integrated whole. Such an integration calls for harmony and balance when reframing a process of catechesis for initiation.

Since our task is one of better understanding initiatory catechesis, theologian Bernard Lonergan's analysis of understanding in *Method in Theology* is helpful:

[W]e grasp the unity, the whole, only through the parts. At the same time the parts are determined in their meaning by the whole which each part partially reveals. Such is the hermeneutic circle. Logically it is a circle. But coming to understand is not a logical deduction. It is a self-correcting process of learning that spirals into the meaning of the whole by using each new part to fill out and qualify and correct the understanding reached in reading the earlier parts.²⁷

The multitude of documents that have emerged since Vatican II attests to such an iterative, self-correcting process of examining the parts to apprehend the meaning of the whole. The process of producing these documents is itself an exercise in the process of understanding.

Directories and Documents: New Vision and New Methods

Predating this rapid progression of catechetical and liturgical documents, the catechism genre had served at once the demands of content and method, functioning well in a context of a cohesive Catholic Christian community characterized by discipline and

²⁷Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1971), 159.

nourished by wide-spread popular piety.²⁸ At the close of the Council in 1965, the Latin Mass was still celebrated world wide, with some 70% of Roman Catholics in the United States still attending Mass every Sunday.²⁹

The challenge to the catechism method of instruction, described in the GCD, incorporated not just content, but insights emerging from the social sciences. Within a few short years following Vatican Council II a cadre of catechists (mostly professed religious who had been steeped in catechesis and spiritual formation in a religious community) embraced new methods for teaching the content of the faith, using catechetical text books, scripture, and Mass in the vernacular. With uncommon commitment to the demands of the gospel and extensive education in faith, this virtual army of women and men were primed for the new catechetical challenge.

Following the lead of the GCD, catechetical sessions for children began to be organized around a doctrinal concept that was developed by starting with some aspect of the child's experience. The intention in using experience as a starting point was to help a child understand the concept being presented. Then, by drawing upon a suitable biblical text, the lesson culminated in an activity intended to unite experience, doctrine and scripture.

²⁸See Mary Charles Bryce, "Evolution of Catechesis from the Catholic Reformation to the Present," in *A Faithful Church*, ed. John Westerhoff and O. C. Edwards (Wilton, CT: Morehouse-Barlow, 1981), 204-16. Bryce likens the catechism genre to a fragmentary approach to catechesis in contrast to the integrated biblical narrative approach of the early and medieval church, which was coupled with the experience of sacramental life, Christian witness, and testimony.

²⁹D'Antonio et al., *American Catholics Today*, 55.

Prayerful experiences usually accompanied the lesson as a part of reinforcing the concept.³⁰

This methodological change was met with enthusiasm, for it opened a way to honor the content of the faith in a context of the new insights coming from psychology on the development of the child.

Sharing the Light of Faith: National Catechetical Directory for Catholics of the United States (SLF) interpreted the directory genre presented in the GCD for catechetical leaders in the United States. SLF, the first national directory, describes the catechumenate in a somewhat undifferentiated, uneven, and tentative approach, addressing the “rite of Christian initiation of adults,” not as a Roman liturgical document, but as a means of catechesis for “both catechumens and adult catechesis.”³¹ Published about eight years after the GCD and the RCIA, SLF appeared before the period of experimentation with the restored catechumenate had closed and a full decade before the promulgation of the 1988 edition of the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* adapted for the United States. Thus, its presentation regarding the catechumenate is limited and its assumptions are based on the known: children of catechetical age are presumed to have been baptized as infants and in need of sacramental catechesis from the perspective of needing a religious education. The GCD had led the way,

³⁰See Catherine Dooley, “Catechumenate for Children: Sharing the Gift of Faith,” *The Living Light* 24, no. 4 (June 1988): 316.

³¹SLF, no. 9. Only later in nos. 115, 117, 119 and 227 does the directory refer to the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* as a Roman document. The fact that it is a liturgical document appears to be presumed. The periods of the catechumenate are named, but the ritual steps receive no attention as part of the catechetical formation. The sacraments receive attention as “end points.”

³²Kenneth Boyack, “What is ‘New’ in the New Evangelization?” *The Living Light* 30, no. 1 (Fall 1993): 3-8.

calling for more attention to the catechumenate emerging from the Second Vatican Council; SLF reinforced its importance, but only as one among other important aspects.

While SLF brings attention to catechesis according to age groups, the development or differentiation between and among all the groups that landed in the relatively new *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* is less well developed. Unbaptized catechumens, candidates from another ecclesial communion, lapsed Catholics or Catholic adults who are in need of adult catechesis are all merged into a single catechumenate. SLF does suggest that the catechumenate is appropriate for Catholic adults who have already been baptized. The distinctions between catechumens and candidates, however, as well as the distinctions between Catholics in need of completing sacraments of initiation or candidates coming from other ecclesial communions, are not well developed. Incorporating children of catechetical age into the catechumenate is not yet in the field of vision.

The presence of such mixed audiences in the newly-restored catechumenate, with their differing catechetical and formational needs (and sometimes agendas), often presented pastoral challenges for catechetical leaders in the early years of implementing the catechumenate in the United States. Pastoral practice first exposed the challenge in combining all aspects of initiatory catechesis for diverse groups before clearly understanding its constitutive parts, purpose and roots. Blurring the boundaries between catechesis for initiation (based on the missionary model) and catechesis for renewing commitment (based on conversion for the already initiated) exposed working assumptions that failed: first, one needs to pay attention to the faith journey of the person as an individual, rather than as an

idealized group; and second, the catechumenate is not just another program for catechesis. The concept of an already baptized person needing initiatory catechesis was a new insight emerging from the “new evangelization” articulated in EN.³² The elements that eventually become more finely developed as the six universal tasks of catechesis in the GDC are distributed throughout these earlier documents, but not yet well-collated.³³

Evolution in Evangelization

The evolutionary process in catechesis was on its way, but still had a longer journey to travel. Taking its cue from the *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World Gaudium et spes* (GS), the GCD linked evangelization with the Church’s essential mission. While evangelization was a central theme, the issues surrounding the addendum regarding “The First Reception of the Sacraments of Penance and the Eucharist” had served to distract many from taking full notice of evangelization as a primary thrust in the document.³⁴ The Church’s central mission of evangelization was moved further into the forefront through the *Decree on the Church’s Missionary Activity (Ad Gentes)* (AG), *Code of Canon Law*,³⁵ and

³²Kenneth Boyack, “What is ‘New’ in the New Evangelization?” *The Living Light* 30, no. 1 (Fall 1993): 3-8.

³³GCD, no. 22, and SLF, no. 36, include language that manifests the tasks of catechesis that are later developed in the GDC and NDC.

³⁴Marthaler, *Digest of Catechetical Documents*, 37.

³⁵See Canon 781, quoted in Marthaler, *Digest of Recent Catechetical Documents*, 37: “The whole Church is by its nature missionary and the work of evangelization must be held as a fundamental duty of the people of God.”

the *Decree on the Pastoral Office of Bishops in the Church (Christus Dominus)* (CD). In that latter decree, instruction is directly linked with evangelization in this manner:

Bishops should be especially concerned about catechetical instruction. Its function is to develop in women and men a living, explicit and active faith, enlightened by doctrine. It should be very carefully imparted, not only to children and adolescents but also to young people and even to adults. In imparting this instruction, the teachers must observe an order and method suited not only to the matter in hand but also to the character, the ability, the age and the lifestyle of their audience. This instruction should be based on holy scripture, tradition, liturgy, and on the teaching authority and life of the church.³⁶

Before EN appeared, evangelization and catechesis were understood as two separate aspects of the ministry of the word.³⁷ Evangelization was addressed to unbaptized unbelievers, while catechesis was addressed to baptized believers or the baptized person who had not experienced conversion. Truly, the Second Vatican Council had laid the foundation for Catholic evangelization and the mission of AG. However, Pope Paul VI signaled a shift regarding evangelization when he remarked to the College of Cardinals well before the 1974 Synod that

[t]he conditions of the society in which we live oblige all of us therefore to revise methods, to seek by every means to study how we can bring the Christian message to modern man. For it is only in the Christian message that modern man can find the answer to his questions and the energy for his commitment of human solidarity.³⁸

After EN was released, it was clear that a shift in the understanding of evangelization had occurred during the General Assembly of the 1974 Bishops' Synod. The influence of this

³⁶CD, no. 14.

³⁷Marthaler, *Digest of Catechetical Documents*, 99.

³⁸EN, no. 3.

first-ever exhortation on evangelization has been far-reaching, capturing the attention of catechetical leaders who engage in catechumenal ministry:

A means of evangelization that must not be neglected is that of catechetical instruction . . . Moreover, without neglecting in any way the training of children, one sees that present conditions render ever more urgent catechetical instruction, under the form of the catechumenate, for innumerable young people and adults who, touched by grace, discover little by little the face of Christ and feel the need of giving themselves to Him.³⁹

EN further develops the notion of applying the content of evangelization to baptized Catholics who are in need of a new evangelization. This interpretation was a pastoral response to the disintegration of Christian culture, which had begun first in Europe (especially in France) after World War II, and which was seen at the time as a developing reality throughout the world.⁴⁰ The document is noteworthy in advancing the evolution in catechesis because it brought about a both-and approach to evangelization: the content for evangelization needs catechesis and evangelizing catechesis is required for the baptized in need of conversion. However, as the concept of evangelization develops alongside the notion of a new evangelization, the expanded understanding of evangelization does not negate the mission AG established at the Council.⁴¹ Regarding the “Methods of Evangelization” in EN, it is noteworthy that Pope Paul VI posits that “[t]he obvious importance of the content of evangelization must not overshadow the importance of the ways and means.”⁴² This shift in

³⁹EN, no. 44.

⁴⁰See Kenneth Barker, “Jacques Audinet: Catechesis as Pastoral Action,” *The Living Light* 15, no. 1 (Spring 1978): 128-40.

⁴¹GDC, no. 5, p. 9, referencing John Paul II, Encyclical *Redemptoris Missio*, 7 December 1990.

⁴²EN, no. 40.

thinking about evangelization exerts an enormous influence on the evolutionary development of initiatory catechesis in relation to conversion for baptism.

Evolution in Catechesis in *Catechesi Tradendae* (*On Catechesis in Our Time*)

Catechesi Tradendae (CT) addresses three major concerns in catechesis: 1) pedagogy needs evangelization,⁴³ 2) catechesis must be systematic,⁴⁴ and 3) catechesis is ecclesial.⁴⁵ While the final document represents a deductive and prescriptive approach to catechesis, getting to the final product involved interplay between an inductive and deductive process.⁴⁶ During this interplay Cardinal Lorscheider of Fortaleza, Brazil, (“*Rapporteur* of the Subject”) introduced the “Working Paper” to the Synod and delivered reports that summarized strategic points along the way. The “Summary” acknowledges that differences of opinion were expressed in the interventions around questions of catechetical procedure. In spite of these differences, there was a desire to affirm and retain the dialectical tension, which called for a creative synthesis of method. It is worth noting that the Synod fathers regarded cognitive preparation in the faith as insufficient without personal conversion on the

⁴³CT, no. 18.

⁴⁴Ibid., no. 21.

⁴⁵Ibid., no. 24.

⁴⁶See Marianne Sawicki, “The Process of Consensus: Purpose, Papers and Proceedings of the Synod,” *The Living Light* 15, no. 1 (Spring 1978): 7-31. As a doctoral candidate at The Catholic University of America, she had access to the papers and proceedings of the 1977 Synod in order to write the above article. The issue of *The Living Light* in which it appeared is dedicated to the Synod.

part of the catechist.⁴⁷ Such an attitude demonstrates that content does not stand alone, and its impact on a person is influenced by both positive and negative human factors that need to be taken into consideration.

The apostolic exhortation CT followed the 1977 Synod of Bishops that served as a consultation on catechesis for Pope Paul VI, whose death before the exhortation could be completed (and indeed the untimely death of his successor, Pope John Paul I)⁴⁸ meant that it fell to Pope John Paul II to complete the document. Prior to his ascent to the papacy, Cardinal Wojtyla had served as part of the Synod as Archbishop of Krakow. In that capacity he had been involved in the preparatory stages as a member of the Council of the General Secretariat of the Synod that had recommended the theme “on catechesis in our time.” He also had the advantage of having served as chairman of the Council when the working paper was drawn up and many of his interventions are part of the final document.⁴⁹

CT specifically brought forward the primacy of the ecclesial-evangelical nature of catechesis, emphasizing that it is the Church that catechizes. The particularity of age, culture and social location are important, but they do not trump the Church’s role in setting the direction for catechesis. In the view of CT, the Church is not just universal; it is also trans-historical, pan-cultural and eschatological. Within this context of the ecclesial nature of catechesis, the operating principle during the Synod was to address catechesis in our time

⁴⁷Sawacki, 17.

⁴⁸Pope John Paul I died within the first month of his pontificate.

⁴⁹Marthaler, *Digest of Recent Church Documents*, 101. See especially CT, nos. 14, 19, 39, 67.

using the lens of catechesis for youth to probe the issues. While also becoming aware of the catechetical needs of adults alongside those of youth, the 1977 Synod never lost sight of understanding catechesis within the larger context of the Church's mission to convey the gospel to the world.⁵⁰

CT is an important document for gaining a deeper understanding of initiatory catechesis because the tensions that had preceded the Synod played out during the single month that the Synod was in session. These tensions, presented as dialectics, continue to be present in our own time. The first revolves around catechesis as Christ-centered vs. catechesis centered on life experience. The second is prevalent today as catechesis structured to handle doctrinal formulations vs. catechesis that fosters a personal relationship with God and a human response through conversion. A third tension is found in a catechesis that incarnates the Christian message in pluralistic societies in a dialogical manner vs. catechesis that prophesies, witnesses to the world, and in turn, judges the world. The fourth tension centers on catechesis that promotes a global notion of social justice vs. catechesis that discerns social justice actions in line with the needs of the universal church.⁵¹ In the final analysis, CT affirms the joining of evangelization to catechesis, giving prominence to the ecclesial nature of catechesis and sound, authentic instruction. Without discounting the role of experience in catechesis, CT acknowledges that the adaptations needed in catechesis are to

⁵⁰ Sawicki, "The Process of Consensus," 7.

⁵¹ Ibid., 24.

be directed to the person based on age and psychological needs so that “faith is presented gradually but coherently and integrally.”⁵²

The integrity of the Christian message is paramount in CT. According to Sawicki’s analysis of the documents, a normative principle coming from the Working Paper for the Synod contains seeds of the final product: “the end of any catechesis is to be drawn from the life of the Church, its mission, its relation with the Father, in Christ and the Spirit, its sacramental nature, its history, its tradition and its hope.” A corollary principle is that catechesis is adapted to circumstances without altering the essential message.⁵³ These principles are consistent with initiatory catechesis as it is defined and described today.

While the GCD and SLF parsed catechesis through forms and signs, CT does not concern itself with which particular form of catechesis makes for true, authentic catechesis. It shows a preference for identifying characteristics that need to be present to produce such authentic catechesis: 1) an encounter with the person of Christ, 2) a conversion of the heart, and 3) the expression of the Spirit in the ecclesial community.⁵⁴ These characteristics are clearly consistent with baptismal catechesis as an initiatory catechesis.

CT promoted the term “systematic catechesis,”⁵⁵ which continues to polarize tensions in catechesis today, especially as related to the catechumenate. Not given to producing a definition of systematic catechesis, CT once again provides characteristics of systematic

⁵²Sawicki, 23.

⁵³Ibid., “The Process of Consensus,” 13.

⁵⁴See CT, nos. 5, 20 and 24.

⁵⁵Ibid., no. 21.

catechesis: it must 1) be programmed to reach a precise goal; 2) deal with essentials; 3) be sufficiently complete, not stopping short of initial proclamation of the Christian mystery; and 4) be an integral Christian initiation, and open to all the other factors of Christian life. Such characteristics are open to a wide range of interpretations in implementation, but ultimately they are expected to yield an “organic and systematic Christian instruction, because of the tendency in various quarters to minimize its [systematic catechesis’] importance.”⁵⁶ This critique is echoed five years after CT by then Cardinal Ratzinger⁵⁷ who complained that in catechesis “method has overshadowed content.”⁵⁸

Systematic catechesis as presented in CT is ordered toward a comprehensive communication of the content of the faith. Yet, according to Pope Paul VI in his concluding address to the Synod, systematic catechesis also consists of “reflective study of the Christian mystery that fundamentally distinguishes catechesis from all other ways of presenting the word of God.”⁵⁹ This approach to Christian mystery describes a central concern that emerged during the fourth general assembly of the synod. The concept of “reflection” in this statement is important to initiatory catechesis for reflection, as an operation within catechesis, unites the teaching of the Church and human experience. Such an exercise in reflection can help to move one toward conversion as a human response to the promptings of the Holy Spirit.

⁵⁶CT, no. 21.

⁵⁷Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger was elected Pope Benedict XVI following Pope John Paul II’s death.

⁵⁸Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, “Problems in Catechesis Today: An Interview with Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger,” *Communio: International Catholic Review* 11 (Summer 1984): 148.

⁵⁹CT, no. 21. See also Paul VI, Concluding Address to the Synod, 29 October 1977, AAS 69 (1977): 634, no. 50.

Instruction on the process of reflection on the Christian mysteries for those coming to faith, especially children of catechetical age, has implications for teaching the content of the faith through liturgy and liturgical catechesis.

Content of the Faith

With this succession of documents the evolution of catechesis becomes more sharply focused. CT promoted the content of the faith and addressed how to deliver that content to diverse age cohorts, yet did not lose sight of catechesis as a complement of operations expected to address the faith formation needs of unbelievers, believers who lack authentic conversion to Jesus, and the young who are at the early stages of formation in faith. While addressing these needs, CT presents elements of catechesis that will later be reiterated as the six tasks of catechesis presented in the GDC⁶⁰ and further developed in the NDC.⁶¹ These tasks organize categories to convey the comprehensive content of the faith and they are further developed as six dimensions of adult faith formation content in *Our Hearts Were Burning Within Us: A Pastoral Plan for Adult Faith Formation in the United States*.⁶²

These developments are a manifestation of the evolution in catechesis and are important for contextualizing faith content in relation to age, culture and circumstance. Since

⁶⁰CT, no. 18. In CT catechesis is built on the following elements: preaching through kerygma, apologetics or examining the reasons for faith, experience of Christian living, celebration of the sacraments, integration into the ecclesial community, and apostolic and missionary witness.

⁶¹NDC, no. 20, pp. 62-63.

⁶²Department of Education, *Leaders' Guide to Our Hearts Were Burning Within Us* (Washington, DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2000), 24.

the recent directories establish that adult faith formation is the axis around which all other forms of catechesis revolve,⁶³ the expanded articulation of the six dimensions guides how to approach the content of the faith with youth as well. As important as these six tasks of catechesis are in a more fully developed iteration of catechetical essentials in the most recent directories, the CCC is a key document on faith content that is acknowledged as the standard for the content of the faith in both of the recent directories.

The 1985 Extraordinary Synod proposed a universal catechism, which was promulgated October 11, 1992. The universal *Catechism* was proposed and promulgated in light of the rapidly changing world context and concern for the content of the faith. The opening words of the Apostolic Constitution on this publication of the CCC, *Fidei Depositum*, describe its purpose: “Guarding the deposit of faith is the mission which the Lord entrusted to his Church, and which she fulfills in every age.”⁶⁴ The CCC reflects the call for a systematic catechesis in CT, presents the content of the faith comprehensively, updates the catechism genre, and reaffirms that Jesus is the heart of catechesis.⁶⁵ The content of the faith presented in the CCC is an important backdrop and reference point in the evolution of catechesis that emerges as initiatory catechesis.

⁶³GDC, no. 275.

⁶⁴John Paul II, *Apostolic Constitution Fidei Depositum of the Publication of the Catechism of the Catholic Church Prepared Following the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council* (FD), no. 1 (Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference-Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1994).

⁶⁵CCC, nos. 7, 426.

Comprehensive Integration

The arrival of the GDC heralded a synthesis of all that preceded it. Evangelization and systematic catechesis in accord with the CCC are brought together and the new concept of an initiatory catechesis emerges as a distinct form of catechesis. The GDC builds on a new vision for catechesis promoted in the GCD and EN, taking its cue from CT when it reiterates that evangelization is the umbrella for all catechetical activity.⁶⁶ Further GDC advances an evangelization which must develop its “totality” and completely “incorporate its intrinsic bipolarity: witness and proclamation, word and sacrament, interior change and social transformation.”⁶⁷

Building on the notion of unresolved tensions from the past and reframing them through the lens of a bipolarity, the GDC presents a both-and integrated approach to catechesis. With a new perspective, the GDC advances the term “initiatory catechesis”⁶⁸ that remembers its roots and redefines its purpose by being inherently linked to baptismal catechesis and six universal tasks of catechesis. Acknowledging that initiatory catechesis is proper for the baptized as well as the unbaptized, the GDC retains mystagogical and ongoing catecheses as forms of catechesis that are not completely divorced from the initiatory

⁶⁶CT, no. 18: “Catechesis is one of these moments—a very remarkable one—in the whole process of evangelization.”

⁶⁷GDC, no. 46.

⁶⁸Ibid., no. 64.

catechesis required for the catechumenate.⁶⁹ This new way of understanding catechesis for initiation constitutes a new horizon for catechesis, and brings the tasks of catechesis into sharper focus by the creation of the new term initiatory catechesis.

Initiatory Catechesis Defined

Recognizing how the most recent directories (the GDC and the NDC) evolved from the stream of documents that preceded them, it is now helpful to examine the definitions and descriptions of initiatory catechesis that these documents provide and the six tasks of catechesis that have also been undergoing development. The ideas that these documents put forth become more thought-provoking in the light of a renewed consciousness regarding the semantic evolution in catechesis.

At the onset the GDC recognizes that catechists do not fully understand the concept of catechesis as a school of faith, a process of formation, and an initiation and apprenticeship in the entire Christian life.⁷⁰ It is this lack of full understanding that delimits a comprehensive view and practice of initiatory catechesis, which by its nature includes knowledge of the faith (together with scripture), liturgy, moral formation, prayer, apprenticeship in community, and apostolic witness: the six tasks of catechesis. Further, initiatory catechesis is consistent with baptismal catechesis during the catechumenate that includes ritual steps or liturgies of the

⁶⁹United States Catholic Conference, “Catechesis in the Church’s Mission of Evangelization,” in *Sowing Seeds: Notes on the General Directory for Catechesis* (Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference, 2000), 20-21.

⁷⁰GDC, no. 30.

Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults. It is significant that the GDC notes that the characteristics of systematic catechesis delineated in CT and the catechumenal process according to the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* do not exist in water-tight compartments.⁷¹

Initiatory Catechesis and the Six Tasks of Catechesis

In the GDC initiatory catechesis emerges not merely as a new term but also as a distinct form of catechesis.⁷² As a distinct form, initiatory catechesis is characterized by the “comprehensive and systematic formation that it provides as a means of deepening the individual’s relation to Christ.”⁷³ This distinct form of catechesis is the way to bring about an integration of the six fundamental tasks of catechesis, which also appear as the six dimensions of adult faith formation content.⁷⁴

Initiatory catechesis is recognized by its basic, essential, comprehensive, and systematic content of the faith that the six fundamental tasks of catechesis capture: 1) knowledge of the faith; 2) knowledge of the meaning of the Liturgy and the sacraments; 3) moral formation in Jesus Christ; 4) teaching Christians how to pray with Christ (Our Father); 5) preparing Christians to live in community and to participate actively in the life and

⁷¹GDC, no. 59.

⁷²Ibid., passim, names biblical catechesis, continuing catechesis, doctrinal catechesis, initiatory catechesis, kerygmatic catechesis, and mystagogical catechesis.

⁷³Ibid., nos. 67-68.

⁷⁴Ibid., nos. 85-87. GDC introduces these six tasks as: “fundamental tasks of catechesis: helping to know, to celebrate and to contemplate the mystery of Christ.”

mission of the Church; and 6) a missionary spirit that prepares the faithful to be present as Christians in society.⁷⁵ Furthermore, these tasks are universal. Not just for the catechumenate, they are constitutive for all forms of catechesis, according to the NDC:

These six tasks of catechesis contribute a unified whole by which catechesis seeks to achieve its objective: the formation of disciples of Jesus Christ. All these tasks are necessary in order to attain the full development of the Christian faith. Each task, from its own perspective, realizes the object of catechesis, and all the tasks are interdependent. Knowledge of the Christian faith, for example, leads to celebrating it in the sacramental Liturgy. Participation in the sacramental life encourages moral transformation in Christ. Christian moral living leads to prayer, enhances community life, and encourages a missionary spirit. To accomplish these tasks catechesis depends on the “transmission of the Gospel message and the experience of Christian life. It is very important that catechesis retain the richness of these various aspects in such a way that one aspect is not separated from the rest to the detriment of others.”⁷⁶

These tasks are also detailed in the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* distributed among several paragraphs. Paragraph 75.1, centers on word and message, prescribing a “suitable catechesis” “accommodated to the liturgical year” “supported by celebrations of the word” and communicating “dogmas and precepts” together with “a profound sense of the mystery of salvation.” Paragraph 75.2 focuses on apprenticeship in community. With the community the catechumens learn “to pray,” “to bear witness to the faith,” to practice “love of neighbor,” and to recognize that their formation is a “spiritual journey.” Paragraph 75.3 connects the journey in faith formation to “suitable liturgical rites.” These liturgies “purify the catechumens little by little” as they journey toward baptism. Paragraph 75.4 directs the catechesis of catechumens to incorporate teaching “how to work actively with others to

⁷⁵NDC, no. 20.

⁷⁶GDC, no. 20, with reference to GCD, no. 31.

spread the Gospel and build up the Church by the witness of their lives and the profession of faith.”⁷⁷ Paragraph 75 summarizes powerfully what has been evolving in catechesis since Vatican Council II. These paragraphs in the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* (primarily a liturgical document) contain the essence of what constitutes initiatory catechesis.

As we have seen, the primary elements that make up these six tasks have been a recurring theme in the previous documents, including the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*. In the GDC they are brought together in a more comprehensive manner and are more fully explicated in the NDC. It is significant the NDC advances that initiatory catechesis

should be of a kind that while presenting Catholic teaching in its entirety also enlightens faith, directs the heart toward God, fosters participation in the liturgy, inspires apostolic activity, and nurtures a life completely in accord with the spirit of Christ.⁷⁸

The NDC takes this definition directly from RCIA, paragraph number 78, leaving no doubt that initiatory catechesis and baptismal catechesis are considered one and the same in the NDC. They share the same purpose, the roots of both are found in RCIA, paragraphs 75 and 78, and the content is defined through the CCC and distributed through the six universal tasks of catechesis. The NDC goes on to describe initiatory catechesis as a

[c]omprehensive and systematic formation in the faith [that] . . . includes more than mere instruction: it is an apprenticeship of the entire Christian life, it is a ‘complete Christian initiation,’ which promotes an authentic following of Christ, focused on his Person; it implies education in knowledge of the faith and in the life of faith, in such a manner that the entire person, at his deepest levels, feels enriched by the word of God.⁷⁹

⁷⁷RCIA, no. 75.

⁷⁸NDC, no. 19.

⁷⁹Ibid., with reference to GDC.

Following the lead of the GDC, the NDC clarifies that initiatory catechesis and the baptismal catechesis in the catechumenate are synonymous.⁸⁰ The NDC echoes the GDC that initiatory catechesis is comprehensive, that is, not fragmented into constitutive parts, concluding that, “[t]he richness of this initiatory catechesis should serve to inspire other forms of catechesis.”⁸¹

Initiatory Catechesis and Liturgy

Initiatory catechesis is not merely an inspiration. It is a specific, essential form of catechesis, which cannot be divorced from liturgy. Faithful to its roots, initiatory catechesis emerges from catechesis in its original sense which seeks “to promote communion with Jesus Christ;” it is rooted in God’s word and “intrinsically bound to every liturgical and sacramental action.”⁸² It is this intrinsic connection to every liturgical and sacramental action that has been neglected in the adapted rite for children in the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*. Thus, the initiatory catechesis for children of catechetical age is not complete without attention to liturgical formation and the requisite ritual steps in the Rite, including full initiation. Liturgy and the ritual steps of the catechumenate are constitutive not just of a catechumenal process, but also of initiatory catechesis, which the directories deem as appropriate for everyone. This is not just a new concept. It is a specific direction that poses

⁸⁰NDC, no. 19d.

⁸¹Ibid. See also GDC, no. 68, which further equates initiatory catechesis with the baptismal catechesis in the catechumenate.

⁸²GDC, no. 30.

challenges for catechumenal ministers as well as catechetical leaders who have little to no familiarity with the catechumenate. The baptismal catechumenate “is the model” for all the Church’s missionary activity and “some elements of the baptismal catechumenate are now considered as the source of inspiration for post-baptismal catechesis.”⁸³ The catechetical documents surveyed above acknowledge and assume that liturgy is a constitutive element in catechesis. The GDC and NDC make the integration of liturgy and catechesis more explicit for all catechesis in advancing initiatory catechesis.

When the GDC brings together liturgy and catechesis by advancing baptismal catechesis as the inspiration and model for all catechesis, it reiterates that catechetical components are legitimately inductive as well as deductive operations. The NDC defines the inductive approach as one that “proceeds from the sensible, visible, tangible experiences of the person, and leads, with the help of the Holy Spirit, to more general conclusions and principles.” The deductive method “proceeds in the opposite manner, beginning with the general principles or truths of the faith and applying them to concrete experiences of those to whom the catechesis is addressed.”⁸⁴ NDC makes an important distinction between the deductive method that begins with truths of the faith, applying them to concrete situations and the inductive method that presents facts (biblical events, liturgical acts, events from the Church’s life and events from daily life) in order to discern the meaning these have in divine

⁸³GDC, no. 90.

⁸⁴NDC, no. 29.

Revelation. The GDC's caution, however, is an important one: the deductive method has full value only when the inductive process is completed.⁸⁵

Liturgy is integral to formation in faith and as such it is essential to initiatory catechesis. In calling to mind the fruits of Vatican II in the four constitutions, the GDC recounts that

liturgical life is more profoundly understood as the source and summit of ecclesial life; the people of God has acquired a keener awareness of the "common priesthood" founded on Baptism . . . ; that Sacred Scripture is read, savored and meditated upon more intensely . . . ; and that the mission of the Church in the world is perceived in a new way.⁸⁶

These first fruits of the Council, although evident from the beginning, become more fully understood over time. In our time it has become abundantly clear that children of catechetical age need more than mere information about the liturgy if they are to be imbued with a proper sense of Church. They also need experience with all forms of liturgy, which the ritual steps in the adapted rite for children of catechetical age provide.

As demonstrated in paragraphs 75 and 78 of the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, such an initiatory catechesis emerged in practice before it emerged as a term in the recent directories. Early implementers of the restored catechumenate understood such catechesis to be an organic whole patterned after the model of the Church Fathers. In a symposium to launch the NDC for the United States, Bishop Richard Malone affirms this notion when he describes the catechesis contained in the Rite:

⁸⁵NDC, no. 29.

⁸⁶GDC, no. 28.

The RCIA gives us the recipe for sound catechesis at all levels. It has all of the ingredients for effective catechesis: instruction, formation, gradual stages, rites, symbols, biblical and liturgical signs, the experience of community, worship and prayer. It is a true school of faith.⁸⁷

In speaking about initiatory catechesis, which permeates the entire catechumenal process, Bishop Malone's analogy of a recipe is appropriate. The kind of catechesis he describes is not a formula, which is more fixed and relies on precise measurements and execution to achieve a standard, predictable outcome. The recipe he describes allows for individual judgment in terms of skill, capacity and finely tuned sensibilities when combining ingredients. Implementing initiatory catechesis is more art than science and thus, the Church has continually called for well-trained catechists through whom this art can flourish.

Catechesis for Conversion

Initiatory catechesis is that form of catechesis ordered toward conversion to Jesus Christ: that is, a specific intended outcome that leads to the sacraments of initiation, a profession of faith and incorporation in the mystery of Christ. However, this outcome cannot be guaranteed. Initiatory catechesis helps to facilitate a decision for Christ, but it does not determine that decision. God's grace and human freedom are operative within this distinct dynamic during initiatory catechesis.

⁸⁷Bishop of Portland, Maine, and chairperson of the U.S. Bishops' Committee on Evangelization and Catechesis, Malone spoke at the January 2005 symposium to launch the *National Directory for Catechesis* in Baltimore, Maryland. See Devillers, "Initiation and Catechesis," 11.

Initiatory catechesis has a substantial quality, in that it prepares for the profession of faith both before and after baptism.⁸⁸ This is an important both-and distinction. In its discussion of the relationship of initiatory catechesis in connection to the profession of faith before and after baptism, the GDC links initiatory catechesis with ongoing catechesis that follows the profession of faith to “renew the commitments that it entails.”⁸⁹ Both recent directories link initiatory catechesis with conversion and yet also distinguish it from other forms of catechesis: ongoing or perfective catechesis, occasional catechesis, and mystagogical catechesis.⁹⁰ A recurring theme in the directories situates initiatory catechesis as catechesis of “initial faith” that is for “catechumens and neophytes.”⁹¹ Within the context of the catechumenate according to the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, initiatory catechesis is appropriate for children of catechetical age as well as adults who are coming to faith through a conversion process that prepares for the sacraments of initiation

Yet, on the other hand, the directories also situate initiatory catechesis as appropriate “after baptism” and as the “necessary link between missionary activity which calls to faith and pastoral activity which continually nourishes the Christian community.”⁹² Having expanded the definition and reach of initiatory catechesis in this way, the GDC goes on to

⁸⁸GDC, no. 82.

⁸⁹Ibid., no. 64.

⁹⁰See *ibid.*, nos. 64, 69; and NDC, nos. 17, 19.

⁹¹GDC, no. 165.

⁹²Ibid., no. 64.

warn that without initiatory catechesis “missionary catechesis lacks continuity and is sterile and pastoral activity lack roots and becomes superficial and confused.”⁹³

Conversion is the key to initiatory catechesis both before and after baptism. Initiatory catechesis may be a distinct form of catechesis ordered toward initial faith but it is not disassociated from what precedes and what follows as a continuous catechesis.⁹⁴ A recurring theme in both directories is that initiatory catechesis, which is synonymous with baptismal catechesis, is a basic and fundamental catechesis that constitutes the catechumenal style of catechesis. Twenty-two years earlier, CT hailed the catechumenal style of catechesis as one of “integral formation rather than mere information; it must arouse true conversion,”⁹⁵ This certainly describes initiatory catechesis according to the GDC and the NDC.

In this semantic evolution that catechesis has undergone, initiatory catechesis, a distinct form of catechesis for catechumens and neophytes, has now been appropriated for other members of the faith community in need of conversion. Initiatory catechesis is about integral formation rather than mere information. It represents not so much a leap in thinking as a progression. EN and CT brought together evangelization and catechesis. In CT, for example, the catechumenal stage for children is advanced and carried out largely in the course of ordinary catechesis. This understanding assumes that ordinary catechesis is initiatory catechesis or a catechumenal style of catechesis—and therein is the difficulty. Initiatory catechesis celebrates the link between liturgy and catechesis. Yet, as both the GDC

⁹³GDC, no. 64.

⁹⁴Ibid., no. 59.

⁹⁵CT, no. 19b. See also GDC, no. 29.

and the NDC acknowledge, the problem facing catechesis today is that ordinary catechists are not aware of or have lost sight of this essential link. The next horizon for catechesis is to align catechesis for sacrament preparation with the constitutive elements of initiatory catechesis, while also remembering Pope Paul VI's exhortation to not lose sight of the role of reflection in the catechetical process.

Multifaceted Characteristics of Initiatory Catechesis

The fact that the six tasks of catechesis are constitutive of all forms of catechesis presents a challenge to catechesis for sacramental preparation that at times continues to fragment the constitutive elements of initiatory catechesis. Understanding the comprehensiveness of initiatory catechesis becomes especially important. There is a tendency to place children of catechetical age who belong in the catechumenate in so-called "catch up" sacramental preparation or religious education programs for their "baptismal catechesis."⁹⁶ This practice is an interpretation that some catechists make based on one paragraph in the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*:

Since the children to be initiated often belong to a group of children of the same age who are already baptized and are preparing for confirmation and eucharist, their initiation progresses gradually and within the supportive setting of this group of companions.⁹⁷

⁹⁶See Paul Turner, "Envy and the Confirmation of Children of Catechetical Age," *Catechumenate: A Journal of Christian Initiation* 27, no. 2 (March 2005): 9. Turner states, "The RCIA envisioned that children baptized as infants would be preparing for first reconciliation, confirmation and first communion at about the same age, and that unbaptized children of catechetical age would join their period of formation."

⁹⁷RCIA, no. 254.1.

Given the historical context of the time in which the Rite was developed, it is conceivable that usual and customary catechesis was assumed to be adequate baptismal catechesis. However, in our time, we have learned that children of catechetical age need initiatory catechesis that is consistent with *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, numbers 75 and 78. This initiatory, baptismal catechesis is expected to facilitate its intended goal of conversion to Jesus Christ by incorporating the full complement of six tasks for catechesis so that catechesis for initiation can attend to the mystery of Christ comprehensively.⁹⁸ It is a form of catechesis that adjusts to the needs of an intended audience, which means that the gradual nature of such catechesis is essential. Initiatory catechesis acknowledges catechesis as ecclesial and makes possible the unfolding of a catechumenal process that is a gradual school of faith and also a process of formation.⁹⁹ It cannot be programmed into a specific time line according to a sacramental preparation program that uses age and school grade as the starting principle. Initiatory catechesis must stay attuned to a person's openness to the grace of conversion consistent with age and stage of development. Yet, initiatory catechesis is only as effective as its practitioners.

Drawing from CT and the GCD, the GDC identifies characteristics associated with initiatory catechesis. It is a comprehensive and systematic formation in the faith. Such

⁹⁸ The rite seems unaware that the family cultural shifts and the continued de-Christianization of culture would result in such an increase in nominal Catholic parents not baptizing their children as infants. Nor does the rite envision that placing these two groups of children (older unbaptized children and children baptized as infants and reared in the faith) together for all aspects of their initiatory catechesis and formation would be challenging for the unbaptized children. A presumption that a "catch up" sacramental program would be sufficient without giving attention to the notion of conversion as a gradual process seems to be operating under the surface.

⁹⁹GDC, no. 91.

systematic formation goes beyond mere cognitive instruction to incorporate an apprenticeship in the whole Christian life. To facilitate this kind of apprenticeship, initiatory catechesis depends on local context, liturgy and the community of faith, because it “incorporates into the community which lives, celebrates and bears witness to the faith,” and it “fulfills, at once, initiatory, educational and instructional functions.”¹⁰⁰ Furthermore, linked with the Christian community, initiatory catechesis intends to “introduce the life of faith, the Liturgy, and the charity of the People of God to those being initiated.”¹⁰¹ More than “occasional or circumstantial” catechesis, initiatory catechesis is an essential catechesis that provides a person with the certainties of the faith, essential evangelical values and a foundation for spiritual growth.¹⁰² Initiatory catechesis avoids disputed questions, theological investigations and superficial instruction precisely because these do not contribute the goal of bringing a person into communion with Jesus Christ and do not build faith or lead to Christian conversion.

While initiatory catechesis is a distinct form of catechesis with constitutive elements and particular characteristics, it is not entirely separate from permanent catechesis. This concept can confuse pastoral ministers who have a limited vision of permanent catechesis. Each form of catechesis constitutes a distinct stage in the Church’s mission of

¹⁰⁰GDC, nos. 67-68.

¹⁰¹NDC, no. 17c.

¹⁰²CT, no. 21.

evangelization.¹⁰³ Regarding the implementation of initiatory catechesis, the GDC gives wise cautions about the complementarity of its tasks:

It is fundamentally important that initiatory catechesis for adults, whether baptized or not, initiatory catechesis for children and young people and continuing catechesis are closely linked with the catechetical endeavor of the Christian community, so that the particular Church may grow harmoniously and that its evangelizing activity may spring from authentic sources. “It is important also that the catechesis of children and young people, permanent catechesis and the catechesis of adults should not be separate watertight compartments . . . It is important that their perfect complementarity be fostered.”¹⁰⁴

Such a directive could be interpreted as license to collapse initiatory catechesis and permanent catechesis, blurring the distinctions between these two forms without regard to the particular audiences.

Therefore, it is with good reason that the GDC admits that the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* has proven to be “especially useful for catechetical renewal.”¹⁰⁵ The catechumenal process, which merges instruction and ritual steps into an initiatory catechesis, is ordered through the structure of the rite. That structure has an intrinsic value for initiatory catechesis, establishing predictable times for coming together over time as a gradual process.¹⁰⁶ Each period has a specific catechetical purpose. Its four periods and three ritual steps underscore that conversion is a process that is much more than a one-time, lightning-bolt awakening. Conversion to Jesus as Lord set forth in the first proclamation begins a

¹⁰³NDC, no. 17d.

¹⁰⁴GDC, no. 72, quoting CT, no. 45c.

¹⁰⁵GDC, no.3.

¹⁰⁶See RCIA, nos. 42, 75-78, 138-49, 303.

journey in faith and a process in spiritual growth, which is aided by initiatory catechesis and leads to “explicit confession of the Trinity.”¹⁰⁷ While sacred scripture and a copy of the *United States Catholic Catechism for Adults* may be important print tools in the hands of a catechist for children, no single catechetical textbook contains or exhausts the constitutive and multi-dimensional elements and characteristics of initiatory catechesis or the six tasks of catechesis. It is with good reason, then, that the GDC and NDC call for well trained catechists.

As the pioneers of the contemporary catechumenate began to implement the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, they discovered the need for this form or style of catechesis ordered toward an initial conversion to Jesus Christ that was “integral formation rather than mere information.”¹⁰⁸ The kind of radical conversion to Jesus called for in the scriptures and through the catechumenate requires an authentic transformation of the whole person: thought, beliefs, behaviors and practices. Formerly, such conversions were associated with missionary lands, but when Rome promulgated the GDC, the Church expanded the notion of catechesis as a “ministry of the word” to an “essential moment in the process of evangelization.”¹⁰⁹ This shift signaled a maturation (indeed, an evolution) that had been underway for decades, much like the undercurrent Lonergan describes in *Method in Theology*. The concepts that coalesce as initiatory catechesis had been moving forward, in some ways undetected, until they came

¹⁰⁷GDC, no. 82.

¹⁰⁸Ibid., no. 29.

¹⁰⁹Ibid., no. 63.

crashing forth like a wave brought to the shore. By expanding the catechetical lexicon to include “initiator catechesis” in these recent documents, the Church reemphasizes that conversion precedes baptism and requires a distinctive yet integrated form of catechesis. In order for initiator catechesis to emerge with a name and distinct identity, it had to evolve without losing sight of the gains made in the GCD (1971), RCIA (1972); EN (1975); CT (1979); SLF (1979), GDC (1997); and NDC (2005). What had been moving forward on many levels to achieve this new understanding of initiator catechesis involved a much longer, gradual process before the emergence of directories.¹¹⁰

Conclusion

The process of coming to a new understanding in relation to initiator catechesis is connected with dialectic or tracing differences back to the most primitive point. The origin of the gross differences, as we have seen, is a difference in horizon and involves conversion.¹¹¹ This involves not just the conversion of an individual to Christ or the conversion of mental constructs in how to understand catechesis. As the GDC previously acknowledged, it is the catechetical community itself which needs conversion with regard to understanding what constitutes a comprehensive initiator catechesis.

Rather than being one form of catechesis among others, initiator catechesis enjoys the privileged place that is given to baptismal catechesis, yet is not restricted to pre-baptismal

¹¹⁰For an analysis of “cycles of progress and decline,” see Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 52-55. The much longer gradual process also includes the convergence of the liturgical and catechetical movements.

¹¹¹On “dialectic,” see Longergan, *Method in Theology*, 246.

catechesis. That is both a gift and a challenge. Were all forms of catechesis patterned after a truly comprehensive and systematic initiatory catechesis, the tensions between and among systematic catechesis, lectionary-based catechesis, doctrinal catechesis, liturgical catechesis, and so on, would be seen as unhelpful distractions to the true catechetical agenda: conversion to Jesus Christ.

Initiatory catechesis now has a permanent place in the catechetical lexicon, having been established as a particular form of catechesis with a particular definition and characteristics in the GDC and the NDC. It is not going away. The next phase for initiatory catechesis is to capture the imagination of catechists and catechetical leaders who are in the best position to implement initiatory catechesis, as intended, with intentionality. The melding of catechetical concepts inherent in initiatory catechesis is a new cloth constructed from the threads of ancient and contemporary modes of catechizing, and from the developing consciousness of how initiatory catechesis is a unified whole and grounded in a renewed understanding of baptism for conversion.

Through the two most recent directories, the Church announces that it needs an initiatory catechesis to fulfill its mission. Initiatory catechesis intends what the GDC affirms: “a fundamental principle of catechesis, therefore, is that of safeguarding the integrity of the message and avoiding any partial or distorted presentation.”¹¹² For children of catechetical age in the catechumenate, that means incorporating all six tasks of catechesis, which adheres to the structure and catechumenal style that the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* ensures.

¹¹²GDC, no. 111.

Initiatory catechesis cannot be reduced to a course of study in Catholic fundamentals that ignores the other five tasks of catechesis. Initiatory catechesis, which reconnects catechesis and liturgy, also necessarily incorporates liturgical catechesis.

Before proceeding to a focus on liturgical catechesis, it is necessary to consider the liturgical and catechetical movements that paved the way for the emergence of the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* and also contributed to the semantic evolution in catechesis. These topics form the subject of Chapter Three: Contribution of Liturgical Catechetical Renewal in the Vatican II Era.

CHAPTER 3

CONTRIBUTION OF THE LITURGICAL CATECHETICAL RENEWAL IN THE VATICAN II ERA

Introduction

As the fruit of both pre- and post-conciliar documents (and the two catechetical directories that preceded them), the *General Directory for Catechesis* (GDC)¹ and the *National Directory for Catechesis* (NDC)² constitute important new maps for a renewal of catechesis, which share lineage with the convergence of scholarly and pastoral movements that informed the work of the Council and prompted a restoration of the catechumenate in the form of the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* (RCIA). From our vantage point in the early twenty-first century, five such movements stand out as having contributed to the reform of Vatican Council II and the liturgical catechetical renewal: namely the biblical, patristic, liturgical, catechetical and ecumenical³ movements. The scholarship associated with these movements is evident in the Council's Constitutions, Decrees, Declarations as well as in

¹Congregation for the Clergy, *General Directory for Catechesis* (Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference, 1997).

²United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *National Directory for Catechesis* (Washington, DC: USCCB, 2005).

³ The fifth movement, the ecumenical movement, is not a major focus for this study, as we will deal only with the Rite appropriate to unbaptized children of catechetical age and not to children who may wish to make a profession of faith and come into full communion with the Catholic Church. It is mentioned here to give the full sweep of the movements that are at once singular and also complementary.

post-conciliar documents and directories. This collective body of work signals a vindication for the work of European scholars whose return to the sources, attention to historical criticism, and interest in pastoral realities created these movements.

This chapter will examine key aspects of convergence in these movements that set in motion a trajectory of new insights. Among the insights related to the era of renewal is a shift in initiation “polity”⁴ that has served to refocus our understanding of the sacraments of initiation (chiefly baptism but also confirmation and eucharist). This shift in understanding the sacraments of initiation has, in turn, created a more expanded appreciation of a comprehensive catechesis for initiation. The significance of baptism and the conversion required before admittance to the initiation sacraments owes a debt to the scholars who retrieved original sources concerning the ancient catechumenate. These gains have exerted significant influence on the kind of initiatory catechesis necessary for formation in a contemporary catechumenate, including a catechumenate adapted for children of catechetical age according to the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*.

As seen in the semantic evolution of the term initiatory catechesis in Chapter Two, convergence is only available in hindsight as a category of analysis. During the time that the work of scholars associated with the five movements noted above was unfolding, there was no consciousness that their work would inform a future ecumenical council, the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, or the emergence of a distinct form of catechesis called initiatory catechesis. Yet, the fruit of this scholarship is evident in what has come to be

⁴See Aidan Kavanagh’s analysis of initiation polity in *The Shape of Baptism* (New York: Pueblo Publishing Company, 1978), 106ff. He uses “polity” to describe initiation from an institutional point of view.

known as the liturgical reforms and catechetical renewal in current pastoral ministry of the Church.

Chapter Three provides a survey of four of these movements in order to advance a deeper appreciation of initiatory catechesis as a distinct form and prepares the ground for a more focused analysis of liturgical catechesis in Chapter Four. The purpose of examining these movements is to connect the elements in them that are germane to the semantic evolution that emerged as initiatory catechesis.

Biblical Movement

While still in its infancy on the eve of the Council and in the face of the condemnation of modernism,⁵ biblical scholars engaged in a movement that was characterized by scholarly, pastoral and theological elements. It was scholarly in that it used a variety of sources to facilitate greater understanding of biblical texts in their historical, intellectual and spiritual context. To this end, biblical scholars embraced both philology (the study of historical and comparative linguistics) and archeology as appropriate tools to advance the pastoral dimension of their work. Driven by a desire to make scriptures more available to the faithful, these scholars engaged in a more rigorous biblical exegesis in order

⁵See Pope Pius X, Encyclical on the *Doctrine of the Modernists (Pascendi Dominici Gregis)*, 8 September 1907; and *Apostolic Constitution (Syllabus) Condemning the Errors of the Modernists (Lamentabili Sane)*, 3 July 1907. See also Alfred Firmin Loisy, *The Gospel and the Church* (Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books, 1988), 23-25. This book, first published in 1902, represents the turning point in the modernist controversy or the precipitating event of what came to be called the Modernist crisis. The book's message was not well received by the Catholic hierarchy. The wholesale rejection and condemnation of "Modernism" was a product of its time and failed to distinguish between the value of critical studies and the Modernists' misuse of such critical methods.

to create improved editions of the Bible. Bypassing the manuals used in medieval Scholasticism, biblical scholars made biblical studies more theological.⁶ As much as Pope Pius X's campaign at the beginning of the twentieth century against the Modernists served to work against biblical scholars, Pope Pius XII's 1943 Encyclical *Divino afflante spiritu* relaxed some impediments, requiring biblical scholars to work from original texts of scripture and thus opening the door for biblical scholars to progress in their pursuits.⁷

Perhaps chief among the benefits of this movement on the life of Christians today is the "rediscovery" of salvation history as a framework for the early catechetical renewal.⁸ The biblical movement contributed to the positioning of catechesis as a "ministry of the word" in paragraph 17 in the first *General Catechetical Directory* (GCD).⁹ The average Catholic now has access to more scripture as a result of the post Vatican II lectionary of the Church for liturgy and the word of God figures prominently in all catechetical endeavors (as evidenced in the catechetical directories and in the modern baptismal catechumenate).

⁶ Etienne Fouilloux, "The Antepreparatory Phase: The Slow Emergence From Inertia (January, 1959—October, 1962)" in *History of Vatican II, vol. 1, Announcing and Preparing Vatican Council II Toward a new Era in Catholicism*, ed. Giuseppe Alberigo and Joseph A. Komonchak (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1995), 86.

⁷ John J. Pilch, "Towards 'A Renewal of Biblical Renewal:' Interpreting Magisterial Documents," *The Living Light* 37, no. 3 (Spring 2001): 20.

⁸ See Vatican Council II, *Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation (Dei Verbum)*, nos. 2, 9, 10; *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 1074; *General Directory for Catechesis*, nos. 107-108, p. 102; *National Directory for Catechesis*, no. 16, pp. 43-44, and no. 33, p. 110. See also Quentin Quesnell, "The Role of Scripture in the Renewal of Catechetics," *The Living Light* 9, no. 3 (Fall 1972): 41.

⁹ See National Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Sharing the Light of Faith: National Catechetical Directory for Catholics in the United States*, (Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference, 1979).

Patristic Movement

No less scholarly and more effective theologically was the patristic movement that developed in England, France and Germany. The importance of this movement in the retrieval of original sources that described the ancient catechumenate is abundantly evident today in the contemporary *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*. The work of patristic scholars exposed constitutive elements of liturgy and catechesis as well as characteristics of the earliest form of catechesis for initiation found in the ancient catechumenate.

These scholars acknowledged the Church Fathers as the first authoritative interpreters of the Christian message, and as a result, made editions and commentaries of the eastern and western Fathers of the Church accessible to educated Catholics.¹⁰ The NDC acknowledges the role of the Fathers in noting that the renewal of catechesis in the United States includes a “revived interest in the writings and teachings of the Fathers of the Church and the restoration of the catechumenate.”¹¹

The Fathers’ method of integrating scripture, liturgy and catechesis into an original liturgical catechesis (which itself was constitutive of baptismal catechesis for initiation) is central in this study. Their integrated method continues to inspire those involved in the modern catechumenate and informs a contemporary understanding of initiatory catechesis—for coming to faith in the first six centuries of the Church is remarkably similar to coming to

¹⁰Fouilloux, “Antepreparatory Phase,” 86. See also *The Didache*, in *Springtime of the Liturgy: Liturgical Texts of the First Four Centuries*, ed. Lucien Diess, trans. Matthew J. O’Connell (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1979), 73-77; and St. Augustine of Hippo, *First Catechetical Instruction (De catechezandis Rudibus)*, in *Ancient Christian Writers: The Works of the Fathers in Translation*, vol. 2, ed. Johannes Quasten and Joseph C. Plumpe, trans. Joseph P. Christopher (Baltimore: J. H. Furst Company, 1946), 13-87.

¹¹NDC, no. 12, p. 7.

faith in the pluralistic, multicultural context of the twenty-first century. While the term initiatory catechesis may not have been used in the so-called golden age of the catechumenate (fourth century), the model of this distinctive form of catechesis with its catechumenal style is available to our time in the teachings that the Fathers left behind and that the patristic scholars unearthed.¹²

Liturgical Movement

The liturgical movement had a direct influence on the Second Vatican Council's liturgical reforms, out of which grew the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*. This movement owes its development to liturgical scholars, who in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries labored to bring to light the liturgical traditions of the early Church. They aimed at freeing the liturgy from the "rubricism of the preceding century," divesting it of historical accretions and demand for uniformity.¹³

From its genesis in 1830 to the final phase of the American liturgical study weeks in 1969¹⁴ the liturgical movement went through four phases: the Benedictine or monastic phase; research and scholarship phase; a popular and pastoral phase that encompassed Europe and the United States; and finally, a legislative phase that preceded and followed Vatican Council

¹²See Edward Yarnold, *The Awe-Inspiring Rites of Initiation: The Origins of the R.C.I.A.*, 2nd ed. (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1994); and Enrico Mazza, *Mystagogy: A Theology of Liturgy in the Patristic Age*, trans. Mathew J. O'Connell (New York: Pueblo Publishing Company, 1989).

¹³Fouilloux, "Antepreparatory Phase," 86.

¹⁴Virgil C. Funk, "The Liturgical Movement," in *The New Dictionary of Sacramental Worship*, ed. Peter E. Fink (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1990), 695-96. See also Annibale Bugnini, *The Reform of the Liturgy - 1948-1975*, trans. Matthew J. O'Connell (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1990), 711-15.

II. Rather than retracing the history of each phase, the purpose here is to reveal outcomes that are relevant to initiatory catechesis. Among the elements of the liturgical movement that influenced the liturgical reforms are the concepts of full, conscious and active participation by the laity in the liturgy and the adoption of the vernacular language for the liturgy. As important as the research of the liturgical scholars has been in paving the way for reforms, the key changes in the reforms were carried out by Rome: that is, by central authorities, the bishops of Vatican Council II, and committees designated to implement the reforms.¹⁵ Key among these reforms for the purpose of this study is the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, which from the outset showed concern for children of catechetical age.

Several papal decisions preceding the Council are worth noting in relation to the liturgical movement. First, in 1905 Pope Pius X encouraged daily communion by the faithful in *Sacra Tridentina Synodus*. This legislation concerned the practice of communion, restricted by frequency and the age of the communicants. Second, in 1910 he followed with the Decree *Quam singulari*, which lowered the age for first communion to the “age of reason” (i.e., about seven).¹⁶ These changes regarding the participation of children in the eucharist were considered an occasion for encouraging the liturgical movement,¹⁷ in spite of the negative effect that the latter decision had on unhinging the ancient, traditional order of celebrating the sacraments of initiation. Through this decision, an understanding of the unity

¹⁵Funk, “Liturgical Movement,” 697.

¹⁶Congregation for the Council, Decree *Sacra Tridentina Synodus*, 20 December 1905; Congregation for the Discipline of the Sacraments, Decree *Quam singulari*, 8 August 1910; Funk, “Liturgical Movement,” 700.

¹⁷Fouilloux, “Antepreparatory Phase,” 79-80.

of the sacraments of initiation as baptism, confirmation and eucharist was altered, thus introducing an interrupted sequence of sacraments as baptism, penance, eucharist, confirmation. It is a decision whose consequences are not only prevalent today but also troublesome. Notwithstanding the degree of controversy that this decision has generated, it nevertheless occasioned an emphasis on catechesis for eucharist in a way heretofore not experienced. However, the theological debate surrounding this reordering and interruption of the initiation sacraments is ongoing, especially regarding children of catechetical age, whose confirmation during the ritual steps of the catechumenate is increasingly being delayed or withheld.¹⁸

The third decision, considered the “Magna Carta” of the liturgical movement, was Pope Pius XII’s Encyclical Letter *Mediator Dei* (20 November 1947).¹⁹ As a sign of encouragement, the encyclical emphasized that liturgy is more than exterior worship; it is also interior worship. *Mediator Dei* also served as a critique against arguments supporting the vernacular and for preserving the Latin language in the liturgy at the “Assisi Congress” in 1956.²⁰

¹⁸See Steven Francis Callahan, “Canonical Considerations on the Requirements to Confirm Immediately Children of Catechetical Age Who Are Baptized or Received into the Church,” (JCL diss., The Catholic University of America, 1994).

¹⁹Funk, “Liturgical Movement,” 705-706. See also Rita Ferrone, *Liturgy: Sacrosanctum Concilium* (New York: Paulist Press, 2007), 8-9.

²⁰Funk, “Liturgical Movement,” 706. See also Fouilloux, “Antepreparatory Phase,” 89; and Joseph A. Komonchak, “The Struggle for the Council During the Preparation of Vatican II (1960-1962),” in *History of Vatican II*, vol. 1, ed. Giuseppe Albergio and Joseph A. Komonchak (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1995), 215.

Fourth, Pope Pius XII restored the paschal vigil in 1951, which liturgical theologian Aidan Kavanagh has called the “highwater mark” of the modern liturgical movement.²¹ French theologian Etienne Fouilloux, describes this decision to move the paschal vigil from the morning of Holy Saturday to the nocturnal service between Holy Saturday and Easter Sunday as the “masterpiece” of the liturgical reforms leading up to the Council.²² This change by decree paved the way for the Easter Vigil with full initiation as currently celebrated. Restoring the ritual structures of initiation in the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* with the fully restored Easter Vigil has significantly advanced the need for a deeper understanding of initiatory catechesis, especially in relation to full initiation of children of catechetical age through the adapted rite.

The liturgical movement was also characterized by pastoral concern, as evidenced by the efforts of liturgists to change “passive believers into active participants.”²³ The influence of this pastoral concern is evident in initiatory catechesis in the catechumenate today. Through initiatory catechesis, as well as liturgical catechesis, catechumens are formed so that they may “be led to that full, conscious, active participation in liturgical celebrations called for by the very nature of the liturgy.”²⁴ Liturgical scholars understood that pastoral concern for the Church’s sacramental vocation through liturgy was to be the key to renewal of the

²¹ Aidan Kavanagh, *The Shape of Baptism: The Rite of Christian Initiation* (New York: Pueblo Publishing Company, 1978), 91.

²²Fouilloux, “Antepreparatory Phase,” 81.

²³Ibid., 79-81.

²⁴Vatican Council II, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 4 December 1963, no. 14.

Church and the Church's sacramental vocation.²⁵ History has shown they were correct in this judgment and it is a work in progress—for as the GDC recognizes, the lack of liturgical formation (which attends to the second task of catechesis) is a lacuna in need of remediation.²⁶

Before Vatican Council II, sanctions from Rome directed at the work of these scholars were as damaging to their work and their careers as the aforementioned papal decisions had been encouraging. In spite of sanctions and set backs, the liturgical movement, perhaps more so than all of the other movements, had become truly global. By the 1960's, therefore, it was in the best position to exert its influence on the eve of the Council. Given the encouragements signaled by papal decree and the degree of severity of the sanctions that the liturgical scholars experienced, E. Fouilloux describes opposing forces in this manner:

[A]s seen from Rome, it was always the same national Churches and the same people within them that were causing problems; as seen from France or Germany, it was always the same local informers and the same Roman censors who were blocking the way, especially since the multiplication of vacancies in the Roman Curia meant that officials often exercised several functions there. As a result, what is sometimes called, somewhat fussily, the “marching wing” in Catholicism got the impression that it was being blocked or even smothered . . .²⁷

The vestiges of attitudes represented by these two camps that emerged during the liturgical movement still exert influence today when it comes to implementing the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* adapted for children. As beneficiaries of past tensions, opposing voices

²⁵ Raymond Vaillancourt, *Toward a Renewal of Sacramental Theology*, trans. Matthew J. O'Connell (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1979), 80.

²⁶GDC, no. 30.

²⁷Fouilloux, “Antepreparatory Phase,” 90, citing “*Voeux pour un concile*,” *Etudes* (Paris) (December, 1961).

represent differing ways of “receiving” the liturgical reforms from Vatican Council II: some with whole-hearted and sometimes uncritical acceptance, and some with partial acceptance or even non-compliant reinterpretation of the documents regarding liturgy, in general, and the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, in particular.²⁸

The influence of the liturgical movement on the catechumenate and initiatory catechesis is recognizable in the way it developed in the United States in its pastoral and popular phase. The United States catechetical leaders benefited from the work of the liturgical movement due to the vision and work of Dom Virgil Michel, who discovered the liturgical movement during a nine-month visit to Europe while studying and traveling in the first quarter of the twentieth century. Upon returning to the United States, he disseminated the insights of the liturgical movement through the journal *Orate Fratres*, and with collaborator Sr. Jane Marie Murray, O.P., introduced liturgical concepts into catechetical manuals and textbooks used in Catholic schools (e.g., the *Christ-Life Series* for elementary school students and the *Christian Religion Series* for high school and college students).²⁹

The *Christ-Life Series* was ahead of its time. Had it been written after the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, it may have been more widely understood, appreciated and used. The Mass that Catholics experienced at the time the program was written did not reflect the vision for liturgy that the Benedictine Virgil Michel had absorbed from his

²⁸ For an analysis of Vatican Council II themes received, insufficiently received, and rejected, see *The Reception of Vatican II*, ed. Giuseppe Alberigo, Jean-Pierre Jossua, and Joseph A. Komonchak, trans. Matthew J. O’Connell (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1987).

²⁹ See Michael Whalen, “Method in Liturgical Catechesis: A Systematic and Critical Analysis of the Relationship between Liturgy and Catechesis in the Writings of Dom Virgil Michel (1890-1938),” (Ph.D. diss., The Catholic University of America, 1996), 4-7. See also Funk, “Liturgical Movement,” 702.

exposure to the liturgical movement in Europe. Michel's program made use of stories and myths including stories of feast days. It featured a component for preparing for liturgy using concrete objects, gestures, and all the senses at prayer. Its incorporation of sacred music, sacred silence and reflection was grounded in the history and meaning of the liturgical rites, which had been unearthed by the liturgical movement's return to the sources. It stressed Christ's action in the liturgy, promoted a baptismal spirituality, and highlighted the significance of the worshipping community.³⁰ While such innovations may not appear unusual in a contemporary context, however, such was not the case at the time they were first introduced.

Responsible for reconnecting liturgy and catechesis in catechetical materials in the United States, Michel's work is a forerunner of initiatory catechesis as defined and described in the NDC, and his influence is also evident in liturgical catechesis today. Through his introduction of liturgical catechesis into catechetical materials, Michel helped to restore the original symbiotic relationship between liturgy and catechesis modeled in the patristic era and manifest in the restored catechumenate. He paid homage to the ancient practices that liturgical and patristic scholars had retrieved in his work, opening the way for its application not only to the restored catechumenate in the United States but also to initiatory catechesis, as it has evolved.

³⁰Mary Kay Oosdyke, "Acquiring a Sense of Liturgy in Contemporary Times," *Religious Education* 84 (Summer 1989): 330. For additional reviews of this series see Burton Confrey, "Training Children to Live the Liturgy," *Orate Fratres* 5 (1930-31): 543-47; and Mary Estelle, "Through Christ Our Lord," *Orate Fratres* 7 (1932-33): 307-12. These earlier reviews predate Oosdyke's claim for the 1945 publication by Macmillan, which may indicate that the series was published as a prototype before Macmillan published it for broader distribution.

Catechetical Movement

The catechetical movement, which is directly related to the evolution in catechetical semantics, was infused with the new theology emerging from the liturgical and biblical movements. Like their colleagues, catechetical scholars also returned to the sources, history and process, which encouraged catechetical insight and innovation. The catechetical movement offered a counterbalance to the indoctrination and question-and-answer method of the catechism. Reformation and speculative theology, the context in which the catechism genre had developed, presented problems for religious educators, who were growing in awareness of new theories of learning, human growth and development, and developmental psychology as ways to renew catechesis.³¹ These trends are evident in the first GCD,³² and they are developed further through the first national directory, *Sharing the Light of Faith* (SLF).

Elements identified with the catechetical movement that are recognizable in the catechumenal process include respect for learning through experience and an individual's need for time to develop gradually on a unique personal timetable. Notwithstanding the proclamation of the faith intended to arouse internal conversion, these developmental factors

³¹See Jean Piaget, *Six Psychological Studies* (New York: Random House, Vintage Books, 1967), and *The Child and Reality* (New York: Penguin Books, 1976); Abraham Maslow, *Religion, Values, and Peak-Experiences* (New York: Viking Press, 1964); Erik Erikson, *Childhood and Society*, 2nd ed. (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1963). On subsequent age and stage theorists on morality and faith development, see Lawrence Kohlberg, *The Philosophy of Moral Development: Moral Stages and the Idea of Justice* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1981); and James Fowler, *Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1981).

³²American Delegation, "Report on the International Catechetical Congress," *The Living Light* 8, no. 4 (Winter 1971): 80-99.

are also considered necessary conditions to facilitate a person's coming to faith through conversion.

Phase One: Method

The modern catechetical movement is identified with four phases: Method, Kerygma, Missionary Orientation, and Consolidation and Implementation.³³ Catechesis is as much concerned with method and allied interdisciplinary fields as it is with the content of the faith and the intended audience. One of the first significant methodological developments in catechesis, the Munich Method, emerged and incorporated a system of presentation, explanation, and application to the teaching of faith content. Later a fourth element (leading to action) was added as the Munich Method found its way into modern catechetical text books.³⁴ This method has influenced not only the presentation of catechetical materials in text books for school-age children, but also the process has seeped into the consciousness of contemporary catechists who have appropriated its elements, at times, without knowing the source.

³³ Gil Ost diek, "Liturgical Catechesis," in *The New Dictionary of Sacramental Worship*, ed. Peter E. Fink (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1990), 165-66. See also Mary Charles Bryce, "The Interrelationship of Liturgy and Catechesis," *American Benedictine Review* 28, no. 1 (March 1977): 1-29.

³⁴ Ost diek, "Liturgical Catechesis," 165. See also Luis Erdozain, "The Evolution of Catechetics: A Survey of Six International Study Weeks on Catechetics," in *Sourcebook for Modern Catechetics*, ed. Michael Warren (Winona, MN: St. Mary's Press, 1983), 88.

Phase Two: Kerygma

The Kerygmatic Phase of the modern catechetical movement in the United States owes much to the research of biblical and liturgical scholars. This phase, often associated with Josef Jungmann, S.J., (a historian, liturgiologist, and catechetical theorist, and key figure in the liturgical movement and Vatican Council II),³⁵ retrieved the centrality of the Word of God and a Christo-centric approach in catechesis. Jungmann's student, Johannes Hofinger, S.J., was highly visible in promoting the kerygma in relation to the pastoral ministry of the Church; Hofinger is largely responsible for organizing and securing funding for the Catechetical Study Weeks.³⁶ Because Virgil Michel bridged both the liturgical and the catechetical movements in the early part of the twentieth century in the United States, he also focused on the Word of God and a Christo-centric approach to catechesis, which are clearly evident in catechesis in general and initiatory catechesis in particular in the latest generation of catechetical documents.

Phase Three: Missionary Orientation

Originally gaining momentum during the international catechetical study weeks, the missionary phase of the catechetical movement may be considered ongoing in light of the recent directories and current cultural contexts. The influence of the missionary phase was noted in the *Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity (Ad Gentes)* (1965) and the *Decree*

³⁵See Michael Warren, "Introductory Overview," in *Sourcebook for Modern Catechetics*, ed. Michael Warren (Winona, MN: St. Mary's Press, 1983), 26.

³⁶*Ibid.*, 27.

Concerning the Pastoral Office of Bishops in the Church (Christus Dominus) (1965) before blossoming in Paul VI's *Apostolic Exhortation on Evangelization in the Modern World (Evangelii Nuntiandi)* (1975), which expanded an understanding of both mission *Ad Gentes* and a "new evangelization" for a de-Christianized culture.³⁷

Bridging the Missionary Phase and the Consolidation and Implementation Phase are the international gatherings called study weeks. These played a key role in the catechetical movement, just as they had in the liturgical movement, and exerted influence on catechetical developments in the United States. These international gatherings fostered significant collegial connection and advanced the integration of method, kerygma, and missionary orientation that emerged in EN and the *Apostolic Exhortation on Catechesis in Our Time (Catechesi Tradendae)* (CT).

The Liturgical Weeks were spearheaded by European liturgical scholars who garnered the best thinking among liturgists by convening international gatherings at Maria Laach (1951), Mont Saint Odliue (1952), Lugano, Italy, (1953), Mont Cesar, Louvain (1954), Assisi, later known at the "Assisi Congress" (1956), and Montserrat, Catalonia, Spain (1958). The work of scholars at Montserrat focused on "Baptism and Confirmation" which influenced the liturgical reform and by extension catechesis for the sacraments of initiation. Upon the death of Pope Pius XII shortly following this study week, newly-elected successor Pope John XXIII, a long-time friend of Benedictine Lambert Beauduin (who was himself

³⁷Pope Paul VI, *Apostolic Exhortation on Evangelization in the Modern World (Evangelii nuntiandi)*, 8 December 1975. See also Kenneth Boyack, "What is 'New' in the New Evangelization?" *The Living Light* 30, no. 1 (Fall 1993): 3-8.

associated with the monastic phase of the pastoral liturgical movement in Belgium) announced his intent to summon an Ecumenical Council in January 1959.³⁸ The seeds that had been planted between 1951 and 1958 during these liturgical gatherings were about to bear fruit in subsequent international meetings that focused on catechesis.

The Catechetical Study Weeks were patterned after the international study weeks on liturgy. Between 1959 and 1968, Johannes Hofinger, S.J., invited more than two hundred bishops, missionaries and specialists in catechetics to a series of six international study weeks dedicated to catechetics.³⁹ The rapid succession of meetings occurring in scarcely ten years' time gave renewed impetus to the catechetical movement: Nijmegen on "Liturgy and the Missions" (1959); Eichstatt on "Catechetics and the Missions" (1960); Bangkok on "Catechetics" (1962); Katigondo, "The Pan African Seminar" (1964); Manilla, "The Asiatic Seminar" (1967); and Medellin, "The Latin American Seminar" (1968), were all concerned with the presentation of the Christian message in the world.⁴⁰

Through the new watchwords that emerged from these study weeks, the standard catechetical lexicon was expanded, especially regarding the catechumenate. These new terms take their place within the semantic evolution in catechesis identified by the GDC. From the Eichstatt gathering the terms "proclamation" and "renewal" gained prominence and were

³⁸Funk, "Liturgical Movement," 710.

³⁹Erdozain, "Evolution of Catechetics," 86.

⁴⁰Ibid., 86-99.

understood as the means by which to realize “conversion” and “living faith.”⁴¹ At Bangkok the term “pre-evangelization” emerged as a corrective to the purely kerygmatic approach, for before announcing the Good News of Jesus Christ, the “person to be catechized” had to be taken into consideration.⁴² At the midpoint of the study weeks, a shift in thinking occurred about local context and culture(s).⁴³ This epiphany resulted in a change from theme-based names to culture-based names for the last three gatherings. The Katagondo week, for example, was renamed the Pan-African Seminar, while the gathering in Manila became The Asiatic Seminar, and the Medellin gathering became the Latin American Seminar.⁴⁴ The die had been cast for transforming catechesis world-wide.

With such developments occurring around kerygma, liturgy, missions, catechetics, culture, anthropology, and community, the stage was also set to expand a primarily Euro-centrist approach to catechetics, theology, liturgy, and biblical studies to include culture as context and the human person as subject of catechesis. The six international catechetical study weeks called upon catechetical leaders to explore more effective ways of teaching. A consensus emerged that much more was needed than the catechism genre, which was prevalent in the years just before Vatican Council II. In hindsight, these study weeks succeeded in positioning catechesis as central to the Church’s mission, linked to

⁴¹Erdozain, “Evolution of Catechetics,” 92-93.

⁴²Ibid., 93. This insight is similar to St. Augustine’s practical advice to Deogratias in *The First Catechetical Instruction* (*De catechizandis rudibus*) uncovered by patristic scholars.

⁴³Erdozain, “Evolution of Catechetics,” 97-105.

⁴⁴Ibid., 85-109.

evangelization, and essential to the Church's pastoral ministry.⁴⁵ Each of these concepts may sound very familiar to contemporary ears, but they were groundbreaking insights in their time. While the terms mentioned above are now integral to the catechumenate and initiatory, baptismal catechesis, they emerged in the context of the various study weeks as breakthrough thinking that shifted the catechetical trajectory.

Catechetical Movement in USA

Until the beginning of the twentieth century (1908), the church in the United States was a mission church, dependant on foreign clergy and financial support from more established churches.⁴⁶ Against this backdrop, the emergence of a catechetical movement in the United States in the first third of the century is more remarkable. While the Confraternity for Christian Doctrine (CCD) had been established shortly after the turn of the twentieth century, the catechetical movement in the United States came into being sometime in the 1930's, when the National Center of the CCD, a clearinghouse and catalyst for the convergence of the ideas emerging from the liturgical and biblical movements, was established in Washington, DC.⁴⁷ Gerard Sloyan, Professor Emeritus of Religion and Religious Education at The Catholic University of America, was a major facilitator in the

⁴⁵ Erdozain, "Evolution of Catechetics," 85-109.

⁴⁶ John Kozar, General Session Address, 25 March 2008, at the 105th annual convention of the National Catholic Educational Association, Indianapolis, Indiana.

⁴⁷ Berard Marthaler, "Introduction," in *Source Book for Modern Catechetics*, ed. Michael Warren (Winona, MN: St. Mary's Press, 1983), 13.

catechetical renewal in the United States.⁴⁸ He worked with the National Center housed at the National Catholic Welfare Conference (now the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops), where he was instrumental in bringing about *The Living Light*,⁴⁹ a quarterly for professionals devoted to Catholic religious education topics and concerns. Recognizing the connection between liturgy and catechesis, he played a role in early international catechetical study weeks. He was also one of the key leaders of the Liturgical Conference in Washington, DC, which was one of the first organizations to explain and enlist interest in the changes in the liturgy after Vatican Council II.

As noted in Chapter Two, the United States has been a world leader in the development of national catechetical directories, having received the *recognitio* from Rome for SLF (1979) and the NDC (2005). Both national directories, the United States Bishops' responses to the GCD (1971), and the GDC (1997), respectively, manifest the convergence of concepts coming from the movements as well as evolution and maturation of catechetical themes. In support of the catechumenate in the United States (and Canada), the North American Forum on the Catechumenate, founded by James B. Dunning (priest of the Archdiocese of Seattle) with encouragement and inspiration from Belgian born Christiane Brusselmans (lay theologian and author) first brought the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* into the mainstream in the United States.

⁴⁸Marthaler, "Introduction," 11-20. See Gerard Sloyan, *Shaping the Christian Message* (New York: McMillan Company, 1959).

⁴⁹Due to lack of financial sustainability, *The Living Light* ceased publication after forty years after the 2004 spring issue.

While the demise of *The Living Light* is regrettable, the reassuring presence of *Catechumenate: A Journal for Christian Initiation* continues to address theological concerns and pastoral issues for catechumenal ministers. In order for new concepts to coalesce and be translated into action, not only is there a need for directories, but also a need for institutions and literature that encourage theological and pastoral dialogue. These tested means of disseminating new ways of thinking about these concepts to leaders in the field is now augmented by the ever-growing technological resources of the Internet.

Phase Four: Consolidation and Implementation

Profiting from a return to the sources described above and benefiting from research into modern pedagogy and theorists in cognitive, moral and faith development, the modern catechetical movement has succeeded in establishing catechesis as an initiation into faith, and focusing on essentials of the faith that derive from guiding principles. The emergence and treatment of initiatory catechesis in the GDC and the NDC exemplify the most recent evidence of such catechetical evolution and development. It is noteworthy that catechists have embraced a liturgical document, the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, as an inherently catechetical one.⁵⁰ Two aspects of the catechumenate that are still developing are the implementation of ritual steps in the adapted rite for children of catechetical age and the incorporation of liturgical formation of these children in initiatory catechesis.

⁵⁰William Harmless, *Augustine and the Catechumenate* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1995), 20-21.

The biblical, liturgical, patristic and catechetical movements⁵¹ that preceded Vatican Council II influenced and helped to shape liturgical reforms and catechetical developments appropriate to the restored catechumenate. The GDC clearly names the baptismal catechumenate as the inspiration for all catechesis.⁵² The proliferation of documents from the Magisterium that addresses the catechetical mission of the Church after Vatican Council II demonstrates a far-reaching catechetical trajectory.⁵³

The *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, undeniably a liturgical document, has expansive catechetical implications. It manifests an essential link between liturgy and catechesis and a restoration of their symbiotic relationship. It informs catechesis for initiation and calls into question assumptions regarding initiatory, ongoing and mystagogical catechesis. The Rite is a driving force in establishing the baptismal catechumenate as the inspiration for all catechesis. To gain a deeper understanding of how the restored catechumenate challenges assumptions, it is necessary to examine a key implication from the restored Rite, namely the implications for adult initiation.

⁵¹See note 3 above. For sources on ecumenism, see Vatican Council II, Decree on the Church's Ecumenism *Unitatis redintegratio*, 21 November 1964; and Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, *Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms on Ecumenism*, 25 March 1993.

⁵²GDC, no. 90.

⁵³See *The Catechetical Documents: A Parish Resource* (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 1996), which contains twelve of the most important documents. See also the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (1992), and *United States Catholic Catechism for Adults* (2006). For a digest of magisterial catechetical documents see Berard L. Marthaler, *The Nature, Tasks and Scope of the Catechetical Ministry: A Digest of Recent Church Documents* (Washington, DC: National Catholic Educational Association, 2008).

Implications for Adult Initiation

The *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* incorporates critically important shifts regarding initiatory catechesis, liturgical catechesis, and the pastoral challenges related to the adapted rite for children. The concept of conversion as a requirement for baptism in those over the age of seven is significant. Without upending the baptism of infants, it calls attention to untested assumptions about the sacraments of initiation and the initiatory catechesis for children that precedes and follows conferral of the initiation sacraments. Because the adapted rite for children is dependent on the contemporary adult rite, the implications that are germane to chronological adulthood are also applicable to children of catechetical age, who are considered adults according to Canon Law.

First, it is helpful to acknowledge the role of the structure of initiation and its relationship to catechesis for initiation. Proclamation, conversion, and baptism are part of the complex set of rites that manifest a pattern of initiation that was already in place in the New Testament period. These appear “not as a single act but as a continuum of articulated events already undergoing a rich if initial degree of development.”⁵⁴ Far from being restricted to instruction on central doctrines, the catechesis for initiation in this period also consisted of active formation that involved prayer, hand-laying, exorcism, fasting, and tasting salt. The lenten scrutinies, for example, were major acts of catechesis that involved the whole community. Catechesis for initiation from the beginning incorporated didactic instruction as

⁵⁴Kavanagh, *Shape of Baptism*, 36.

well as participation in interactive ritual.⁵⁵ This joining of instruction and ritual is vitally important to a contemporary understanding of initiatory catechesis.

Liturgical scholars have traced the beginnings of these initiatory orders to the Christian apologist Justin Martyr's *First Apology*, in which the catechumenate is presented as consisting of seven vital elements: 1) an indeterminate period of instruction; 2) a syllabus that included the trinitarian baptismal creed used in Rome; 3) a biblical commentary that included exposition of moral precepts and virtues; 4) a testing that incorporated the profession of faith; 5) a triple immersion that constituted ritual baptism; 6) the trinitarian formula that accompanied ritual action of the water bath; 7) and sharing of eucharist within the community that was the final ritual moment.⁵⁶ This pattern, considered the genesis of Roman initiatory practice, is more fully visible about a generation later in Hippolytus' *Apostolic Tradition* (in the 2nd or 3rd century). Georg Kretschmar, liturgical scholar and vicarious bishop of the Lutheran Church in Riga, Latvia, shows that Hippolytus is familiar with three anointings with two different oils, a total anointing before and after the baptism bath, and an anointing of the forehead at the bishop's laying-on-of-hands.⁵⁷

The *Apostolic Tradition* establishes a prolonged catechumenate together with an examination of the candidate's life. The longer preparation includes formation through the Word of God, daily exorcisms, a bath on the Thursday before the ritual bath of baptism,

⁵⁵Kavanagh, *Shape of Baptism*, 60.

⁵⁶Thomas M. Finn, *Early Christian Baptism and the Catechumenate*, Message of the Fathers of the Church 6, *Italy, North Africa, and Egypt* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1992), 36.

⁵⁷Georg Kretschmar, "Recent Research on Christian Initiation," in *Living Water, Sealing Spirit: Readings on Christian Initiation*, ed. Maxwell E. Johnson (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1995), 22-25, 32.

fasting, final exorcism, and the rite of the Paschal night. Tertullian's *On Baptism* (3rd century) and the *Gelasian Sacramentary* and *Ordo Romanus XI* (representing the 6th through the 8th centuries) are adaptations of Hippolytus. Each work presented its own conception of the major stages of the initiatory process, which included a catechesis for initiation.⁵⁸

Kavanagh analyzes these orders separately in order to demonstrate that chrismation was an integral part of the water bath in baptism:

Far from leaving the neophytes to shift for themselves because everything had in fact been theologically accomplished in the water bath our three sources show that the newly baptized are received into full communion with the Church by a series of hospitable acts—clothing, solemn public prayer, chrismations, hand-layings, kisses of peace and finally admission to the common table of the eucharist. This pastoral liturgical context is that within which all the events after the water bath must be interpreted: they cannot be sundered from their pastoral context, then be liturgically isolated from each other and still be expected to make complete sense in themselves . . . yet . . . this is what happened as the whole initiatory continuum became fragmented in later centuries...⁵⁹

Fragmentation both in catechesis and liturgical structure is an important concept in this study. The theological and pastoral problems associated with the interruption of the proper sequence of the sacraments of initiation over the centuries comes into sharper focus in light of the restored catechumenate, which returns to the unity and the sequence of the initiation ritual. These problems appear as pastoral practices of withholding confirmation and ignoring the ritual steps leading up to full initiation for children of catechetical age in the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*. A century-long practice of fragmenting the unity and sequence of the sacraments of initiation not only obscures the meaning of initiation, but also

⁵⁸Kavanagh, *Shape of Baptism*, 54.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 47.

works against a comprehensive initiatory catechesis (which includes liturgical catechesis) for initiation in the restored catechumenate with children of catechetical age in the adapted rite.

Structural fragmentation of the rite mirrors the kind of fragmentation seen in catechesis for initiation when mere didactic instruction in doctrinal concepts displaces the original pattern of instruction coupled with ritual participation followed by reflection. The first initiation structures included an intentional instruction that was part of a larger notion of liturgical catechesis prior to the baptismal water rites for initiation. Such catechesis included ritual enrollment of adults and children who wished to prepare for initiation. After enrollment, there was time for catechesis ordered toward conversion as a desired outcome and a prerequisite for full initiation. The intent of this catechesis was to prepare not just for the sacramental rites of initiation, but also for a life of faith in which “asceticism, good works, and sacramental engagement” blend together to form a robust whole.⁶⁰ The original initiation structures provided the categories for a distinct initiatory catechesis that the GDC and NDC have presented for a new era.

For nearly four hundred years before the liturgical and catechetical reforms of Vatican II, the rite of baptism that had been originally intended for adults became compressed, truncated and used as the normal rite for infants. Influenced by the polemic with Protestant Reformers, the rites in the 1614 *Roman Ritual* supported an initiation practice unrelated to the full ancient Roman baptismal liturgy originally developed with adults in mind even though the more ancient rite remained in the *Roman Pontifical* after 1595, it was

⁶⁰ Kavanagh, *Shape of Baptism*, 105.

rarely used by the mid twentieth century due to its great length and its being entirely in Latin. In practice, the baptism of infants had become the dominant practice that was considered “normative” within a context of social expectation rather than a context of faith and conversion.⁶¹ Such unhinging of conscious faith through catechesis and baptism demonstrates a disintegration and fragmentation of the original Christian initiation pattern that had given priority to adult baptism in the ancient catechumenate.

The *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* restores adult baptism as “normative,” a designation with greater resonance than merely ascribing priority to adult faith formation.⁶² An adult’s capacity for coming to faith through conversion is a critical factor that has deeper theological significance. Christian initiation is more than mere membership in a group or organization. It is participation in the paschal mystery—and conversion is a sign that one willingly embraces the mystery of Christ. Incorporation into the paschal mystery involves both regeneration in Christ by being born of water and the spirit (John 3:1-15) and a participation in the death and burial of Jesus Christ (Romans 6:1-11). It culminates in sharing eucharist and living as a disciple of Jesus. Children who have reached the age of reason also

⁶¹Kavanagh, *Shape of Baptism*, 104-106.

⁶²See Michael Balhoff, *The Legal Interrelatedness of Sacraments of Initiation: New Canonical Developments in the Latin Rite from Vatican II to the 1983 Code of Canon Law* [Legal Interrelatedness], Canon Law Studies 511 (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1984), 12-22. Balhoff challenges Kavanagh’s use of the word “normative” in relation to baptism of adults in RCIA from a legal perspective. In his judgment the evidence from “conciliar and post conciliar reform does not support so strong a statement.” However, he does concede that “the adult rite is deliberately given first place in the descriptions of various norms.” Further he reiterates that the adult rite is the “pattern for the infant rite” (ibid., 122).

have capacity for conversion that is appropriate to their age and stage of development.⁶³ Not only do they have the capacity for catechesis and conversion, but ritual itself has a formative catechetical significance for children of catechetical age.

Aidan Kavanagh considers baptism of adults with conscious attention to the conversion process (which he calls “conversion therapy”) an important counterbalance to infant baptism’s becoming “a malign abnormality due to pastoral malfeasance, theological obsession, or the decline in the faith among Christian parents.”⁶⁴ Infant baptism communicates the graciousness of the gift of faith and has a permanent place in the Church’s initiation practice.⁶⁵ However, infant baptism has never been considered the “norm” of the Church’s initiation “polity,” notwithstanding the Church’s teaching on original sin. In Kavanagh’s view, the predominance of the practice of infant baptism may have supplanted the theological significance of adult baptism, but the frequency of an action does not constitute a norm. It is rather the standard according to which a thing is done that establishes a norm.⁶⁶ The church’s standard for baptism has been and remains that of baptism for adults after evidence of initial faith through conversion to Jesus Christ. It follows, then, that the predominance of infant baptism had not changed the theology of the church in relation to

⁶³See Rita Burns Senseman, “What Should We Ask of Child Catechumens?” in *Readings in the Christian Initiation of Children*, ed. Victoria M. Tufano (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 1994), 153-62.

⁶⁴Kavanagh, *Shape of Baptism*, 110.

⁶⁵See Mark Searle, “Infant Baptism Reconsidered,” in *Alternative Futures for Worship*, vol. 2, *Baptism and Confirmation*, ed. Mark Searle (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1987), 15-54.

⁶⁶Kavanagh, *Shape of Baptism*, 108.

baptism, but the predominance of the practice of infant baptism has had a far-reaching influence in shaping an understanding of baptism, expectations regarding initiatory catechesis for the sacraments, and assumptions about the sequence of the initiation sacraments in relation to penance and confirmation.

Conversion to Christ is and always has been the standard for baptism regardless of practice. If we are to take seriously the directive in the GDC that “the organizing principle, which gives coherence to the various catechetical programs offered by a particular Church is attention to adult catechesis” and that “this is the axis around which revolves the catechesis of childhood and adolescence as well as that of old age,”⁶⁷ then coming to conscious, intentional faith in Christ through conversion is a fundamental concern. As such, the primacy of the adult pattern of baptism must never be neglected when working with children of catechetical age according to the adapted rite within the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*. The Rite provides a gradual process for such conversion for adults and children of catechetical age and provides an appropriate ritual structure to accompany the stages of conversion as a process.⁶⁸

The ritual structure also guides the initiatory catechesis appropriate to the catechumenate. The shift to reestablishing adult baptism as “normative” through the *Rite of*

⁶⁷GDC, no. 275; cf. *Directorium Catechisticum Generale* (1971), no. 20, commonly known as the *General Catechetical Directory* (GCD), where it is shown that the other forms of catechesis are ordered (*ordinantur*) to adult catechesis.

⁶⁸Robert D. Duggan, “Conversion in the *Ordo Initiationis Christianae Adultorum*: An Analysis and Critique” (STD diss., The Catholic University of America, 1980).

Christian Initiation of Adults helps to reestablish what baptism truly signifies. A. Kavanagh's analysis of this shift is insightful:

The Council's concern was to reiterate that the Church continually comes into existence in and through the full rhythm of Christian initiation, the normal scope of which is to be seen in the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*. So radical is baptism that it is not merely something the Church may do in its spare time.⁶⁹

Without denying the Augustinian concept that original sin implies personal guilt, which baptism removes even in infants, the restored catechumenate signals a shift from a popular understanding of infant baptism as the norm to one that highlights conversion before baptism as the norm, the original prerequisite for baptism. Both adults and children of catechetical age have the capacity for conversion and, through a process facilitated by catechists, can by God's grace come to faith through conversion. The sacrament of baptism is the "inwardness of faith" given bodily expression through the Church. Here the ecclesial nature of catechesis is made clear. Furthermore, baptism, as a sacrament of faith, must be coextensive with the stages of the development of faith if it is to have a truly catechumenal style.⁷⁰

Catechesis "aims to bring about in the believer an ever more mature faith in Jesus Christ."⁷¹ Initiatory catechesis, specifically, aims at facilitating such initial belief through conversion, which has both a divine and a human dimension. The primacy of conversion in initiatory catechesis is the theological grounding for the primacy of the catechesis of adults.

⁶⁹Kavanagh, *Shape of Baptism*, 110.

⁷⁰*Ibid.*, 90-92.

⁷¹NDC, no. 19a.

It is a shift with significant consequences, especially for children of catechetical age in the adapted rite.

Refocusing on baptism of adults highlights the need for a shift to initiatory catechesis. In a largely Christianized world where conversion to Jesus Christ was assumed and living faith was practiced in the family, catechesis that merely instructs, informs or indoctrinates may not have been obviously defective. However, as a response to the signs of the times in the world situation, when the Church made a liturgical shift through the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* to reestablish the primacy of adult baptism rooted in conversion, there naturally followed a need for a shift to an evangelizing, initiatory or baptismal catechesis for conversion to Jesus Christ and incorporation into the Church.

Conclusion

Returning to the convergence of movements that produced the conditions for the possibility of the Second Vatican Council and the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* is more than a mere historical exercise. Knitting together the elements of the biblical, patristic, liturgical, and catechetical movements that provide the foundation for the shift in initiation practice after Vatican II is an important exercise in remembering our roots. The scholars who took up the task of returning to sources gifted the next generation with a means to articulate the gospel message more effectively and to reclaim fundamental principles that are embedded in the origins of initiatory structure and practice. Through these foundations we have been able to reconnect catechesis not only to liturgy but also to the cultural and

anthropological realities that are the portals through which the proclamation is communicated.

Understanding the origins of the liturgical catechetical renewal through the lens of the movements helps put into perspective the role of conversion that is at the heart of the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*. As seen through this lens, conversion is the aim of initiatory catechesis in the catechumenal process that intends to “put a person in touch and in communion with Jesus Christ.”⁷² Such conversion depends on liturgy as constitutive of the process of formation in the catechumenate. Conversion, a divine-human dynamic, makes possible a profession of faith, which constitutes the Church and sets faith in motion in our time.⁷³

Initiatory catechesis, as a product of the semantic evolution in catechesis,⁷⁴ is as much a fruit of the movements as are Vatican Council II and the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*. Given the nature of initiatory catechesis as a comprehensive form of catechesis that incorporates liturgy, catechetical leaders are challenged to adopt the pattern of initiatory catechesis in the catechumenate that involves attention to liturgical catechesis, which constitutes the subject of Chapter Four: Focus on Liturgical Catechesis.

⁷²GDC, no. 80.

⁷³See Kenneth Barker’s analysis of catechesis based on the work of Jacques Audinet in “Catechesis as Pastoral Action,” *The Living Light* 15, no. 1 (Spring 1978): 128-40.

⁷⁴GDC, no. 35.

CHAPTER 4

FOCUS ON LITURGICAL CATECHESIS

Introduction

A contemporary understanding of the term liturgical catechesis has been developing since Vatican Council II and the term is more recognizable as it continues to be included in the titles of pastoral articles and books.¹ This literature covers a wide and undifferentiated spectrum, focusing on separate elements that make up discrete aspects of liturgical catechesis, such as focus on the liturgy of the word, liturgical symbols and gestures, or the liturgical year. The proliferation of such literature, based at least in part on an ever-increasing awareness of the term, *per se*, presents both an opportunity and a challenge. Some authors, for example, seem to use liturgical catechesis as an amorphous catch all term, relating it to artifacts and actions apart from liturgical celebrations, connecting it with a mystagogy following ritual prayer, or applying it to popular religion. Focusing on such discrete topics related to liturgy may push back the boundaries of ignorance in one or more of these areas;

¹Thomas H. Morris, "Liturgical Catechesis Revisited," *Catechumenate: A Journal of Christian Initiation* 17, no. 3 (May 1995): 12-19; Victoria M. Tufano, "How Do We Do Liturgical Catechesis?" *Catechumenate: A Journal of Christian Initiation* 23, no. 5 (September 2001): 28-37; Jerry Galipeau, "Entering the Mystery of Salvation: The Potential for Liturgical Catechesis," *Catechumenate: A Journal of Christian Initiation* 30, no. 1 (January 2008): 2-11; Daniel Miller, "An Elegant Sufficiency: Symbol and Gesture in Christian Initiation," *Catechumenate: A Journal of Christian Initiation* 34, no. 6 (November 2002): 2-13; Robert Brancatelli, "Religiosidad Popular as a Form of Liturgical Catechesis," *Worship* 77, no. 3 (May 2003): 210-24.

such an approach also has the potential, however, to fragment what is at its core a more integrated and unified concept of liturgical catechesis.

The focus of this chapter is that liturgical catechesis is not only a distinct form of catechesis, but it is also one with constitutive elements and an inherent method. The importance of the term is underscored in the *General Directory for Catechesis* (GDC)² and the *National Directory for Catechesis* (NDC),³ which provide a synthesis of statements on liturgical catechesis that are founded in previous documents. Mystagogy, which is clearly constitutive of liturgical catechesis and not so foreign a word as it once was, gains greater prominence for catechists since its integration in the definition of liturgical catechesis in number 1075 in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC). Familiarity with these terms provides a unique opportunity and foundation for deepening and expanding a more comprehensive, holistic understanding of liturgical catechesis.

The challenge, however, is that such familiarity without a degree of depth of understanding has the potential for introducing no small amount of confusion about liturgical catechesis in pastoral practice. According to Gilbert Ostdiek, professor of Word and Worship at the Catholic Theological Union in Chicago, there are as many understandings of liturgical catechesis as there are perspectives on what constitutes it.⁴ Victoria Tufano, former editor of

²Congregation for the Clergy, *General Directory for Catechesis* (Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference, 1997).

³United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *National Directory for Catechesis* (Washington, DC: USCCB, 2005).

⁴Gilbert Ostdiek, "Liturgical Catechesis," in *The New Dictionary of Sacramental Worship*, ed. Peter E. Fink (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1990), 386.

Catechumenate: A Journal of Christian Initiation, gives a very uncertain answer to the question of the definition of liturgical catechesis: “To be honest, no one knows exactly.”⁵ Catechists, too, can often have a somewhat limited understanding of the scope of liturgical catechesis; for those catechists responsible for children of catechetical age (who rightly belong in a catechumenal style of formation) liturgical catechesis may be reduced to preparation for the sacraments. Some authors focus on the aspect of liturgy that teaches in its own right. For others, there may be little recognition that liturgical catechesis is composed of specific liturgical elements and they may have little knowledge of its genesis and development in the post-Vatican II era. These mixed and undifferentiated approaches to liturgical catechesis often compete with each other. At the level of pastoral practice they compound a catechist’s task of understanding contemporary liturgical catechesis not only as a specific form of catechesis but also as one with a particular method. Such deficits have implications for pastoral practice especially with regard to the adapted rite for children in the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* (RCIA).

Ostdiek describes two forms of liturgical catechesis: 1) liturgy itself as a form of catechesis and 2) preparation to participate in the liturgy as another form.⁶ He admits that the first is the most “important form of liturgical catechesis,”⁷ while the second is a

⁵Tufano, “How Do We Do Liturgical Catechesis?” 30.

⁶Gilbert Ostdiek, *Catechesis for Liturgy* (Washington, DC: Pastoral Press, 1986), 9.

⁷Ibid.

“contemporary one” based on Thomas Groome’s work in religious education for adults.⁸ In the first he acknowledges the importance of the mystagogical catechesis of the early catechumenate; in the second he puts forth a method for attending to, reflecting and applying the languages of liturgy: liturgical space, environment, time, feasts and seasons, action, objects, speech and song. Catherine Dooley, professor of religious education and catechetics at The Catholic University of American and Dominican College in Chicago, connects liturgical catechesis with the Church’s ancient tradition of mystagogy, which relies on the symbolic actions and prayers experienced in the initiation rites of the fourth and fifth centuries. Her approach does not negate a catechesis about and for liturgy and promotes a liturgical catechesis that is drawn from the liturgy using insights from modern liturgical theology and pastoral liturgical studies.⁹

The most recently developed statements and definitions on liturgical catechesis appear in the NDC. For example, the NDC describes a liturgical catechesis that

is most explicit in the form of the homily received during the celebration of the sacraments. As such, liturgical catechesis within the scope of a sacred action is an integral part of that action [SC no. 35]. Its function is “the immediate preparation for reception of the different sacraments, the celebration of sacramentals and above all the participation of the faithful in the Eucharist, as a primary means of education in the faith” [GDC, no. 51]. Liturgical catechesis also includes reflection upon the ritual celebration.¹⁰

⁸Ostdiek, “Catechesis for Liturgy,” 15-16.

⁹Catherine Dooley, “Liturgical Catechesis: Mystagogy, Marriage or Misnomer?” *Worship* 66, no. 5 (September 1992): 391.

¹⁰NDC, no. 17c.

Written eight years prior to the NDC, the GDC, the source book for the NDC, reminds catechists that “liturgical catechesis shall make constant reference to the great human experiences represented by the signs and symbols of liturgical actions originating in Jewish and Christian culture.”¹¹ Further, the GDC characterizes liturgical catechesis as “among the forms of catechesis most apt to inculturate the faith” and calls it “a privileged means” of catechesis.¹²

Because liturgical catechesis is a thread that runs throughout this study, a preliminary definition and treatment of it as a form of catechesis appears in preceding chapters. Chapter One follows the lead of the GDC and presents liturgical catechesis as an “eminent kind of catechesis” that “explains the contents of prayers, meaning of signs and gestures, [and] educates to active participation, contemplation and silence”.¹³ Each of these named activities points to a catechetical approach that is beyond merely teaching about the liturgy. Chapter Two situates liturgical catechesis as an essential dimension of a larger context of initiatory catechesis and underscores the need to include child catechumens in the adapted rites of the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*. Participation of children of catechetical age in all the adapted rites of the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* is essential if children are to experience the catechumenate as “a process of formation and as a true school of faith” it is

¹¹GDC, no. 112.

¹²Ibid., no. 207.

¹³Ibid., no. 71. See also John Paul II, *Apostolic Exhortation (Catechesi Tradendae)*, 16 October 1979, no. 23, “Catechesis and Sacraments.” The document speaks of eminent catechesis with reference to the restored catechumenate.

meant to be.¹⁴ Chapter Three demonstrates that the liturgical movement leading up to and following Vatican Council II set the stage for a retrieval of a restored catechumenate, which helped to highlight the need for a liturgical catechesis in pastoral practice. Based on this movement, an important precursor to contemporary liturgical catechesis in the United States is the contribution of Dom Michel Virgil's innovative catechetical materials that incorporated an early form of liturgical catechesis. With the retrieval of the ancient catechumenate through the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, the mystagogical catechesis used by the Church Fathers is recognized as a model for contemporary liturgical catechesis.

Based on foundations laid in previous chapters, these multifaceted aspects of liturgical catechesis presented as separate elements as well as multiple definitions in pastoral, scholarly and official Church documents contextualize the current chapter. In consideration of these, two questions emerge. First, what constitutes liturgical catechesis? Second, what does it mean to engage in liturgical catechesis as a normative and essential catechetical practice in initiatory catechesis through the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* adapted for children of catechetical age? In addressing these questions, Chapter Four acknowledges the historical foundation of liturgical catechesis in the ancient form of mystagogical catechesis. It also recognizes theological foundations for the evolution of a contemporary liturgical catechesis in the emergence of liturgical theology. Liturgical theology establishes liturgy not only as first theology but also as primary for formation in faith and therefore a source for

¹⁴GDC, no. 91. See also NDC, no. 35d.

catechesis.¹⁵ These two roots, mystagogy and liturgical theology, are especially important for establishing liturgical catechesis as a method that permeates the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* including the rites adapted for children of catechetical age.

Foundations for Liturgical Catechesis

Liturgical catechesis assumes and promotes active and conscious participation in the liturgy as well as acquaintance and familiarity with the language of liturgy in sign, symbol, gesture, word and silence. Liturgy, the Church's ritual prayer, is the common denominator in mystagogy and liturgical theology, both of which are roots of liturgical catechesis. To underscore liturgy's power to teach, form and transform, Pope John Paul II's apostolic letter inaugurating the year of the Eucharist, *Mane Nobiscum Domine*, calls for celebrating the liturgical signs well in order to bring about a deeper mystagogical understanding of their meaning.¹⁶ Such mystagogical understanding depends on good liturgical celebration, no doubt. It also depends on a person's being present during such good liturgical celebrations, for mystagogical understanding is grounded in experience of the liturgy and needs well trained catechists with a capacity to engage in a liturgical catechesis flowing from a liturgical experience.

¹⁵Catherine Dooley, "Lex Orandi, Lex Credendi: Implications for Catechesis," in *Catechetical Scholars III: Perspectives in Evangelization and Catechesis*, ed. Diana Dudoit Raiche (Washington, DC: National Catholic Educational Association, 2005), 79-85.

¹⁶John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Mane Nobiscum Domine*, no. 17 (Trivandrum, Kerala, India: Carmel International Publishing House [St. Joseph's Press], 2005).

Mystagogy, Mystagogical Catechesis, and Liturgical Catechesis

The most recent catechetical directory acknowledges the value and importance of the Church Fathers' method of mystagogical catechesis, positioning mystagogy in relation to liturgical catechesis.¹⁷ The word mystagogy itself, the use of which dates from the beginning of the Byzantine period, in its broadest Christian sense means "explanation of liturgical rites." Enrico Mazza claims that it is on the basis of this broader meaning that mystagogy is applied to liturgical celebrations.¹⁸ Among the Greek Fathers mystagogy means "initiation into the mysteries," "performance of a sacred action" and "oral or written explanation of the mystery hidden in the scriptures and celebrated in the liturgy."¹⁹ Mazza contends that the methodology used in the mystagogical catecheses is a kind of liturgical theology as opposed to belonging to a solely catechetical or spiritual theology. Applied to the liturgical action or the "ontological content" of the sacrament, then, the mystagogical method is seen as capable of bringing to light and explaining the contents that are theological and true in the proper sense.²⁰

Acknowledging the ancient roots of mystagogy in a pre-Christian as well as early Christian era, David Regan²¹ focuses on the revival of mystagogy in relation to the restored

¹⁷NDC, no. 35.

¹⁸Enrico Mazza, *Mystagogy: A Theology of Liturgy in the Patristic Age*, trans. Matthew J. O'Connell (New York: Pueblo Publishing Company, 1989), 1.

¹⁹Mazza, *Mystagogy*, 1.

²⁰*Ibid.*, 3.

²¹Fr. David Regan, C.S.Sp., was born in Tipperary and taught philosophy and liturgy in Ireland before emigrating to Brazil in 1963 to teach post-graduates.

catechumenate and human experience. He situates mystagogy within the pastoral agenda of Vatican Council II and the concern that the Council shows for attention to the relevance of human joys and sorrows in their Christian experience. Historically, such concern for Christian experience is positioned between the remnants of the Modernist crisis with de-Christianization of the West on the one hand and the vestiges the Enlightenment and a return to scripture and spirituality in a post-Vatican II era on the other. D. Regan further connects mystagogy with the Paschal Mystery, the center point of the Christian experience through liturgy. With that as his starting point, he avoids describing mystagogy as commentary on the rites of initiation as in the past, but rather positions mystagogy as a means for connecting one's human experience of the central Mystery with spiritual lessons for living as a Christian in the world.²² He posits that mystagogy "introduces a unity into theology" and indeed that the "relation of mystagogy to catechetics makes the topic relevant to religious formation."²³

The Fathers of the Church, whose works provide us with some of the earliest depictions of Christian initiation, developed a method of commentary on the ritual that is considered an original Christian mystagogical catechesis. Cyril of Jerusalem's *Mystagogical Catecheses*, for example, is instructive for those who struggle to implement a contemporary liturgical catechesis in the current cultural context. In Cyril's homilies, one finds a suitable methodology for mystagogical catechesis that motivates a new Christian to want to live as a Christian in the company of other Christians. In the hands of a mystagogue such as Cyril and

²²David Regan, *Experiencing the Mystery: Pastoral Possibilities for Christian Mystagogy* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1994), 27-34.

²³Ibid., 7.

other Church Fathers, the careful, artful, concrete, and spiritual reflection on the ritual action just experienced through the use of scripture and the sacramental theology of the time illuminates the mind and heart of the ancient neophyte. According to Walter Burghardt, the mystagogues in the ancient catechumenate understood the rites of initiation to be a source of insight because the liturgy itself was responsible for Christian understanding. The neophytes were capable of understanding what had occurred because they had been “transformed” through the liturgical experience:

Because they have been baptized, they are in a position to understand how baptism has made them counterparts of the suffering Christ. Because they have been anointed with the Spirit, they can grasp what the unction of the Spirit effects. Because they have fed on the flesh of Christ, they see what it means to be incorporated into Christ.²⁴

Based on this model, the homily is featured prominently as a central element in modern-day liturgical catechesis, as well as in the Period of Post-baptismal Catechesis or Mystagogy in the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*.

The NDC both differentiates and connects mystagogy and mystagogical catechesis: mystagogy means probing the mysteries while mystagogical catechesis is now used interchangeably with post-baptismal catechesis. Sometimes the latter term is applied to neophytes in the catechumenate, while at other times it is used in connection with faithful. In either case, however, equating mystagogy with post baptismal-catechesis begs the question of whether they are really one and the same if post baptismal-catechesis is devoted to neophytes in the Fourth Period of the catechumenate as well as to the faithful in their

²⁴Walter Burghardt, “Catechetics in the Early Church: Program and Psychology,” *The Living Light* 1, no. 3 (Autumn 1964): 107.

continuing journey of ongoing conversion. Mystagogy is clearly delineated as that “phase of liturgical catechesis that aims to incorporate the neophytes more deeply into the mystery of Christ through reflection on the Gospel message and the experience of the sacraments they have received.”²⁵ Mystagogy and the mystagogical catechesis that is based on it is then part of a larger context that constitutes contemporary liturgical catechesis. The key point is that both follow an experience of the liturgy. Post-baptismal catechesis is certainly necessary for the neophyte recently baptized and incorporated into the Church. It is also an application of mystagogy for ongoing formation according to what NDC calls a “catechumenal style” of catechesis that does not slavishly mimic the catechumenate.²⁶

The CCC incorporates the ancient foundation of mystagogy to liturgical catechesis in its definition:

Liturgical catechesis aims to initiate people into the mystery of Christ (It is a “mystagogy.”) by proceeding from the visible to the invisible, from the sign to the thing signified, from the “sacraments” to the “mysteries.” Such catechesis is to be presented by local and regional catechisms. This Catechism, which aims to serve the whole Church in all the diversity of her rites and cultures, will present what is fundamental and common to the whole Church in the liturgy as mystery and as celebration (Section One) and then the seven sacraments and the sacramentals (Section Two).²⁷

Consistent with the approach used throughout the *Catechism* to retain traditional language, the above definition links language associated with sacraments to liturgical catechesis for a contemporary audience. It is noteworthy that the CCC is the first catechism to incorporate the

²⁵NDC, no. 35d.

²⁶Ibid. See GDC, no. 29.

²⁷CCC, no. 1075.

term liturgical catechesis into its lexicon and indeed the first to place sacraments within the context of liturgy.²⁸ However, there is some caution in relying only on the catechism genre to situate liturgical catechesis in relation to the catechumenate. Some could too easily default to mere instruction on liturgy and sacraments without giving proper attention to participation in the liturgical celebration or reflection on what one experienced flowing from the liturgical celebration.

Liturgical Theology

A second and more contemporary foundation for contemporary liturgical catechesis is the emergence of liturgical theology after Vatican Council II. The axiom *lex orandi, lex credendi* (that is, as one prays, so one believes) is founded in a more ancient dictum: *ut legem credendi lex statuat supplicandi* (that is, the order of supplication determines the rule of faith).²⁹ In a post-Vatican II era, this fifth-century adage attributed to Prosper of Aquitaine became associated with liturgical theology, a theological discipline that emerged from the liturgical movement and ended the rupture between theological study and liturgical experience.³⁰ As Alexander Schmemmann says,

²⁸Catherine Dooley, "Liturgical Catechesis According to the Catechism," in *Introducing the Catechism of the Catholic Church: Traditional Themes and Contemporary Issues*, ed. Berard L. Marthaler (New York: Paulist Press, 1994), 97-98.

²⁹ Dooley, "Lex Orandi, Lex Credendi," 80. See also Paul de Clerk, "Lex orandi, lex credendi: The Original Sense and Historical Avatars of an Equivocal Adage," trans. Thomas M. Winger, *Studia Liturgica* 24 (1994): 178-200; and Kevin Irwin, *Liturgical Theology: A Primer* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1990), 11-17.

³⁰Alexander Schmemmann, *Introduction to Liturgical Theology*, trans. Ashleigh E. Moorhouse (Bangor, Maine: American Orthodox Press, 1966), 9-12.

Therefore the task of liturgical theology consists in giving a theological basis to the explanation of worship and the whole liturgical tradition of the Church. This means, first, to find and define the concepts and categories which are capable of expressing as fully as possible the essential nature of the liturgical experience of the Church; second, to connect these ideas with that system of concepts which theology uses to expound the faith and doctrine of the Church; and third, to present the separate data of liturgical experience as a connected whole, as in the last analysis, the “rule of prayer” dwelling within the Church and determining her “rule of faith.”³¹

Acknowledging the historical and theological sources for liturgical theology, Kevin Irwin of The Catholic University of America calls attention to the fact that *lex orandi* was “totally absent from theological study or magisterial teaching from Trent to the present.”³² Irwin continues that notwithstanding the difficulties in establishing the “precise relationship between liturgy and theology,” the earliest liturgies enacted and embodied not just what the Church teaches but also proclaimed the scriptures for gathered communities of faith. He notes that what is at stake in the original use of *lex orandi* is the fact that the Church is gathered for prayer, for liturgy is the prayer of the Church. It is not necessarily the formulas of the specific prayers but the theology reflected in the prayers that constitutes the *lex credendi*.³³ Thus liturgy is a theological source to the degree that it is based on biblical revelation, as the Church understands it.³⁴ Therefore, liturgy is not only a source of theology, but it is also a foundational source for catechesis.³⁵

³¹Schmemmann, *Introduction to Liturgical Theology*, 14.

³²Irwin, *Liturgical Theology: A Primer*, 13.

³³*Ibid.*, 14.

³⁴*Ibid.*, 11-12.

³⁵Dooley, “Lex Orandi, Lex Credendi,” 80.

The importance of looking to liturgical theology as a foundation for liturgical catechesis cannot be underestimated. Irwin advances that it is just this kind of attention to the primacy of the liturgy that helped Cipriano Vagaggini, one among the Vatican II European scholars that contributed to a contemporary understanding of liturgical theology, to avoid the charge of anachronism in relation to his understanding of patristic liturgical theology because his focus is fixed on the main purpose of the liturgy: “to enact the mystery of faith”.³⁶ Bringing that mystery of faith forward into contemporary context, Vagaggini sees “faith is a point of departure” and the liturgy as a source for theology that enacts the “mystery of faith” and leads one to contemplate God.³⁷

Such an understanding is akin to one of the descriptions of catechesis in the NDC, namely, that catechesis is an ecclesial act that aims to bring about initial conversion in Jesus Christ, develop that initial faith, nourish the Christian life and continually unfold the mystery of Christ until the believer willingly becomes his disciple.³⁸ This explanation of catechesis aligns with the notion that catechesis derives content from a theology of liturgy whereby one reflects on and gains greater understanding through instruction on what it means to enact Christ’s paschal mystery in the present. As Irwin says, it is through both theology and liturgy that the mystery of God is “acknowledged and experienced.”³⁹

³⁶Irwin, *Liturgical Theology: A Primer*, 22, citing Cipriano Vagaggini, *Theological Dimensions of the Liturgy* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press), 512-14.

³⁷Irwin, *Liturgical Theology: A Primer*, 22.

³⁸NDC, no. 19.

³⁹Irwin, *Liturgical Theology: A Primer*, 68.

With this thrust of approaching the theology *of* the liturgy and theology drawn *from* the liturgy, Irwin advances that a third law can be added to the equation of *lex orandi, lex credendi: lex agendi* or the law of acting. He contends that it is just as important to examine the actual experience of the liturgical celebrations, the liturgical “performance” of the ritual including the music as a source for theology as it is to rely on books that describe a celebration.⁴⁰ For example, every movement and liturgical choice in ritual prayer communicates something about God, the Trinity, Christ, the Church, the sacraments, and how we relate to the divine and each other. A musical selection, as such, may serve to enhance the depth of meaning intended in the liturgy or serve to limit the assembly’s grasp of what the rite intends to embody and enact.

One pastoral application of this way of approaching liturgical theology would be, as Irwin says, “to evaluate how well contemporary liturgical catechesis reflects and emphasizes the theological meaning of what occurs in liturgy.”⁴¹ It is the very theology of what is happening in the ritual that requires a catechesis called liturgical catechesis, which is itself drawn from the liturgical *performance* in the technical sense. The goal of this liturgical, communal experience of God is for each individual in the community to be progressively and continually transformed into the image and likeness of God.⁴² In concert with grace, this

⁴⁰Irwin, *Liturgical Theology: A Primer*, 68.

⁴¹*Ibid.*, 64.

⁴²*Ibid.*, 66.

transformation is precisely the goal that formation through the catechumenate aims to accomplish in the catechumen.

The Sacramental Principle

Dooley calls attention to the sacramental principle at work in such liturgical actions and choices. The principle of sacramentality, one of the central theological characteristics in Catholicism, embraces all creation as having potential to communicate God's presence and to become an instrument of God's saving activity.⁴³ Thus the Third Council of Baltimore defines a sacrament as "an outward sign instituted by Christ to give grace."⁴⁴ Admittedly, the definition delimits grace as a commodity, which is a problematic notion. Nevertheless, the sacramental principle inherent in the definition works in conjunction with two other principles: the principle of mediation in which God works through secondary agents for divine ends, and the principle of communion, whereby the end of all of God's activity is the union of humanity.⁴⁵ For its part, the CCC addresses the sacramental principle under the subheading, Signs of the Human World:

⁴³Dooley, "Lex Orandi, Lex Credendi," 81. See also Kevin Irwin, "A Sacramental Word—Sacramentality as the Primary Language for Sacraments," *Worship* 76, no. 3 (May 2002): 197-211; and Louis-Marie Chauvet, "Mediation," in *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Experience*, trans. Patrick Maddigan and Madeleine Beaumont (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1995), 84-109.

⁴⁴Francis J. Connell et al., *The New Confraternity Edition Revised Baltimore Catechism and Mass*, no. 3 (Boston: Benziger Brothers, 1952), 178.

⁴⁵Mark Francis, "Principle of Sacramentality," in *HarperCollins Encyclopedia of Catholicism*, ed. Richard McBrien (New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 1995), 1148.

In human life, signs and symbols occupy an important place. As a being at once body and spirit, man expresses and perceives spiritual realities through physical sign and symbols. As a social being, man needs signs and symbols to communicate with others, through language, gestures, and actions. The same holds true for his relationship with God.⁴⁶

These signs and symbols form the landscape of the Catholic sacramental imagination, which is accustomed to acculturating inanimate objects as mediators between God and us. They are capable of communicating meaning that we can apprehend. This Catholic sacramental imagination is without question a critical aspect of forming Catholic identity, especially in children of catechetical age.

Living out the implications of the liturgy through God's grace is part of Catholic sacramental and liturgical spirituality. One's experience of the liturgy comes through the five senses in discursive, non-discursive and intuitive ways. It is a divine liturgy with its own language in signs and symbols apprehended through the right brain,⁴⁷ that area of the brain identified with non-analytical, creative and symbolic functions. Heaven touches earth with Mystery through the human experience in liturgical celebrations. In and through what happens during a liturgical celebration, an interior experience occurs in those who are receptive to God's grace. Irwin notes that such experience has power to advance "Christian conversion, understood as a response to the challenge of the gospel, ratified in cult and reflected in life."⁴⁸ In theological language, this indwelling of God within the human person

⁴⁶CCC, no. 1146.

⁴⁷James Dunning, "The Period of Mystagogia," in *Christian Initiation Resources Reader*, vol. 4, *Mystagogia and Ministries* (New York: William H. Sadlier, Inc., 1984), 12-13.

⁴⁸Irwin, *Liturgical Theology: A Primer*, 72.

that so radically changes us is the work of God's uncreated grace.⁴⁹ Such conversion leads to manifestations of being transformed in Christ-like perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors.

Liturgical Catechesis and Liturgical Instruction

Since instruction plays such a prominent role in sacramental catechesis, it is necessary to ask, what is the place of instruction for liturgy in relation to liturgical catechesis? Is such instruction a counterpoint or complement to a method associated with mystagogy and liturgical theology? In attempting to address these questions, it will be helpful to consider the treatment of liturgical catechesis in the various documents. The GDC defines liturgical catechesis as preparing for the sacraments by "promoting deeper understanding and experience of the liturgy."⁵⁰ The NDC explicates the CCC's definition of liturgical catechesis by linking it with *Catechesi Tradendae*, a document noted for its emphasis on systematic catechesis. Paragraph 23 of this document is worth considering:

[C]atechesis always has reference to the sacraments. On the one hand, the catechesis that prepares for the sacraments is an eminent kind, and every form of catechesis necessarily leads to the sacrament of life. On the other hand, authentic practice of the sacraments is bound to have a catechetical aspect.⁵¹

The NDC then presents liturgical catechesis as fostering a deeper sense of the meaning of liturgy and the sacraments while also promoting a more informed knowledge of the faith and

⁴⁹John O'Donnell, "Faith," in *The New Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Joseph A. Komonchak, Mary Collins, Dermot Lane (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1987), 383.

⁵⁰GDC, no. 71.

⁵¹*Catechesi Tradendae*, no. 23.

more vital experience of the liturgy. It is in this context that the NDC continues with its quote of *Catechesi Tradendae*, no. 23:

In other words, the sacramental life is impoverished and very soon turns to hollow ritualism if it is not based on serious knowledge of the meaning of the sacraments and catechesis becomes intellectualized if it fails to come alive in sacramental practice.⁵²

Instruction, sacramental practice, and reflection on the liturgy are recurring, interlocking aspects of liturgical catechesis. As demonstrated earlier, this combination is present in the catechesis that preceded and followed initiation rites in the ancient catechumenate. Cyril of Jerusalem's introductory lecture and eighteen instructions for instance, certainly were intended to indoctrinate the candidates about the devil, his temptations, penance and remission of sins, baptism and salvation, the nature and origin of faith, and the key doctrinal points contained in the Creed of Jerusalem.⁵³

In a more modern context, even a simple internet search for information on liturgical catechesis yields references to numerous books and articles that instruct on liturgical symbols along side Magisterial documents and a schedule of in-services to train clergy and diocesan liturgical ministers on the translations to be implemented with the Third Edition of the Roman Missal in Advent 2011. In addition, there is no small amount of material devoted to the implementation of this Third Edition of the Roman Missal under the heading of liturgical catechesis. While it is obviously not exactly the same kind of instruction that the Fathers provided in a dynamic face-to-face presentation, this form of online instruction has to be

⁵²NDC, no. 34.

⁵³See Burghardt's translation and summary of these catecheses in "Catechetics in the Early Church," 100.

taken into account. Its potential for the broadest possible reach in disseminating information cannot be underestimated.

Such attention to the role of instruction concerning changes in the liturgy is not new; it is, in fact, similar to the 1953 Apostolic Constitution *Christus Dominus*, which issued new laws for Eucharistic fast, and the need for proper instruction of the faithful regarding these laws.⁵⁴ Following this Apostolic Constitution, *Eucharisticum Mysterium*, prepared by the Congregation of Rites in 1967, is another example of the role of instruction about liturgy that is associated with liturgical catechesis. The General Introduction of this Instruction states its purpose:

The particular purpose of these rules is not only to emphasize the general principles of how to instruct the people in the Eucharist, but also to make more readily intelligible the signs by which the Eucharist is celebrated as the memorial of the Lord and worshipped as a permanent sacrament in the church. For although this sacrament has the supreme and unique feature, that the author of holiness is Himself present in it, nevertheless, in common with the other sacraments, it is the symbol of a reality and the visible form of an invisible grace [reference to Council of Trent and Summa Theol. III]. Consequently the more intelligible the signs by which it is celebrated and worshipped, the more firmly and effectively it will enter into the minds and lives of the faithful [reference to Constitution on the Liturgy *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (SC)].⁵⁵

⁵⁴John C. Ford, *Commentary on the Apostolic Constitution Christus Dominus and on the Instruction of the Holy Office on the Discipline to Be Observed Concerning the Eucharistic Fast* (New York: P. J. Kennedy & Sons, 1953), 118.

⁵⁵Congregation of Rites, *Instruction Eucharisticum Mysterium*, 25 May 1967, no. 5. See also Vatican Council II, *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (Sacrosanctum Concilium)*, 4 December 1963.

SC supports this notion of instruction in numerous paragraphs. It encourages priests to provide liturgical catechesis *during* the celebration of the Eucharist, as appropriate, to instruct the faithful.⁵⁶

A more explicitly liturgical catechesis should be given in a variety of ways. Within the rites themselves provision is to be made for brief comments, when needed, by the priest or a qualified minister; they should occur only at the more suitable moments and use a set formula or something similar.⁵⁷

SC also advances the notion of instruction by pointing out to pastors their duty to provide instruction *on* the liturgy. This has implications relative to liturgical catechesis flowing from the liturgy.

With zeal and patience pastors must promote the liturgical instruction of the faithful and also their active participation in the liturgy both internally and externally, taking into account their age and condition, their way of life and their stage of religious development.⁵⁸

The liturgical instruction toward “active participation in the liturgy both internally and externally” is as important for child catechumens as it is for a fully initiated child or adult. As this study has shown, the lack of participation in the rites belonging to the adapted rite for children of catechetical age is a current problem in pastoral practice; as such, it is particularly important for pastors to exercise this instructional role in making sure that these children have an opportunity to be formed by and through the adapted rites for children in the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*. Without such an experience these children could emerge as

⁵⁶See D’Antonio et al., *American Catholics Today*, 55. This study found that 70% of Catholics were still attending Sunday Mass in 1965, making instruction at Mass possible for a majority of Catholics.

⁵⁷SC, no. 35.3.

⁵⁸*Ibid.*, no. 19.

fully initiated strangers in a foreign liturgical land with which they have little to no familiarity or experience. Participation in the sacraments of initiation is not a reward for knowing enough about them; rather, participation in the rites leading up to the sacraments of initiation contributes to the process of formation required for full, conscious, active participation in these sacraments called for in SC, no. 14. Such participation further contributes to conversion to Jesus Christ that constitutes the journey in faith.

SC also distinguishes the act of worship in liturgy's instructive role:

Although the liturgy is above all things the worship of the divine majesty, it likewise contains rich instruction for the faithful. For in the liturgy God is speaking to his people and Christ is still proclaiming his gospel. And the people are responding to God by both song and prayer.⁵⁹

The inherent ability of liturgy to instruct the faithful coexists with the need to instruct liturgical leaders and the faithful about new laws, liturgical reform or new translations in the name of liturgical catechesis. The latter form of instruction, when modeled in a didactic manner, prompts pastoral ministers to follow suit, that is, to teach about the liturgy in the manner in which that they have been taught. When such instruction is a primary method of liturgical catechesis, the operative assumption is that sacramental practice is present and reflection on the sacraments associated with the liturgical celebration is a given without further need for guidance in a method for that reflection. Such assumptions can be ill advised. In a contemporary context, reflection on sacraments or ritual prayer depends on participation in the liturgical rite. It is intended to expand an understanding of Christian doctrines, probe their meaning for Christian living, and open up liturgical symbols, actions,

⁵⁹SC, no. 33.

and prayers, etc.—thereby, equipping participants for further contemplation of the sacred. In this way a growing mastery of the Catholic liturgical lexicon is deepened and expanded.

Remnants of an uneasy tension between liturgy and catechesis that existed to a greater degree prior to Vatican Council II are still to be found in the disconnect between and among the overlapping roles of instruction, liturgical participation or experience, and reflection as part of liturgical catechesis. Although liturgical catechesis is not a specific topic developed in the GCD, *Sharing the Light of Faith*,⁶⁰ which is based on it, side steps previous tension by focusing on the mutually supportive relationship between liturgy and catechesis:

There is a close relationship between catechesis and liturgy. Both are rooted in the Church's faith, and both strengthen faith and summon Christians to conversion, although they do so in different ways. In the liturgy the Church is at prayer, offering adoration, praise, and thanksgiving to God, and seeking means for deepening it.⁶¹

This first national catechetical directory asserts that liturgy and catechesis are rooted in the Church's faith and are ordered toward "summoning Christians to conversion." It is interesting that the word *conversion* is juxtaposed with the word *Christians*, for the concept of "new evangelization" for the already initiated that emerged in *On Evangelization in the Modern World* (1975) had only recently come to the forefront. No mention of the conversion of the unbaptized appears in this section. The directory does, however, reinforce that liturgy is the church at prayer. Furthermore, in speaking of catechesis and its relationship with the

⁶⁰National Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Sharing the Light of Faith: National Directory for Catechesis*, 1979.

⁶¹*Ibid.*, no. 113.

liturgy, *Sharing the Light of Faith* acknowledges the important role experience plays in both liturgy and catechesis and also echoes SC, no. 14:

As for catechesis, it prepares people for full and active participation in the liturgy (by helping them understand its nature, rituals, and symbols) and at the same time flows from the liturgy, inasmuch as, reflecting upon the community's experiences of worship, it seeks to relate them to daily life and growth in faith.⁶²

Later, under the heading, "Sacraments—Mysteries of Initiation," *Sharing the Light of Faith* notes that the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* provides norms for catechetical as well as liturgical practice in connection with full initiation into the Church. Paragraph 115, for instance, posits that "[s]uch catechesis will involve many members of the parish community who support and pray with the catechized, besides instructing them so that they may grow in understanding of the Christian message."⁶³ In whatever way the term *instruction* is understood after Vatican Council II, it is the term of choice in the documents early on in relation to understanding and speaking about liturgical catechesis.

An examination of liturgical catechesis from these three perspectives (mystagogy, liturgical theology and instruction) does not necessarily mean that instruction and mystagogical reflection on the rites are mutually exclusive operations. It is how the three work together that is important. While it is indeed true that preparation for liturgy is constitutive of liturgical catechesis, so also are mystagogy and reflection on the sacred mysteries. In a contemporary context, liturgical catechesis both prepares for liturgy and

⁶²*Sharing the Light of Faith*, no. 115.

⁶³*Ibid.*

unpacks the theological and spiritual dimensions of the rite in light of the ritual performance and one's experience of the rite.

Like the symbiotic relationship between liturgy and catechesis that has been restored in this post-Vatican II era, these multivalent aspects of liturgical catechesis enjoy a relationship that is mirrored in the tripartite structure of the liturgical year as a continuous cycle of preparation, celebration, and reflection. Just as we prepare in Advent, celebrate in Christmas, and reflect in Ordinary Time, so do we prepare in Lent, celebrate in Easter, and reflect in a second span of Ordinary Time. Moreover, just as it is difficult to maintain the seasonal aspects of Christmas and Easter that extend over several weeks, it is a challenge for assemblies to grasp that the Ordinary Time following Christmas and Easter seasons is truly a time of reflection to understand, apprehend and incorporate into the ordinary events of life the great lessons flowing from the Paschal Mystery each and every Sunday. The *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* not only embodies this restored symbiotic relationship between liturgy and catechesis, but it also advances liturgical catechesis as a method that is made to order for the conversion intended in the catechumenal process. Liturgical catechesis is hindered, but all the more needed, in a Church where fewer than 25% of its faithful participate in the Church's liturgy Sunday by Sunday.⁶⁴

⁶⁴Mark M. Gray and Paul M. Perl, *Sacraments Today: Belief and Practice Among U.S. Catholics* (Washington, DC: Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate, 2008), 2, 161.

Constitutive Elements in Liturgical Catechesis

Liturgical catechesis operates between two poles: the liturgy itself and reflection on one's experience of the liturgy. The bridge that joins the liturgy and reflection upon it is one's own experience of the liturgical celebration, regardless of the necessary instruction in the traditional sense that precedes or follows liturgy. Of course, the liturgy needs to be well planned and executed. This is a necessary condition for liturgical catechesis to operate, whether one wishes to focus on the mystagogical, reflective, theological or instructional aspects. Liturgical catechesis first introduces the liturgical lexicon and then facilitates bringing about understanding of that vocabulary in the light of one's experience, illuminating "not only what one sees, but more deeply what one experiences with all the senses."⁶⁵ The presence of children of catechetical age at the liturgies appropriate to the catechumenate is necessary for liturgical catechesis to fulfill its essential function normatively as an "eminent form of catechesis"⁶⁶ in initiatory catechesis. Through liturgical catechesis, catechumens are formed for "full, conscious, and active participation" in the liturgical celebrations called for in the very nature of the liturgy.⁶⁷

SC provides authoritative statements that identify constitutive elements of the liturgy and these liturgical elements are the critical ones that are constitutive for liturgical catechesis. They are constitutive elements because the nature of the liturgy and the catechesis that

⁶⁵Peter E. Fink, "The Church as Sacrament and the Sacramental Life of the Church," in *Vatican II: The Unfinished Agenda*, ed. L. Richard Harrington and J. O'Malley (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1987), 76.

⁶⁶GDC, no. 71.

⁶⁷SC, no. 14

precedes and flows from the liturgy helps to put a person in touch and in communion with Jesus Christ. According to SC,

[T]he visible signs used by the liturgy to signify invisible divine realities have been chosen by Christ or the Church. Thus not only when things are read “that were written for our instruction” (Rom 15:4), but also when the Church prays or sings or acts, the faith of those taking part is nourished and their minds are raised to God, so that they may offer him their worship as intelligent beings and receive his grace more abundantly.⁶⁸

It is possible in this passage from SC to substitute the term catechumen for the word faithful, for the articles directed at renewing the Church’s liturgy applies as much to the liturgical rites of the catechumenate as to the Eucharistic liturgy. These catechumenal rituals gradually present liturgical elements in a manner that supports the conversion process and the gradual journey toward and in faith, for, as the *Directory for Masses with Children* (DMC) states, “by the very act of celebrating, children come easily to appreciate liturgical elements for example, greetings, silence, and common praise . . .”⁶⁹ Each fully initiated neophyte is expected to continue to participate in the liturgies of the Church after full initiation. There is a direct relationship between experience of the rites proper to the catechumenate during the process of formation and ongoing participation in liturgy after full initiation Sunday after Sunday.⁷⁰ Each liturgical celebration deserves and requires liturgical catechesis not only to

⁶⁸SC, no. 33.

⁶⁹Congregation for Divine Worship, *Directory for Masses with Children*, no. 13 (Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference, 1973).

⁷⁰United States Catholic Conference, *Journey to the Fullness of Life: A Report on the Implementation of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults in the United States*, October 2000, 55. According to this report, 64% of the newly initiated attend Mass on a weekly basis. See Chapter One of this dissertation; the CARA study on sacraments shows that 23% of the faithful attend Mass weekly. See also Gray and Perl, “Sacraments Today,” 2, 161.

attend to the second catechetical task (knowledge of the liturgy and the sacraments), but also to the other five tasks: knowledge of the faith, moral formation in Jesus Christ, formation for prayer with Christ, formation for community and appropriating Christ's mission, and finally, formation to equip the faithful to be present to and give witness in society.⁷¹

Regarding the second task devoted to liturgy and sacraments, the NDC uses the term *sacramental catechesis* to denote a catechesis that prepares for the initial celebration of the sacraments and provides enrichment following their reception.⁷² The catechesis following reception of sacraments is not specified, and in pastoral practice has been interpreted as a continuation of the instructional catechesis that preceded the reception of the sacraments. It is important to note that just as these six tasks “constitute a unified whole,” according to the NDC, and cannot be neatly separated, so too is liturgical catechesis a comprehensive, holistic tripartite process with constitutive elements not easily divorced from one another. A comprehensive liturgical catechesis, appreciated and implemented in all its elements, instruction, participation in the rites and mystagogy, challenges a more narrow interpretation of mystagogy as the only form of liturgical catechesis and as mere instructional follow-up catechesis.

⁷¹NDC, no. 20.

⁷²Ibid., no. 20.2.

Ritual and Prayers

While directed specifically toward the Eucharist in relation to the already baptized, article 48 of SC is also relevant to children of catechetical age in the catechumenate. This article gives support for engaging in a more conscious, robust liturgical catechesis:

The Church, therefore, earnestly desires that Christ's faithful, when present at this mystery of faith, should not be there as strangers or silent spectators; on the contrary, through a good understanding of the rites and prayers they should take part in the sacred service conscious of what they are doing, with devotion and full involvement. They should be instructed by God's word and be nourished at the table of the Lord's body; they should give thanks to God; by offering the immaculate Victim, not only through the hand of the priest, but also with him, they should learn to offer themselves as well; through Christ the Mediator, they should be formed day by day into an ever more perfect unity with God and with each other, so that finally God may be all in all.⁷³

In addition to its insistence that the faithful take “part in the sacred service conscious of what they are doing,” article 48 identifies the entire ritual itself along with the various rites and prayers as key liturgical elements which are constitutive for liturgical catechesis.

Word of God

The nature of the word of God, as a window into the mystery of faith and an essential liturgical element, is more fully addressed in article 24:

Sacred Scripture is of the greatest importance in the celebration of the liturgy. For it is from the Scripture that the readings are given and explained in the homily and the psalms are sung; the prayers, collects, and liturgical songs are scriptural in the inspiration; it is from the Scriptures that actions and signs derive their meaning.⁷⁴

⁷³SC, no. 48.

⁷⁴Ibid., no. 24.

Immersion in scripture is necessary for a child catechumen. Understanding the scripture corresponds to a child's age and stage of faith development, for these children are most often at what Jean Piaget has termed the concrete operational stage of cognitive development and at what James Fowler has called the mythic-literal stage of faith development.⁷⁵ Nonetheless, children are attracted to God's word and do respond to the call for interior change or conversion based on scripture in profound ways.⁷⁶ Liturgy of the Word for Children is an appropriate complement to the catechumenal process and engages children in ongoing celebrations of the word together with a homily suited to their hearing,⁷⁷ while the catechumenal process gives child catechumens an opportunity to achieve the level of liturgical *savior faire* called for in article 24. Frequent, recurring celebrations of the word are an important element in the Christian formation of a child catechumen. Such a foundation promotes gathering for liturgy Sunday after Sunday after full initiation and this element of liturgical catechesis is an inherent aspect of a catechumenal style of catechesis. Absence from on-going celebrations of the word or indeed the absence of liturgical catechesis that is available to them throughout the catechumenal process denies these children a truly initiatory catechesis that aims at conversion.

⁷⁵See James W. Fowler, *Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1981), 63-68, for a summary of Piaget's cognitive development in relation to Fowler's age-stage theory of faith development. Children develop on different internal schedules, however, and it is possible to have a precocious abstract thinker or a synthetic-conventional believer or for development to be delayed in a child who exhibits otherwise normal development.

⁷⁶DMC, no. 17b. See also *ibid.*, nos. 47-48.

⁷⁷*Ibid.*, no. 19.

Community and Sense of Church

SC, no. 27 is especially worth noting in relation to children of catechetical age. Too often, if rites are celebrated at all with a child catechumen, these are not celebrated within the Sunday assembly, but in a celebration with classmates or family for reasons of social comfort. However well-intentioned this practice may be, it in fact robs the child of an authentic ecclesial experience that is bigger than one small group, and only serves to isolate the child as well as the family from the larger Christian community. As SC puts it:

Whenever rites, according to their specific nature, make provision for communal celebration involving the presence and active participation of the faithful, it is to be stressed that this way of celebrating them is to be preferred, as far as possible, to a celebration that is individual and, so to speak, private.⁷⁸

Furthermore, “liturgical services are not private functions, but are celebrations belonging to the Church, which is the ‘sacrament of unity’ . . . ”⁷⁹

Participation in the adapted rites of the catechumenate gives a child catechumen an ecclesial experience that is essential to their formation. However, RCIA, no. 257 sets up a difficulty for catechists and catechetical leaders who are not familiar with SC. The directive, which states that it is generally preferable “not to have the whole parish community present, but simply represented” at the “rites during the process of initiation,”⁸⁰ is attributed to the experience of children in Germany during the time-frame in which the rites were developed. This example of a German cultural reality is not only inconsistent with the current cultural

⁷⁸SC, no. 27

⁷⁹Ibid., no. 26.

⁸⁰See RCIA, nos. 257, 260.

reality in the United States, but it is also inconsistent with a visible manifestation of the church as a sacrament of unity.⁸¹ Rites adapted for children of catechetical age can, in fact, be celebrated successfully with the Sunday assembly. While the minor rites, such as the blessings, anointings and minor exorcisms may also be conducted at a catechetical session or other set time apart from the Sunday assembly, those major steps that signal a change in status during the journey of faith in conversion are best celebrated on Sunday and with an assembly that represents the diversity of a local faith community. These children are not being initiated into a cult or sect, but rather into an ecclesial community that manifests a sacrament of unity.

The normative celebration of the Eucharistic Liturgy is the parish Sunday Mass through which, according to the NDC, Christ enables people “to move beyond particular circles to celebrate in common the sacrament of unity”.⁸² Sunday liturgy has no effect as praxis and cannot nurture the faith lives of people unless a gathered community is present to participate in the worship experience and then take the resulting personal transformation out into the marketplace for the life of the world. As such, it is critical that children, once admitted to the second period of the catechumenate, attend Sunday liturgy with the parish community for the Liturgy of the Word. That celebration may take place in the midst of the gathered assembly or at a parish Liturgy of the Word for Children in a separate place with a homily suited to a child’s age and stage of development. When Liturgy of the Word for

⁸¹Maureen Kelly, “Reframing the Questions: Children’s Catechumenate,” *Catechumenate: A Journal of Christian Initiation* 31, no. 2 (March 2009): 20.

⁸²NDC, no. 36.3b.

Children is in place, it is of paramount importance that child catechumens gather with the Sunday assembly for the introductory rites of the Mass and be ritually sent forth for a separate Liturgy of the Word for Children.

Signs and Symbols

SC continues to establish a firm foundation for words and objects as elements in liturgical catechesis in article 59:

The purpose of the sacraments is to make people holy, to build up the Body of Christ, and finally, to give worship to God; but being signs they also have a teaching function. They not only presuppose faith, but by words and objects they also nourish, strengthen, and express it; that is why they are called “sacraments of faith.” They do indeed impart grace, but, in addition, the very act of celebrating them disposes the faithful most effectively to receive this grace in a fruitful manner, to worship God rightly, and to practice charity. It is therefore of highest importance that the faithful should readily understand the sacramental signs and should with great eagerness frequent those sacraments that were instituted to nourish the Christian life.⁸³

What is said regarding the faithful is also appropriate for those who seek formation in faith and request baptism, confirmation and eucharist through the catechumenate. In this regard, liturgical catechesis for a child catechumen is not just essential but it is like a seamless garment. Children in the catechumenate need instruction in the sacramental signs, experience of them in the ritual celebration, and a method of reflecting on the meaning of the signs following the liturgical experience.

The *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* directs catechetical leaders to celebrate the major rites as well as the minor rites, such as the prayers of exorcism, anointing, blessing and

⁸³SC, no. 59.

presentations, etc., as constitutive of the catechumenate. The minor rites also contribute to a child catechumen's process of formation. These rituals may accompany liturgies of the word that frequently recur throughout formation.⁸⁴ Conducting the minor rites of exorcism, anointing and blessing may begin in the Period of Evangelization before the Rite of Acceptance and continue through the formation process, being repeated throughout other periods.⁸⁵ The rituals aim at facilitating initial conversion or, as the rite states, "evidence of an initial faith."⁸⁶ They also nurture and facilitate evidence of growing faith. Taken together, a full complement of rites appropriate to the catechumenate has the potential to capture the mind and heart of a young child, especially when celebrated with careful attention to the visual elements of the liturgy, which the DMC reminds catechists are necessary and formative for children. The colors of the liturgical year, the veneration of the cross in Lent, the Easter candle and the lights for various feasts, for example, all play a role in capturing the attention and landscaping the liturgical imagination of a child.⁸⁷ Naturally, each of these rites needs an appropriate liturgical catechesis to ensure appropriate and complete formation.

⁸⁴See RCIA, nos. 81-84.

⁸⁵See *ibid.*, nos. 40, 85-89, 90-93, 95-96, 98-101, 104-105, 147-49, 277-80, 301, for directives on minor rites that are available to child catechumens.

⁸⁶See *ibid.*, no. 42, which lists the following: initial conversion and intention to change their lives and enter into a relationship with God in Christ, first stirrings of repentance, calling upon God in prayer, a sense of the Church, and some experience with the company and spirit of Christians through contact with a priest or members of the community. After detailing the evidence of first faith, the introduction to the First Step: Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens also calls for instruction about the celebration of the liturgical rite of acceptance but does not specify when or how this instruction should occur.

⁸⁷DMC, no. 35.

Liturgical Year

SC is attentive to the role of the liturgical year in relation to liturgical catechesis as well, noting in no. 109 that

Lent . . . disposes the faithful, as they more diligently listen to the word of God and devote themselves to prayer, to celebrate the paschal mystery. The baptismal and penitential aspects of Lent are to be given greater prominence in both the liturgy and liturgical catechesis.⁸⁸

In conjunction with this article, several elements are highlighted: baptismal features proper to liturgy, penitential elements, and paschal fast. The liturgical year is a prominent factor in the multi-year formation process when the catechumenate is implemented as intended over a sufficient length of time.⁸⁹ It is of special note in the Period of Purification and Enlightenment, which normally coincides with the Lenten season and focuses on penitential aspects of formation through the scrutinies and penitential rite for children.⁹⁰ All the rites proper to this period are a rich source of liturgical catechesis.

Music, Gesture, Silence

Sacred music, too, is of considerable importance, deserving ten articles in SC. No. 112 states,

⁸⁸SC, no. 109.

⁸⁹See RCIA, no. 253: “Accordingly, as with adults, their initiation is to be extended over several years if need be, before they receive the sacraments. Also as with adults, their initiation is marked by several steps, the liturgical rites of acceptance into the order of catechumens, the optional rite of election, penitential rites or scrutinies and the celebration of the sacraments of initiation; corresponding to the periods of adult initiation are the periods of the children’s catechetical formation that lead up to and follow the steps of their initiation.”

⁹⁰Ibid., nos. 291-302.

The musical tradition of the universal Church is a treasure of inestimable value, greater than that of any other art. The main reason for this preeminence is that, as sacred song closely bound to the text, it forms a necessary or integral part of the solemn liturgy.⁹¹

Not only singing but also participation in acclamations, responses, psalmody, antiphons, actions, gestures and bearing are necessary along with “reverent silence” at the proper times.⁹² Such active participation that engages physical expressions concretely in word, song, gesture and silence helps to etch liturgical lessons within a young person.⁹³ Such physical expressions are more caught than taught in the company of the faithful.

Each article in SC aims to clarify the role of liturgy and to bring about in people a greater understanding of the Paschal Mystery so that faith may be nurtured and the Church may be realized. For liturgy expresses and creates the Church and the Church at worship manifests and constitutes the Church.⁹⁴ In this latter regard, the ritual action is an especially important source for liturgical catechesis of children, as these concrete, physical actions imprint images of Church and what the Church believes through the eyes, ears, minds, bodies and hearts of young catechumens. The entire ritual experience landscapes the religious imagination that a child of catechetical age needs in order to come to faith and then grow in faith.

⁹¹SC, no. 112.

⁹²Ibid., no 30.

⁹³DMC, nos. 30, 33, 37.

⁹⁴See Margaret Mary Kelleher, “Liturgy: An Ecclesial Act of Meaning,” *Worship* 59, no. 6 (November 1985): 482-97.

The constitutive elements for an authentic liturgical catechesis are present in SC beginning with the celebration of the liturgy itself. Helping a young person learn the language of the liturgy and engage meaningfully in ritual celebrations is part of the formational process in the adapted rites for children in the catechumenate. A catechist can engage in a method which is based on the experience of the rites, flows from the ritual experience, and invites a child catechumen to reflect on these constitutive elements: scripture, prayers, liturgical year, liturgical symbols, symbolic actions, ritual gestures, music, silence and application of these to Christian living and relationships. The elements are themselves contained in the ritual experiences constitutive of the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, including the adapted rites for children of catechetical age. These elements are a rich source for liturgical catechesis that constitutes the catechumenate as a “process of formation and as a true school of faith.”⁹⁵

An analysis of the rituals of the catechumenate using the elements identified above reveals the theology underlying the rite and provides a springboard for further doctrinal catechesis. In ways appropriate to their age and stage of faith development, children are able to gain a competence with scripture that provides a window into the Mystery that is celebrated. They gain familiarity with the liturgical year that frames the ritual actions and celebratory choices as well as the doctrines that are manifested in the very act of celebrating. According to Dooley, “in contemporary liturgical catechesis preparation for the sacramental celebration begins with the liturgical texts and scriptural readings, the symbols and symbolic

⁹⁵NDC, no. 35d, citing GDC, no. 91.

actions of the celebration.”⁹⁶ This is true of those preparing the liturgical celebration and the catechist preparing the liturgical catechesis. A catechist needs to be equipped with a sacramentary, lectionary, musical selections that support a particular ritual, and competence with the doctrinal teachings of the Church. Both the celebration and liturgical catechesis based on the celebration occur within a particular community of faith, a particular time of year and call for continuing reflection that the celebration prompts.

Focus on Method in Liturgical Catechesis

An assembly gathered in faith is necessary to make the Church present and to make Christ present in the world. According to the CCC the assembly so gathered should prepare itself to encounter its Lord and to become “a people well disposed”.⁹⁷ Liturgical catechesis, too, requires catechumens to be participants actively engaged in the rites of the catechumenate for, as Dooley asserts, these liturgies aim to deepen “the life of faith so that the word no longer echoes around the Christian from without but from within”.⁹⁸ As Ostdiek notes, “liturgical catechesis enables people to participate actively, both internally and externally in the liturgy which celebrates that faith.”⁹⁹ Understanding the tripartite movement in liturgical catechesis (preparation, celebration, and reflection) is a basis for understanding that this movement also constitutes a method in liturgical catechesis.

⁹⁶Dooley, “Liturgical Catechesis: Mystagogy, Marriage or Misnomer?” 393.

⁹⁷CCC, no. 1098.

⁹⁸Dooley, “Liturgical Catechesis: Mystagogy, Marriage or Misnomer?” 397.

⁹⁹Ostdiek, “Liturgical Catechesis,” 169.

Inductive Method

Liturgical catechesis functions with an inductive and a deductive methodology, both of which are necessary and fundamental processes in catechesis; one is not superior to the other. With the help of the Holy Spirit, the inductive approach proceeds from a person's "sensible, visible experience" and leads to more general conclusions and principles.¹⁰⁰ The inductive method corresponds to an "existential" approach, beginning with specifics of human experience and examining them in light of the word of God in an ascending direction. The liturgical catechesis within the context of a sacred action is itself an integral part of that action.¹⁰¹ Thus, one's experience of life meets an experience of the liturgy that incorporates biblical events through the scripture, through ritual and liturgical actions, through events in the life of the Church, through the liturgical year and particular feasts, and through the witnessing community at worship and in the public square.

A catechist trained in liturgical catechesis is in a position to help a child of catechetical age enter a ritual experience with some understanding of the liturgical lexicon and ritual actions so that, as NDC states, according to age and ability the child can "discern the meaning these might have in divine Revelation".¹⁰² Such catechesis, while integral and inherent, is not always automatic. It does not happen by magic or osmosis but rather is aided by intentional reflection that is linked to prior instruction and ritual experience. In the case of a child, guided reflection is a necessary complement to a liturgical experience that helps to

¹⁰⁰NDC, no. 29.

¹⁰¹Ibid., no. 17c.

¹⁰²Ibid., no. 17c.

illuminate meaning. In this way liturgical catechesis helps a child move from human experience with the rite to understandings about the divine and human relationships that advance formation in faith.

Deductive Method

In concert with this inductive method, the deductive method begins with truths of the faith that are applied to concrete experiences, as may occur during a homily. The NDC echoes SC, no. 35, in affirming that liturgical catechesis is most explicit in the form of the homily given during sacramental celebrations. The primacy of the homily in liturgical catechesis underscores the contribution that the Liturgy of the Word for Children makes as a complementary celebration of the word during the catechumenal process of formation for children.

The deductive method corresponds to the “kerygmatic” approach by beginning with a proclamation of the faith through Sacred Scripture, Creed or Liturgy and then applying it to human experience. Thus, liturgy communicates God’s revelation and advances truth claims based on scripture and tradition and the teaching authority of the Church—for liturgy is supposed to celebrate in an authentic manner what is true. These beginning points move from the general to the particular in a descending direction.¹⁰³ The deductive method alone,

¹⁰³NDC, no. 29.

however, is an insufficient method of formation; the NDC cautions that the deductive method “has full value only when the inductive process is completed.”¹⁰⁴

Because liturgical experience is the link between the two poles in liturgical catechesis, the liturgy and the reflection on the liturgy, liturgical catechesis is experiential and inductive, which complements and completes the deductive method associated with the homily and prior instruction. A liturgical catechesis that prepares for liturgy includes an experience of the liturgy and then reflects on the experience in mystagogical fashion. This movement constitutes a tripartite, comprehensive and holistic method that is at once inductive and deductive.

Liturgical Catechesis as Method

All too often, what is named liturgical catechesis is only a vague instruction on or reflection of liturgical elements. While it is sometimes necessary to isolate one of the constitutive elements of liturgical catechesis from another in order to provide focused preparatory instruction or follow-up reflection, this alone does not constitute liturgical catechesis. Ritual experience, which is constitutive of liturgical catechesis, is holistic in nature. So, a consistent practice of isolating and disassociating liturgical elements from the ritual experience undermines a comprehensive, holistic approach to formation in faith using liturgy and reflection on liturgy as two poles within which liturgical catechesis operates. Such an approach is evident in the NCCB’s complaint that “mystagogy is the weakest link”

¹⁰⁴NDC, no. 29.

in the report *Journey to the Fullness of Life*.¹⁰⁵ When holistic and comprehensive liturgical catechesis is operational, then there is no possibility for such a charge that mystagogy is “a weak link,” neglected, or missing—for mystagogy is not a stand-alone element in liturgical catechesis. Rather, mystagogy is one part of a tripartite movement and method of liturgical catechesis.

Assumptions are inherent in the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* and are also operative in the rites adapted for children of catechetical age. Among these assumptions are the notions that faith is a journey; that conversion is a human as well as spiritual process; that the catechumenal style of catechesis incorporates scripture, liturgy, the liturgical year and liturgical symbols to communicate the Christian message; and that the community of faith and apostolic witness are constitutive of the catechumenate. Moreover, a little recognized assumption in the ritual text is that mystagogy runs throughout the catechumenal process and is not held hostage to the fourth period,¹⁰⁶ and that mystagogy is itself constitutive of a tripartite method of liturgical catechesis that is rooted in liturgical theology.

Before the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* appeared, scholars and a few well-trained catechists were familiar with mystagogy as a form of catechesis used by the Church Fathers. In the early years of implementing the catechumenate the term mystagogy was itself a stumbling block. The fourth period of the catechumenate, entitled Postbaptismal Catechesis or Mystagogy, has an intentional, specific time frame in the *Rite of Christian Initiation of*

¹⁰⁵ *Journey to the Fullness of Life*, 48.

¹⁰⁶ Diana Dudoit Raiche, “Reflecting on Mystagogy—Again,” *Catechumenate: A Journal of Christian Initiation* 27, no. 3 (May 2005): 5. See also Regan, *Experiencing the Mystery*, 31.

Adults, which devotes no fewer than eight articles in Part I and one article in Part II (no. 330, for children of catechetical age) to the topic of mystagogy. Three National Statutes found in the U.S. edition of the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* also address the issue. However, these articles taken together isolate mystagogy and delimit it as a single form of liturgical catechesis. This unfortunate restriction of mystagogy to such a narrow understanding sets up the conditions for difficulty in implementing it and undermines liturgical catechesis as a three part movement that makes up a unique method inherent throughout the catechumenate. These contributing factors render mystagogy as the most misunderstood and poorly developed dimension of the catechumenate.¹⁰⁷ Pastoral articles around the problems connected with mystagogy strive to bring greater understanding to what constitutes it and how to implement mystagogical catechesis.¹⁰⁸ However, when the Church retrieves from its storehouse of treasures this notion of mystagogy and links it as an element within with a larger context of liturgical catechesis, mystagogy no longer stands alone. Placed as it is in the catechumenate, it completes a process of liturgical catechesis that constitutes a vital method for communicating the central Mystery of faith to those involved in initiatory catechesis.

¹⁰⁷See *Journey to the Fullness of Life*, 39, 47-48.

¹⁰⁸Lawrence Mick, "Mystagogy and Mission," *Catechumenate: A Journal of Christian Initiation* 24, no. 3 (May 2002): 25-35; Sandra DeMasi, "The Church Needs Mystagogy," *Catechumenate: A Journal of Christian Initiation* 25, no. 5 (September 2003): 13-21; Kathleen E. Carey, "Mystagogy Begins Early," *Catechumenate: A Journal of Christian Initiation* 25, no. 6 (November 2003): 25-31; Susan F. Mathews, "Celebrating New Life in Christ: Mystagogy and the Book of Revelation, Part One," *Catechumenate: A Journal of Christian Initiation* 29, no. 2 (March 2007): 17-33; Susan F. Mathews, "Celebrating New Life in Christ: Mystagogy and the Book of Revelation, Part Two," *Catechumenate: A Journal of Christian Initiation* 29, no. 3 (May 2007): 2-22; Mike Schaab "Mystagogy Revisited," *Catechumenate: A Journal of Christian Initiation* 30, no. 5 (September 2008): 2-8.

Every ritual prayer that makes up the catechumenal process communicates something about the Paschal Mystery, which is the historical center of the Christian faith.¹⁰⁹ It is not reasonable to expect neophytes to be “birthed as new Christians” with inherent skills in reflecting on one’s experience of the Easter Vigil or the homilies in the Easter season. This kind of mystagogical know-how cannot be assumed of any neophyte who has been deprived of comprehensive formation throughout the catechumenate with a holistic liturgical catechesis method that includes reflection on the rites all along the journey. Because that reflection will focus on the liturgies, such a comprehensive formation will attend to the constitutive elements of liturgical catechesis identified in SC named above.

Four qualities that characterize liturgical catechesis also align with formation appropriate to the catechumenate: both are Christ-centered, formative-transformative, communal and experientially-based.¹¹⁰ All catechesis is centered on bringing a person in touch and into communion with Christ. Ordered toward the sacraments of initiation, baptism, confirmation and eucharist, the liturgical catechesis that threads its way throughout the catechumenate also aims to incorporate a person into Christ and to communicate the triune God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The liturgical prayer of the Church echoes this central teaching on the Trinity in all her rites and communicates the Paschal Mystery of Christ’s birth, death, resurrection and ascension.

¹⁰⁹ Regan, *Experiencing the Mystery*, 31.

¹¹⁰ Ostdiek, “Liturgical Catechesis,” 170-72; and RCIA, General Introduction, *passim*.

Oriented toward conversion, liturgical catechesis is formative as well as transformative. So too does the liturgy itself, as the essential arena within which liturgical catechesis functions, serve to form and transform people through its capacity to touch minds and hearts with Christ's message. It is this communion with Jesus Christ that transforms a person who undergoes recurring cycles of intellectual, moral and affective conversion in a gradual spiritual journey.¹¹¹ Indeed, a practicing community of faith is necessary to constitute the Church at prayer and witness to the faith of the Church in the marketplace. No one becomes Christian in isolation, rather, Christian initiation is to take place within a community of the faithful. This is a most important characteristic for a child catechumen. Liturgical catechesis is ecclesial, as are all forms of catechesis.¹¹²

Historically, catechesis and liturgy were not divided, but were seen rather as two aspects of the same experience. The mystagogical homilies of the first mystagogues (Cyril of Jerusalem, John Chrysostom and Theodore of Mopsuestia in the Byzantine East, and Ambrose in the Latin West) and the catecheses that preceded initiation constituted the earliest form of liturgical catechesis.¹¹³ In the ancient catechumenate liturgy and catechesis were inseparable and liturgical catechesis was as a seamless garment. A contemporary liturgical catechesis must be positioned to recover this comprehensive, integrated, holistic approach to liturgical catechesis that is an integrated method at once inductive and deductive.

¹¹¹RCIA, nos. 4, 5.

¹¹²See GDC, no. 78; and Paul VI, *Apostolic Exhortation (Evangelii Nuntiandi)*, 8 December 1975, no. 60.

¹¹³ See Edward Yarnold, "Fourth-Century Baptismal Homilies," in *The Awe-Inspiring Rites of Initiation: The Origins of the R.C.I.A.* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1994), 67-250.

This method requires an experience of the Church at prayer as the source of the constitutive elements of liturgical catechesis.

Conclusion

Chapter Four recalls that Vatican Council II restored to consciousness the inseparable relationship between liturgy and catechesis. The restoration of this inseparable relationship is the place to begin when examining liturgical catechesis in a contemporary context. Not only is liturgical catechesis officially recognized as a legitimate form of catechesis in its own right, but the Church also acknowledges liturgical catechesis as a legitimate form of catechesis rooted in the Patristic period in the ancient catechumenate. The early catechumenate provides a model for true liturgical catechesis that is not restricted just to mystagogy, but includes the instruction that preceded the liturgies as well as participation in the ritual with the Church gathered at prayer before such reflection. Liturgical catechesis is then a legitimate form of catechesis that is particularly suited to the rites belonging to the restored catechumenate and to the rites of the Church.

Second, liturgy has a non-discursive catechetical role that depends on participation in and experience with the rituals. Liturgy refers not just to the sacraments, but also to a host of rituals that are constitutive of the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* and those rites adapted for children of catechetical age. These include the minor rites as well as the major rites: the rite of acceptance into the order of catechumens; the rite of election and the rites belonging to the period of purification and enlightenment (scrutiny rites, penitential rites, presentations,

preparation rites); and the celebration of the sacraments of initiation. Each of these liturgical rites and the sacraments are liturgies of the Church that have formative value. When speaking of liturgical catechesis in relation to the catechumenate, the full complement of these catechumenal rites with their symbolic ways of communicating and forming are relevant.

Third, because the liturgy or *lex orandi* communicates first theology through the prayer of the Church, it also communicates the *lex credendi* or what the Church believes based on that theology. Flowing from that foundation in liturgical theology, liturgical catechesis is a prime method accompanying liturgical formation. It identifies, clarifies, probes, and applies to contemporary settings the doctrines of the Church that are revealed throughout the liturgical year and through the rites appropriate to the catechumenate. Liturgical catechesis incorporates instruction prior to the rites and reflects on them following the ritual experiences.

Fourth, liturgical catechesis has constitutive elements. As Ostdiek has noted, the key to understanding liturgical catechesis is founded on what constitutes it. As previously noted in this chapter, the SC identifies the constitutive elements for liturgical catechesis because these are the same elements that constitute liturgy, the source for liturgical catechesis. Liturgical catechesis has the capacity to focus on how core teachings of the Church are manifest through scripture, prayers, the liturgical year, liturgical symbols, symbolic actions, ritual gestures, music, silence and application of these to Christian living and relationships. Without clearly-defined constitutive elements, liturgical catechesis has been applied to multiple aspects of church life that are not essential liturgical elements.

Fifth, a complete liturgical catechesis is necessary for children of catechetical age in the catechumenate. If implemented and executed appropriately, the multiple adapted rituals in the catechumenate afford ample opportunity for a child of catechetical age to be schooled in the liturgy of the Church. It is important for child catechumens to become familiar with the three movements of liturgical catechesis and appreciate its tripartite method that parallels the liturgical year: preparation, celebration, and reflection. This method equips a child of catechetical age for a life-long journey in faith. There is less concern about the truly instructive phase of liturgical catechesis with child catechumens than there is about participation in the rites appropriate to the catechumenate and reflection on them. In the catechumenal process, catechumens and neophytes, especially children, are not expected to have acquired the skill or *habitus* of reflecting on acquired knowledge of the sacraments, liturgical language or symbols. Their formation depends on experienced catechists who know the ritual being celebrated, recognize the doctrinal content inherent to and manifested in the ritual celebration, and know how to reflect with the children on their liturgical experiences.

Chapters Five, Six and Seven will focus on the rituals in the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* adapted for children. Such an analysis using the constitutive elements of liturgical catechesis identified in Chapter Four will demonstrate liturgical catechesis as a method that is an essential dimension in initiatory catechesis.

CHAPTER 5
ANALYSIS OF RITES
PART II, CHAPTER 1
FIRST STEP

Introduction

Participation in the rites appropriate to the catechumenate adapted for children, Part II, Chapter 1, is an underlying issue with regard to the formation of children of catechetical age. There are two major concerns regarding participation in the rites and these children. First, unbaptized children seven years or older are not consistently placed in a process of formation appropriate to the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* (RCIA) and thus do not have access to a truly catechumenal style of formation that includes the adapted rites. This concern is a grave one, especially in light of the fact that the *General Directory for Catechesis* (GDC) highlights a “catechumenal style” of catechesis as the remedy to contemporary challenges to catechesis,¹ and notes that “[b]ased on the example of catechesis in the patristic era, [catechesis] needs to form the personality of the believer and therefore be a true and proper school of Christian pedagogy.”² Second, even after showing a desire for

¹Congregation for the Clergy, *General Directory for Catechesis*, no. 91 (Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference, 1997). On problems with regard to content of catechesis, see GDC, no. 30, pp. 27-28; Synod of Bishops, *Message to the People of God, cum iam ad exitum* on catechesis in our times, 28 October 1977, no. 8; Paul VI, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 8 December 1975, no. 44, AAS 58 (1976): 401-522; John Paul II, Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles Laici*, 30 December 1988, no. 61, AAS 81 (1989): 393-521.

²GDC, no. 33.

full initiation in the Catholic Church and being placed in the catechumenate, unbaptized children of catechetical age are sometimes not given access to the adapted rites proper to catechumenate through no fault of their own.³ Chapters Five, Six and Seven of this study address these concerns by focusing on the adapted rites belonging to the catechumenate as essential for the proper catechetical and spiritual formation of these children.⁴

As a catechetical method inherent in the rites of the catechumenate, liturgical catechesis contributes to an integrated, holistic, and spiritual formation of a catechumen (child or adult). Unbaptized children of catechetical age need the kind of initiatory catechesis that the *National Directory for Catechesis* (NDC) describes: the “function of initiatory catechesis is to introduce the life of faith, the Liturgy, and the charity of the People of God to those being initiated.”⁵ Introducing liturgical experience to these children includes engaging them as participants in the rites appropriate to the catechumenate that precede and include full initiation into the church through the sacraments of initiation. Liturgical catechesis based

³National Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Journey to the Fullness of Life: A Report on the Implementation of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults in the United States* (Washington, DC: USCC, 2000), 41.

⁴Chapter 5 addresses analysis of the rites, Part II, Chapter 1: First Step (Rite of Acceptance in the Order of Catechumens, Minor Rites and the Rite of Election or Enrollment of Names); Chapter Six focuses on analysis of the rites, Part II, Chapter 1: Second Step (Penitential Rites [Scrutinies], the Presentations and Preparatory Rites); Chapter Seven explores analysis of the rites, Part II, Chapter 1: Third Step (Celebration of the Sacraments of Initiation). Using the constitutive elements of liturgical catechesis identified in Chapter Four, these analyses underscore the catechetical and spiritual formative value that the complement of rites have for the children when accompanied by an appropriate threefold movement of liturgical catechesis (preparation, celebration and reflection).

⁵ United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *National Directory for Catechesis*, (Washington, DC: USCCB: 2005), no. 17c.

on these rites demonstrates the value that both the major and minor rites have in the initiatory formation of unbaptized children.

Before proceeding to the analysis of the rituals, it is necessary to highlight two aspects of ritual that serve as a backdrop to the study: the principle of adaptation and the essential function of music in liturgy.

Principle of Adaptation

The principle of adaptation in the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* is especially pertinent in relation to child catechumens.⁶ When the Church provides and promotes adaptation in the liturgy, it is for the express purpose of making the ritual more suitable, appropriate, and meaningful for a particular group within a particular context. Priests, liturgy planners and catechetical leaders need to be well-versed in the rites of the catechumenate so that appropriate adaptations are based on “prudent pastoral judgments” that “accommodate the rite to circumstances of the candidates and others present.”⁷ While these pastoral ministers also need to be cognizant of human, psychological and faith development stages of childhood (and the life cycle), additional adaptations intended to be pastorally sensitive must not be contrary to the purpose and intent of the ritual, the unity and sequence of the sacraments of initiation, or the guiding principles of the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*. No single template for adaptations can serve all situations; however, in the area of ritual

⁶RCIA, no. 35.

⁷Ibid.

performance, some adaptations represented in the analysis of the rites have proven to be efficacious, practical and appropriate, having survived the test of time. Other examples, provided as anomalies, are to be avoided.

The Rite of Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens, Penitential Rites (Scrutinies), and the Celebration of the Sacraments of Initiation are non-negotiable rites given as normative and expected major ritual steps in the catechumenal process for children of catechetical age. The Rite of Election or Enrollment of Names is presented as an optional rite for the children. In that regard, the Rite clarifies its addition:

Each conference of bishops may adapt and add to the form of the rite given here in order that the rite will more effectively satisfy local needs, conditions, and pastoral requirements. [The National Conference of Catholic Bishops has done this by providing an optional “Rite of Election” before “Second Step” Penitential Rites (Scrutinies).”] The rites for the presentation of the Creed (nos. 157-162) and the Lord’s Prayer (nos. 178-183), adapted to the age of the children, may be incorporated.⁸

As the Rite provides and experience has borne out, children benefit not only from celebrating the Rite of Election but also from participating in minor rites that make up the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*. Furthermore, RCIA, no. 259, directs celebrants to “make full and wise use of the options mentioned in the “General Introduction” (RCIA, nos. 32-35). The language appropriate to the rituals may be adapted to the condition and understanding of the children and local community, as needed. Adaptation in the choreography of the ritual may also enhance the ritual action in ways that augment the rite’s overall purpose for the children,

⁸RCIA, no. 258. Note that the Rite of Election for adults in Part I is identified as the “second step,” while the Penitential Rite (Scrutiny) in the adapted rite for children, Part II, Chapter 1, is identified as the “second step.” The analysis in this study uses the organization found in Part II, Chapter 1.

parents, sponsors, and the participating assembly. However, nowhere does the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* suggest or state that adaptation equals elimination or omission of the rites. It is also unacceptable to so abbreviate ritual actions that a ritual step (or a minor rite) is emptied of the underlying intention or purpose. To the contrary, adaptation means attending to the prescribed purpose and intent of the ritual as given while adjusting the language or ritual performance, in the technical sense, to aid understanding and efficacy.

Liturgical Music

For the purpose of this study, it is also necessary to recognize the importance of music and singing in the ritual. It is not accidental or arbitrary that the Church sings the liturgy, for this is an essential, necessary, and integral part of the ritual.⁹ Music can facilitate the method of liturgical catechesis even though liturgical catechesis does not focus on music as a stand alone constitutive element. Music takes into account consideration of cultural and social location; it works at a different level within a person. A well-trained catechist typically recalls musical selections when engaging in a mystagogical reflection to bring to consciousness the purpose and intent of the ritual and ritual actions just celebrated.

In exploring the contribution that music makes to liturgy, liturgist and liturgical musician Kathleen Harmon, SNDdeN, examines the theological work of Joyce A. Zimmerman, CPPS. Zimmerman's new insights in defining paschal mystery are helpful:

⁹Vatican Council II, *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (Sacrosanctum Concilium)*, no. 112. See also Edward Foley, "Toward a Sound Theology," in *Ritual Music: An Introduction to Liturgical Musicology* (Beltsville, MD: Pastoral Press, 1995), 107-26.

[A]s a dialectic tension between the “not yet” (soteriology) and the “already” (eschatology) [sic] of human redemption and liturgy as ritual enactment of that dialectic. Musically, this means that singing, which is integral and necessary to liturgy, must in some way catalyze and facilitate ritual enactment of this dialectic.¹⁰

Harmon’s work delves into the manner in which sound reveals presence, in which music shares liturgy’s way of reckoning time, and in which music functions “as an entryway into the third field of human action where barriers between center and periphery collapse in an experience of the self’s oneness with the whole of reality.”¹¹ Children of catechetical age in the catechumenate, parents and sponsors, and catechists may not fully understand why music facilitates the ritual action, but they experience its power to facilitate an experience of God. Music touches an interior place that can move children and adults affectively or open pathways to understanding that may otherwise be blocked by mere words. Tapping into the affective aspect of a person, music facilitates memory-making that helps to connect the dots between ritual and the desire for God. Children as well as adults can embrace such thoughts, feelings, and desires as authentic and true. While specific music that accompanies each ritual performance in the following rites cannot be analyzed in this study, it is essential to acknowledge that ritual performance incorporates liturgical music that is well-chosen to facilitate the theological meaning of the rite. Intimately fused to liturgical performance, then, music has the capacity to facilitate and contribute to liturgical catechesis.

¹⁰Kathleen Harmon, *The Mystery We Celebrate, the Song We Sing: A Theology of Liturgical Music* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2008), viii. See also Dwight Vogel, “Interpretation of the Paschal Mystery in Liturgy and Life,” in *Primary Sources of Liturgical Theology: A Reader*, ed. Dwight W. Vogel (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2000), 302-12. While more accustomed to thinking of soteriology as the “already” and eschatology as the “not yet,” the wording in the quote is faithful to Zimmerman.

¹¹Harmon, *The Mystery We Celebrate, The Song We Sing*, ix.

Rites Belonging to the Period of the Catechumenate
First Step: Rite of Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens

The purpose of the Rite of Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens is to celebrate ritually the passage from the first period of evangelization to the second period of the catechumenate. That is why it is called a ritual step. In the Rite of Acceptance, the child of catechetical age declares publicly an intention to embrace Christ and the Church; the Church, in turn, accepts the child as one who intends to become Christ's disciple and its member.¹² This ritual marks changing one's name from inquirer to catechumen, which is more than a matter of mere nomenclature. It indicates a change in canonical and personal status and signifies that an interior change, transformation or initial conversion is underway. The Church provides a young person who desires Christ and incorporation into the Catholic community the Rite of Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens as an important first ritual step in the process of conversion and being joined to the Christian community. It is not to be omitted.

Structure of the Rite

The structure of this ritual step adapted for children is similar to the Rite of Acceptance for adults in Part 1. The structural congruence is significant, as the intent of the ritual is consistent for all age groups. There is, however, one lacuna: the adapted rite for children omits a first promise of acceptance of the gospel even though the rite provides an

¹²RCIA, no. 41.

option for presenting the children with the Word of God in the form of a bible.¹³ In some parishes, the presentation of a bible is given as a gift. Other parishes adapt a ritual acceptance of God's Word by asking a young person to place hands on the open lectionary signifying that the young person does accept and ritually embrace God's word. There is no impediment in adding a question about a child's acceptance of the Word of God, however, since children of catechetical age are capable of making promises.

The structure of the rite has two parts: "Receiving the Children" and the "Invitation to Celebrate the Word of God." The first of these, "Receiving the Children," is constituted by the Greeting, Opening Dialogue, Affirmation by the Parents (Sponsors) and Assembly, and Signing of the Candidates with the Cross (forehead and other senses). The adapted ritual omits the Acceptance of the Gospel that is provided for adults in Part I.¹⁴ The second part, the "Invitation to Celebrate the Word of God," consists of an Instruction, Readings, Homily, Optional Presentation of a Bible, Intercessions for the Children, Prayer over the Children, and a Dismissal. Because the structure of the rite is a constitutive element in liturgical catechesis, a catechist needs to understand the structural elements and engage in liturgical catechesis that demonstrates awareness of this structure.

¹³RCIA, no. 273.

¹⁴Ibid., no. 52.

Receiving the Children

The Greeting for children mirrors the greeting for adults in RCIA, no. 48. The direction in the ritual text has the children wait with their parents or guardians outside the church or “in a place that, according to the age and understanding of the children, can help them to experience a warm welcome.”¹⁵ In this location they are joined by the gathered community and greeted by the presider. The location or space for the beginning of the ritual is important to the structure and the manner of ritual performance. The way the rite unfolds carries meaning beyond just a sense of welcome. The location communicates what this ritual signifies: being named a true catechumen, one who is embraced by the Church even before Baptism and full initiation. Attention to locating the Greeting outside the church building in relation to celebrating the Liturgy of the Word inside the worship space is made more powerful when accompanied by a dignified procession (as opposed to a helter-skelter, utilitarian movement) and appropriate music. Moving from one physical space to another helps the ritual unveil theological and ecclesiological realities in sign and symbol.

It is important that the rite signify more than mere welcome, however. In the pre-catechumenate period the child comes seeking Christ and the Church. In the Rite of Acceptance, the Church not only ritualizes the welcome that they have been experiencing throughout the period of evangelization, but also ritualizes the Church’s positive response to the child’s request to become a catechumen. Location and liturgical choreography are meant to support each element in the ritual structure, for these liturgical elements link with elements

¹⁵RCIA, no. 261.

that constitute the preceding formation in the pre-catechumenate and point to the period ahead. Therefore, the elements that constitute ritual structure become suitable elements around which to shape liturgical catechesis, which includes both prior instruction and follow-up mystagogical reflection with the children, their parents, and their sponsors after the ritual experience. For example, guiding questions in this reflection can include: What does it mean to gather outside the church and then move inside during the rite? Who is gathered with the children to support them? After celebrating this ritual, the children are in the Church and their status as “catechumens” is no small matter.¹⁶ Every aspect of this ritual needs to convey their new and special status and joyous welcome in the Church.¹⁷

The Opening Dialogue assumes prior preparation, which is consistent with the notion of instruction as a part of a tripartite movement in liturgical catechesis. Such instruction or preparation facilitates the efficacy of the opening dialogue. This includes, but is not limited to, getting to know and having a preliminary conversation with the presider before the actual celebration. To communicate an appropriate sense of welcome, the presider should not be a stranger to the child. Furthermore, questions that are part of the dialogue should neither be rehearsed or canned responses nor mere yes-no answers. A catechist should develop creative instructive preparatory activities to help the children understand that they will verbally

¹⁶*Code of Canon Law*, can. 202: “1) Catechumens are in union with the Church in a special manner, that is, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, they ask to be incorporated into the Church by explicit choice and are therefore united with the Church by that choice just as by a life of faith, hope and charity which they lead; the Church already cherishes them as its own. 2) The Church has special care for catechumens; the Church invites them to lead the evangelical life and introduces them to the celebration of sacred rites, and grants them various prerogatives which are proper to Christians.”

¹⁷See Kathy Brown, “Initiation Rites as Source for Team Planning: The Rite of Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens,” *Catechumenate: A Journal of Christian Initiation* 15, no. 5 (September 1993): 11-12.

express their intention to “do the will of God,” “follow the word of God,” “be baptized,” “be a friend of Jesus Christ,” or “join the Christian family,” in these or “other words.”¹⁸

This dialogue affirms for children that they are made in God’s image and likeness, are called to faith in Jesus Christ, and will now embrace his cross within a community of faithful disciples. They come to understand that they are also called to enjoy life with God in eternity. These important theological concepts are woven into the evangelizing and instructive phase of liturgical catechesis during the pre-catechumenate. As part of this instruction, children learn language to talk about God, Jesus, the cross, and the community of faith. Some of this instruction is didactic; much more of it is embedded in purposeful activities that are followed by reflection on the experience. By the time a child is ready to celebrate this dialogue, there should be no surprises. The questions posed by the presider should be consistent with their preparatory experience and instruction, and, in light of that experience and instruction, should make sense to the child. The ritual performance needs to possess an organic and authentic quality, rather than a rote or mechanical enactment of words and actions for which one has had to rehearse. The ritual is to celebrate what is true about the child’s journey in faith up to this point.¹⁹ Prior instruction is informed and shaped by anticipated rituals; ritual performance intends to validate and celebrate the inquiry experiences during the pre-

¹⁸RCIA, no. 264.

¹⁹See *ibid.*, no. 42, for the signs of readiness to celebrate the Rite of Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens: evidence of first faith in Christ, first stirrings of repentance, calling upon God in prayer, a sense of the Church, and experience with the Christian community.

catechumenate period or period of evangelization. The ritual experience is then followed by mystagogical reflection on the ritual that makes authentic liturgical catechesis possible.

A suitable adaptation to the dialogue can include introducing the children, parents and sponsors by name, even in a homogeneous community. Calling a child by name has significance, as does the physical support of a parent or sponsor. In some cases, a parent serves as the sponsoring adult; in other situations, a member of the community may serve as the sponsoring adult who stands with the child during the ritual.²⁰

Affirmations following the opening dialogue by the parents or sponsoring adult and the assembly, in turn, give overt, expressed consent that these children have freely asked for baptism. The intent of the ritual structure is that the child does not stand alone and does not become a Christian in isolation. This support is not just for show, but is rooted in an established relationship of faith that has been part of the “program of instruction” or preparation from the beginning of the pre-catechumenate period.²¹

The Signing of the Candidates with the Cross is an important ritual action that highlights the centrality of the cross of Christ for a Christian. As part of the ritual action, the cross takes on ecclesial as well as personal significance for the child. The presider traces the cross on the forehead or in front of the forehead, in accord with cultural considerations related to touching another person. Sponsoring adults follow the lead of the presider in this ritual action, which helps a child understand that the “sign of the cross is the sign of being a

²⁰See RCIA, nos. 254b, 262.

²¹See Ibid., no. 265.

Christian and is an important element in liturgy.”²² Naturally, the presence of the processional cross and the ritual gesture of signing oneself with the cross reinforce the cross as a liturgical element that deserves ongoing instruction, experience and reflection. A further adaptation to the ritual may include signing all the senses (eyes, ears, lips, hands, feet, etc.), as provided for in the ritual text.²³

This rite can be celebrated anytime during Ordinary Time of the liturgical year.²⁴ The Rite of Acceptance may occur during Sunday liturgy, notwithstanding the directive given in RCIA, no. 261, that it is “not normally combined with the celebration of the eucharist.” As has already been established in previous chapters, child catechumens in the United States have had no difficulty in celebrating the rites adapted for them (including the Rite of Acceptance) with adult catechumens or within the context of the Sunday assembly.

Invitation to the Word of God: Scripture Readings

The Liturgy of the Word in this rite is a constitutive element in liturgical catechesis because it is a fundamental, constitutive element in liturgy, throughout the catechumenate, and in catechesis.²⁵ Having been invited to join the Christian assembly, the children hear the

²²Balthasar Fischer, “Sealed with the Seal of the Cross,” in *Signs, Words and Gestures*, trans. Matthew J. O’Connell (New York: Pueblo Publishing, 1981), 1-2. Fischer recalls that historically, a sign carried on the forehead is a sign of belonging. This sign included in the infant baptism ritual, will be repeated at confirmation.

²³See RCIA, nos. 266-68; and Elio Capra, “Contemplate the Face of Christ: The Rite of Acceptance,” *Catechumenate: A Journal of Christian Initiation* 25, no. 3 (May 2003): 22-26.

²⁴RCIA, nos. 18, 44.

²⁵See Catherine Dooley, “The Lectionary as a Sourcebook of Catechesis in the RCIA,” *Catechumenate: A Journal of Christian Initiation* 10, no. 3 (May 1988): 10-22; and Margaret Nutting Ralph,

scriptures proclaimed in the presence of the assembly. Given the importance of this proclamation, it is critical that the lector be capable and well-prepared. When the celebration takes place at Sunday Eucharist or when the *Lectionary for Masses with Children* (1992) is used, the scriptures are not adapted locally. The First Reading (Genesis 12:1-4a, the recommended text) focuses on “leaving one’s country to come into a land that I will show you.” The Responsorial Psalm (Psalm 33:3-5; 12-13, 18-19, 20 and 22) provides two response options: “Happy the people the Lord has chosen to be his own” or “Lord, let your mercy be on us, as we place our trust in you.” During the pre-catechumenate the children recognize that God has called them to faith in Jesus. Furthermore, the children begin to understand more deeply that human beings, lacking constancy, falter in living a faithful relationship with Christ. Human beings commit sin, which is contrary to the law of love. Therefore catechumens as well as the faithful need forgiveness. The suggested verse before the gospel is from John 1:41, 17b: “We have found the Messiah: Jesus Christ, who brings us truth and grace.” The gospel (John 1:35-42) presents Jesus as Savior: “This is the Lamb of God. We have found the Messiah.”²⁶

Not only is the structure essentially the same as the Rite of Acceptance in Part I for adults, but the readings are exactly the same. The assumption in the Rite of Acceptance is that the children ought to benefit from liturgically robust rituals for their liturgical and spiritual formation. This formation includes the same scriptures that also form the adults. The

“Scripture as a Living Word: What Is Use and What Is Abuse?” *Catechumenate: A Journal of Christian Initiation* 32, no. 2 (March 2010): 11-18.

²⁶RCIA, no. 271.

adapted rite does not subject a child to a watered-down or diminished version of the ritual experience. The nearly identical ritual structure and identical readings make it easy for some parishes to combine children and adults for this ritual step.

RCIA, no. 271, directs liturgy planners to choose the above suggested scriptures or readings from those given in the Lectionary for Mass, ritual Masses, “Christian Initiation apart from the Easter Vigil” or from elsewhere in the Lectionary. Whichever readings are chosen, they serve as a window into the mystery of Christ being celebrated. The readings need to communicate that faith is a journey which includes a recurring cycle of God’s call and our response. The cross of Christ (our Savior) and the Word of God (the story of salvation) together with the presence of a community of faith (disciples) are constant companions that one needs on this faith journey.

Intercessions

Intercessions for the Children, another constitutive element in liturgical catechesis, are prayers intended to reinforce human dispositions that the children need in this faith journey: a “desire to live with Jesus;” that “by belonging to the Church they may find true happiness;” that they will need “strength to persevere in their preparation for baptism;” that the community prays with them to be “preserved from the temptation of discouragement;” and that they “may rejoice in the happiness of receiving the sacraments of baptism, confirmation and the eucharist.”²⁷ Attentive to these prayers, a child is capable of

²⁷RCIA, no. 274.

understanding that this ritual is not an end point. Rather it signals a longer faith journey with desires, joys, temptations, and eventually full initiation.

A suitable point of post-celebration mystagogical reflection is that the adapted rites are engaged in a life-long formation of a new generation of Christians. Rather than reinforcing a notion that sacraments are end points, conferred automatically at a certain age, or rewards for learning a body of information, the rituals of the catechumenate are integral to forming disciples who understand that faith is an ongoing journey in conversion. It is noteworthy that this first ritual step holds out the promise of all three sacraments of initiation for these children. The children, parents, sponsors, and assembly are listening.

Prayer Texts

Five prayer texts capture attention: 1) prayer after the opening dialogue; 2) prayer with ritual affirmations; 3) prayer with ritual actions; 4) prayer at the close of the rite; and 5) dismissal prayer. First, the prayer after the opening dialogue, as a constitutive element in liturgical catechesis, affirms a child's belief in Christ and desire to prepare for baptism. This prayer also affirms that "we welcome you joyfully into our Christian family, where you will come to know Christ better day by day."²⁸ Second, the prayers that accompany the affirmations situate the important role that parents and sponsors have in a child's journey in faith and broadcast to the assembly that their role in this journey is critical. Third, the prayers that accompany the signing of the senses are specific and may be further adapted by a

²⁸RCIA, no. 264.

presider. More importantly, these prayers—when accompanied by tactile ritual actions, thoughtful, creative and prudent liturgical choreography, and appropriate music—all become more poignant in ritual performance. They impress on a child, the parent, the sponsor, and the assembly the significance of the cross.²⁹

Fourth, the Prayer over the Children, performed with hands outstretched at the close of the rite, demonstrates that a child's desire to become Christian comes from God. It affirms an anticipation that these children will grow in "wisdom and knowledge" with a community that prays for them in this endeavor. Fifth, the dismissal prayer, "Go in peace, and may the Lord remain with you always," calls for a response that the children will come to use in subsequent rituals: "Thanks be to God."³⁰ Leading the children out for this dismissal, catechists take the children to a suitable place for the reflective, mystagogical component of liturgical catechesis immediately following the ritual. It is also appropriate to revisit this mystagogical catechetical reflection at the start of the next catechetical session.³¹

²⁹See Rudolph G. Bandas, "The Liturgy," in *Contents and Methods of Catechization* (St. Paul, MN: Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, 1957), 68-72, in which an analysis of bodily attitudes and movements of children at liturgy are shown to be consistent with psychological laws that affirm a child learns by doing and that bodily involvement at liturgy integrates interior worship and bodily attitudes. Based on the principle that "sense-impression is the origin of knowledge," the author stresses that without proper liturgical training, a child may too easily retreat from "liturgical observance" and "religious life." While written before Vatican Council II and the liturgical reform that issued the RCIA, the analysis of ritual and bodily action in relation to children is relevant to a child's participation in the adapted rites for the catechumenate.

³⁰See RCIA, no. 276.

³¹Dr. Joseph White, child psychologist and Director of Family Life for the Diocese of Austin, affirmed in a personal interview conducted on 16 July 2010 that, because children between the ages of 7 and 12 years take language literally, it is important for catechists to restate theologically accurate language in language the children can understand. In this regard, liturgical catechesis is especially important as it links theological language to "plain English" through ritual experience and thereby advances understanding. Reflective, mystagogical catechesis can be very effective in helping children expand understanding when it follows

Ritual Action

The Rite of Acceptance gives ample opportunity for ritual action, as constitutive of liturgical catechesis, to reinforce the intent of welcome into the Church as a catechumen. A processional cross leads the movement for the children, their sponsors, and the gathered assembly from the place of Receiving the Children to the space for the Liturgy of the Word. This action signifies that one *follows* Christ as a Christian. Embracing this processional cross during the opening dialogue, an adaptation that further underscores the intent of the rite, a child physically affirms her/his intention that “to follow Jesus is to embrace the cross.”³² As the children mature physically and spiritually, their initial faith deepens, as does their understanding of the meaning of this physical embrace. Having a sponsoring parent or sponsor from the community place a hand on the shoulder of the child during the rite gives more than a sense of welcome. It communicates physical presence and support. Children, as well as adults, appreciate being affirmed and supported in the major events of life. This ritual gesture, or another one that is culturally appropriate, communicates in a tangible way that one does not stand alone when seeking Christ, embracing his cross, or asking for baptism. The ritual gesture of signing the senses with the cross is an intensely rich personal as well as

immediately a ritual experience and is revisited with some regularity. There can never be too much repetition with children in the concrete operations state of development.

³²Brown, “Initiation Rites as Source for Team Planning,” 12.

communal experience.³³ It is a precursor of being signed with the cross at baptism and confirmation as well as signing oneself with the cross during private or communal prayer.

Symbols

Liturgical symbols, as constitutive elements in liturgical catechesis, are conveyed slowly over time, in accord with the ritual intent of each of the adapted rites. The primary symbols in the Rite of Acceptance are the Cross of Christ (in procession and gesture) and the Word of God (proclaimed and written). These symbols reappear in the liturgical life that the child embraces, so it is fitting to begin ritually with these essentials. Yet, the community, the presider, and the ritual space are also symbols that contribute to liturgical catechesis. The presence of the community of faith through a sponsor and a gathered assembly is a significant symbol of the Body of Christ,³⁴ which the child wants to join. The presider's position may not be fully apprehended by the child, but the sense of hierarchical order in the Church and the expectation that the priest is a spiritual leader is experienced before it is explained. The gathering space within a church building is a symbol of sacred space in which this community worships Sunday after Sunday. It is a community of faith with which the child will be gathering each Sunday during the remaining periods appropriate to the

³³See RCIA, no. 33.3: "The National Conference of Catholic Bishops has established as the norm in the dioceses of the United States the tracing of the cross on the forehead. It leaves to the discretion of the diocesan bishop the substitution of making the sign of the cross in front of the forehead for the persons in whose culture the act of touching may not be proper."

³⁴United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *United States Catholic Catechism for Adults* (Washington, DC, USCCB, 2006), 122.

catechumenate and throughout life, no matter where the child may physically relocate throughout the life-cycle.

Images

The scriptural images associated with the Rite of Acceptance include being formed into a people by God; going to a land that God chooses, by a route that God chooses; calling on God's mercy while placing trust in him; and rejoicing that Jesus Christ is the Messiah in whom we place our trust and hope for the grace of eternal life. These mental pictures are rich fare for instructional preparation prior to the ritual; they provide a sufficiently full-bodied liturgical experience during the rite that overflows with points of entry for mystagogical reflections after the ritual. The image of being part of a community that moves from one place to another is etched in the young person through action. The image of having the cross traced on one's body is a tangible memory maker that carries multivalent meaning. The cross as ritual action implants an image that is recognized in a religious artifact and focal point (the processional cross) that is central to what it means to be a follower of Christ. The images that are possible through the Rite of Acceptance help to landscape the religious imagination of a child with positive and fruitful mental pictures that a young person can replay over and over again.

Minor Rites, Part I, Appropriate for Children

Several minor rites also advance the spiritual formation of children of catechetical age and enrich the liturgical catechesis they need and deserve. The following rites, included in Part I, may be celebrated with children throughout the catechumenate:³⁵ Celebration of the Word of God;³⁶ Minor Exorcisms;³⁷ Blessings of the Catechumens;³⁸ Anointings of the Catechumens;³⁹ Presentation of the Creed;⁴⁰ Presentation of the Lord's Prayer.⁴¹ The Ephphetha Rite,⁴² the Recitation of the Creed,⁴³ and the Concluding Rites⁴⁴ occur on Holy Saturday in preparation for full initiation at the Easter Vigil.⁴⁵ Recalling that the principles

³⁵RCIA, no. 40, is of particular interest: "During the precatechumenate period, parish priests (pastors) should help those taking part in it with prayers suited to them, for example, by celebrating for their spiritual well-being the prayers of exorcism and the blessings given in the ritual (nos. 94-97)." It is noteworthy that these named minor rites are available to the catechumens even before they celebrate the Rite of Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens.

³⁶Ibid., nos. 81-89, 253: "Corresponding to the periods of the adult initiation are the periods of the children's catechetical formation that lead up to and follow the steps of their initiation."

³⁷Ibid., nos. 90-94.

³⁸Ibid., nos. 95-97.

³⁹Ibid., nos. 98-102.

⁴⁰Ibid., nos. 157-62.

⁴¹Ibid., nos. 178-83.

⁴²Ibid., nos. 197-99.

⁴³Ibid., nos. 193-99.

⁴⁴Ibid., nos. 204-205.

⁴⁵While the Rite does provide for Choosing a Baptismal Name in nos. 200-202, see also RCIA, no. 33.4: "The National Conference of Catholic Bishops establishes as the norm in dioceses of the United States that there is to be no giving of a new name. It also approves leaving to the discretion of the diocesan bishop the giving of a new name to persons from those cultures in which it is the practice of non-Christian religions to give a new name."

and directives found in Part I also govern the implementation and adaptations for the rituals in Part II, experienced catechetical leaders know that these rites also constitute a catechumenal formation and are equally appropriate for child catechumens.⁴⁶ The liturgical elements in these rites are worthy of a separate and specific tripartite liturgical catechesis: scripture, the prayer of the church (in exorcisms, blessings, anointings and the Ephphetha rite), oil used in anointing, the Creed (statement of beliefs), the Our Father (prayer of all Christians), and the significance of naming.⁴⁷ The liturgical elements inherent in these minor rites not only offer additional opportunities for liturgical catechesis, but some are also incorporated into the major rites and can be adapted for appropriate use in a number of settings.⁴⁸ The ritual formation that follows the Rite of Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens is intended to be of a sufficiently long duration and includes minor rites held in conjunction with celebrations of the word, as well as other ritual steps.

⁴⁶See Rita Burns Senseman, "Celebrating the Minor Rites with Children," *Catechumenate: A Journal of Christian Initiation* 30, no. 6 (November 2008): 2-9.

⁴⁷See Gilbert Ostdiek, "How Do Initiatory Symbols Come Alive for Adults?" in *Before and After Baptism: The Work of Teachers and Catechist*, ed. James Wilde (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 1988): 97-113; J. R. Quinn, "Liturgical Blessings," in *The New Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 2 (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1967): 613-14; Stephen Happel, "Symbol," in *The New Dictionary of Sacramental Worship*, ed. Peter E. Fink (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1990): 1237-45; and Robert D. Duggan, "Liturgical Symbols: A Practical Approach," *Church* 3, no. 3 (1987): 41-42.

⁴⁸The Liturgy of the Word can be part of a pre-catechumenal session in the period of evangelization, a catechetical session in the period of the catechumenate, or used alone as ritual prayer with baptized peer companion children. The Liturgy of the Word is included in the major rites and the children experience the Liturgy of the Word for Mass each Sunday. The blessings, anointings and exorcisms can be used at the end of pre-catechumenal or catechetical sessions and these are incorporated into the adapted Penitential Rite (Scrutiny) with children. The Presentations (Creed and Lord's Prayer) can be celebrated either during the period of the catechumenate or during purification and enlightenment. The Preparation Rites (Recitation of the Creed, Ephphetha Rite, [Choosing a Baptismal Name only when culturally necessary] and Concluding Rites) are generally reserved for Holy Saturday prior to full initiation at the Easter Vigil. The Ephphetha Rite precedes the Recitation of the Creed when these are used together.

Rites Belonging to the Period of Purification and Enlightenment
Rite of Election or Enrollment of Names (Optional)

This ritual step, the Rite of Election or Enrollment of Names, is optional in the adapted rite and its inclusion in this study underscores its formative value. The theology expressed or implicit in the ritual has been framed as “a theology of grace, of the human person, of Church and of sacrament.”⁴⁹ The purpose of this ritual step is “election,” for it marks another change in name once the Church elects a child catechumen for baptism. Changing a baptismal candidate’s name from catechumen to elect signifies that the Church recognizes the tangible manifestations of deeper interior transformation or conversion that have taken place within the child. From the beginning of the ancient catechumenate, the elect or *electi*, as they were called in the Latin-speaking churches, were the ones whose petition for baptism was accepted. The historical foundation that election is God’s choice based on the testimony of others⁵⁰ has not been lost in restoring the modern catechumenate.

According to liturgist Rita Ferrone, the theology of election is the engine that drives the rite of election.⁵¹ Not to be confused with election in predestination, the modern catechumenate connects this election for baptism (and thus eternity with God) with the Church’s mission for building the kingdom of God.⁵² Election of a child catechumen in the

⁴⁹Allan Bouley, “Election or Enrollment of Names,” in *Commentaries: Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, ed. James A. Wilde (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 1985), 32-33.

⁵⁰Edward Yarnold, *The Awe Inspiring Rites of Initiation: Baptismal Homilies of the Fourth Century* (Slough, Great Britain: St. Paul Publications, 1971), 8.

⁵¹Rita Ferrone, *Forum Essays: On the Rite of Election* (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 1994), 57.

⁵²*Ibid.*, 52.

adapted rite is no *fait accompli* merely because a child has access to formation in the catechumenate. Discernment is as necessary for a child who is ready to move forward to the Rite of Election as it is for an adult. As Sandra DiGidio writes,

The theology of Christian Initiation is based not on an initiative taken by people, but rather on an initiative taken by God to call individuals to faith and membership in church. The role of the individuals receiving the call lies in their response to God's invitation. The community in which those individuals hear and answer God's call has a responsibility to help discern the candidates' readiness.⁵³

For adults as well as for children, this election is based on the individual's spiritual progress, attitude, desire, and behavioral manifestations of conversion. The child's parents, sponsor, catechists, community members and pastor all play a crucial role in a decision made in prayer (discernment) before a child celebrates the Rite of Election.⁵⁴

When the Church declares at the Rite of Election that within six weeks a child catechumen will celebrate the sacraments of initiation at the Easter Vigil, the Church is saying that the child is ready to undergo the spiritual preparations appropriate to Lent. Celebrating ritually the passage from the second period of the catechumenate to this third period (namely, the purification and enlightenment that coincides with Lent), children are assured that initial faith has become deeper, expressed faith. In this regard, a child is reinforced in the notion that faith is a life-long journey that accompanies human growth and development. This is quite a counterpoint to the notion that when one has completed

⁵³ Sandra DeGidio, *RCIA: The Rites Revisited* (Minneapolis, MN: Winston Press, 1984), 57.

⁵⁴ Elio Capra, "The Rite of Election or Enrollment of Names," *Catechumenate: A Journal of Christian Initiation* 24, no. 3 (May 2002): 27.

catechesis for a sacrament, one is done, further catechesis is unnecessary, and practice of the sacraments is optional or sporadic.

The Rite of Election adapted for children is complicated by three factors, however. First, it is named as optional in Part II, Chapter 1.⁵⁵ Second, the Rite of Election is sometimes confused with the Rite of Sending in Part I, which actually precedes the Rite of Election.⁵⁶ Third, while the Rite clearly directs that this celebration should take place with the bishop presiding at a cathedral or some other larger suitable place,⁵⁷ having the bishop as the presiding minister diverts the focal point of election for some.⁵⁸ The Rite of Election is too often interpreted as merely an occasion to meet the bishop and be welcomed by a larger representation of the faith community.⁵⁹ The above difficulties have been recognized in some

⁵⁵RCIA, no. 277. See also Paul Turner, "The Rite of Election: Two Questions," *Catechumenate: A Journal of Christian Initiation* 32, no. 2 (March 2010): 6. Turner states, "While a Rite of Election for children was included in the U.S. edition, it does not appear in the original Latin edition." He suggests that those responsible for the restored catechumenate thought that simplifying the liturgies for the children was sufficient and that eliminating election and reducing the number of scrutinies from three to one were appropriate adaptations. He advances that the adapted Rite of Election for children is rarely used and that it is more common to see children included in the ceremony with adults at the Cathedral under the presidency of the bishop.

⁵⁶RCIA, no. 106-116. The Rite of Sending, an accommodation approved by Rome for the RCIA, accommodated the cultural context of the Church in the United States. In the Rite of Sending (an optional rite) the names of the elect may be signed in the Book of the Elect at the parish church. The names are then presented formally at the Cathedral where the Bishop or his delegate proclaims the catechumen as elect.

⁵⁷RCIA, no. 279.

⁵⁸Turner, "The Rite of Election: Two Questions," 3-6. Turner reinforces the notion that the Bishop's connection is primarily with baptism and not election. Since the Bishop is not likely to baptize everyone in the diocese at a local parish, or interrupt the Easter Vigil to confer the sacrament of confirmation, the pastor who baptizes is given the faculty to confirm. The presidency of the Bishop at the Cathedral for the Rite of Election preserves the Bishops' role connected with baptism.

⁵⁹Ferrone, *Forum Essays: On the Rite of Election*, 26-36. The term "pathologies" is used in *On the Rite of Election* to signify that these problems are serious impediments to conveying the true purpose of election.

ritual choreography, ritual performance and ritual additions (such as the Bishop signing the Book of the Elect)⁶⁰ that send confusing messages about the purpose of this ritual.

Notwithstanding problems (based on some difficult practices) that have been brought to light,⁶¹ the analysis in this chapter focuses on the adapted rite as it is given. The purpose of such analysis is to determine the liturgical catechesis that flows from the structure, scripture readings, intercessions, prayer texts, ritual actions, symbols and images found in the Rite of Election ritual adapted for children.

The argument throughout this study is that children of catechetical age are better off experiencing the rites of the catechumenate than not participating in them, whether they do so as a single cohort in an adapted rite or with adults, as given in Part I. A corollary to this thesis is that catechists need to know the rites and be prepared to exercise a legitimate liturgical catechesis methodology that is inherent in and flows from these rituals. It is important to note that God's grace is not held captive by inadequately structured or written rites. Poor ritual performance, however, can affect the human experience of the ritual, if not the ultimate efficacy. Notwithstanding any human deficiencies, grace can and does transcend human limitations. Liturgical catechesis can provide in-flight corrections to any misconceptions that the children may have garnered from the ritual experience.

⁶⁰See photos in *Journey to the Fullness of Life*, 16, 19.

⁶¹See Sandra DeGidio's objections in *RCIA: The Rites Revisited* that the call of God is not made clear, the rite does not clearly express the theology of call and response, the role of the godparent (referred to a sponsor) is unclear and the role of the assembly is too scant. See Rita Ferrone for a catalogue of "pathologies" in the ritual performance of the rite and suggestions for possible remedies in *Forum Essays: On the Rite of Election*.

Structure of the Rite

The structure of the Rite of Election or Enrollment of Names adapted for children shows striking structural equivalence with the rite for adults. Following the Liturgy of the Word and homily are the Presentation of the Children; Affirmation by Parents, Godparents [and the Assembly]; Invitation or Enrollment of Names; Act of Admission or Election; Recognition of the Godparents; Intercessions for the Elect; Prayer over the Elect; and Dismissal. The opening addresses and prayers are equivalent to those found in the adult rite. While some adaptations simplify language to accommodate children, none of the adaptations poses any serious problems. Other differences or adaptations include: 1) a single interrogatory option as the affirmations by parents, godparents [and the assembly] instead of having the assembly affirm their support separately; 2) no reference to the scrutinies in the address during the presentation; 3) one additional question during the affirmations to solicit a verbal reaffirmation of the child's intention to celebrate initiation; 4) the addition of a specific instructional liturgical catechesis at the end of the act of admission directed to the godparents about their new relationship with the parents of the elect; and 5) a single option for intercessions. The Form B intercessions for adults in Part I could easily accommodate the presence of children.

The intent of the ritual is exactly the same for adults and children of catechetical age: Election for God's mysterious invitation to baptism and membership in the new people, the Body of Christ.⁶² Except for serious pastoral reasons, the Rite of Election (which, of course,

⁶²Turner, "The Rite of Election: Two Questions," 2.

involves the enrollment of names) is celebrated on the First Sunday of Lent, just as for adults. The celebration of the Rite of Election at this time is in keeping with historical practice in the ancient catechumenate, for as evidenced in the account left by the pilgrim, Egeria (or Etheria), we know that the time for celebrating election at the beginning of Lent traces back to the fourth century.⁶³

While the modern liturgical structure adapted for children incorporates a gathering of the assembly with Liturgy of the Word, just as it does with adults, a few directives introduce a fissure in how this adapted rite may be interpreted. First, the homily

. . . should be brief and suitable to the understanding of the children. If the celebrant finds it difficult in the homily to adapt himself to the mentality of the children, one of the adults, for example, the children's catechist, may speak to the children after the gospel.⁶⁴

As with the adult rite, the celebrant of this rite does not have to be the bishop; if the bishop does preside, however, the children are more likely to experience the rite with adults at a single diocesan-wide celebration using the rite as prescribed in Part I. In this situation, it is unlikely that a catechist would deliver a reflection on the gospel for the children. On the other hand, if the children celebrate this rite without adult “candidates”⁶⁵ present, it is more probable that the bishop would not preside and that the rite would be celebrated at the parish. This scenario could afford a catechist an opportunity to provide a gospel reflection

⁶³Yarnold, *Awe-Inspiring Rites of Initiation*, 8. See also Maxwell E. Johnson, *The Rite of Christian Initiation: Their Evolution and Interpretation*, rev. and exp. (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2007), 125.

⁶⁴RCIA, no. 281.

⁶⁵The term “candidate” is imprecise in the RCIA, referring to both unbaptized catechumens as well as baptized candidates seeking full communion with the Catholic Church. Knowledge of the rites greatly aids understanding that at times the term is ubiquitous referring to anyone engaged in the catechumenate.

accommodated to the children, if the pastor so decides. Neither the location for the rite nor the presiding celebrant alters the ritual structure (which aims at conveying the intent of the rite). However, these two factors do impact ritual performance, color a participant's interpretation of what occurs, and influence follow-up mystagogical reflection. After the homily the rite calls for four movements: presentation of the children; affirmation by parents, godparents [and the assembly]; invitation or enrollment of names; and the act of admission or election.

The Presentation of the Children is made by the priest, deacon, catechist, or representative of the community. Except for omitting a reference to the upcoming scrutinies during purification and enlightenment, the presentation reinforces that the children “ask to be admitted to the sacraments of baptism, confirmation and eucharist.”⁶⁶ The children, accompanied by both parents and/or godparents, may be called by name individually or presented in groups, if there are many children present.

The Affirmation by the Parents, Godparents [and the Assembly] (brackets in original) includes four interrogatories. With the exception of the additional question to test the intentionality of the children, the other three questions are exactly the same as in the adult rite.⁶⁷

⁶⁶RCIA, no. 282.

⁶⁷Ibid., nos. 283, 131.

The Invitation and Enrollment of Names in the adapted rite is the same as for adults.⁶⁸ The manner of enrollment varies from diocese to diocese; there should, however, be only one Book of the Elect for each parish. Signing the Book of the Elect may occur at the Rite of Election; if the book is signed at the parish Rite of Sending, however, it is presented at a diocesan-wide Rite of Election. When there is a very large diocesan-wide gathering for the Rite of Election, the ritual choreography is worked out in relation to the liturgical space and the number of people who are called to election.

The Act of Admission or Election, accompanied by instructive liturgical catechesis during the ritual, notes “the significance of the enrollment that has just taken place.” The address to the children reinforces their having been “chosen to be initiated at Easter through the sacraments of baptism, confirmation, and eucharist.”⁶⁹ Here is an example of adapting language to suit the hearing of the children, for the language in the adult rite refers to the three initiation sacraments as “initiated into the sacred mysteries.”⁷⁰ In the remaining address to the children, the language is also adapted to facilitate understanding. The usual and customary ritual gesture of affirmation for the parent or godparent is a hand on the shoulder of the elect. Some assemblies signify affirmation during liturgical celebrations by applause. Appropriate music and singing by the assembly can also communicate the significance of the enrollment for election, which is the purpose of the ritual. A suitable liturgical catechesis

⁶⁸RCIA, nos. 132, 284.

⁶⁹Ibid., no. 285.

⁷⁰Ibid., no. 133.

prepares children for the purpose and intent of the Rite, attends to the liturgical choreography, and conducts a reflective, mystagogical catechesis on the experience and meaning of the Enrollment of Names.

Scripture Readings

The scriptures for the Rite of Election frame the ritual and are a first source for liturgical catechesis. Pamela Jackson, assistant professor of liturgical theology at Boston College, contextualizes well the readings for this Rite from the first Sunday in Lent:

The Church does not need to select a special set of propers for the catechumenate today. The courtship is ending in betrothal, the wedding is not far off, it is time for all possible candor. The catechumens will soon be one Body with the Faithful, so they must be allowed to hear what God is saying to them; God's Word to the Faithful is also His Word to them.⁷¹

Year A, the readings associated with baptism, includes Genesis 2:7-9; 3:17 (the fall); Responsorial Psalm 51: 3-4, 5-6, 12-13, 17 (Be merciful, O Lord, for we have sinned); Romans 5:12-19 or 5: 12, 17-19 (by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by one man's obedience many will be made righteous); and Matthew 4: 1-11 (temptation of Jesus in the desert). While Year A readings may be used even in Years B and C when catechumens are present, on the first Sunday of Lent the analogous themes run across all cycles: sin, mercy, salvation through Christ, and the Jesus' temptation and triumph in the desert.⁷²

⁷¹Pamela E. J. Jackson, *Journeybread for the Shadowlands: The Readings for the Rites of the Catechumenate, RCIA* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1993), 27.

⁷²*Ibid.*, 25.

Jackson's poetic prose captures what is happening in the Rite of Election for both catechumens and faithful in the readings, which are not beyond the capacity of a child's understanding. We are all afflicted through sin and our common wound is "exposed to the light and probed."⁷³ Seeking mercy, the *Miserere* is the most appropriate response, and the Church teaches her Lenten prayer to the catechumens.⁷⁴ By putting the catechumens squarely in the midst of opposite extremes: disobedience and obedience; trespass and God's free gift of grace; condemnation and justification; death and life; the Church explains that "one contrast subsumes the rest and towers over all"—Jesus Christ conquers death as monarch. Choose him, the liturgy tells them, and you can reign in life through Christ.⁷⁵ The final lesson, of course, deals with how to handle temptations. After a lengthy formation in the second period of the catechumenate, temptation to obvious evil may be more easily avoided. But, in the final stretch of spiritual formation, the spiritual training will involve learning more advanced skills in "defeating temptation to apparent goods not willed by God."⁷⁶ These themes can be accommodated to a child's understanding in the instruction prior to the rite and in the mystagogical, reflective liturgical catechesis that follows the ritual.

These readings are abundantly rich in doctrine and imagery that lend themselves well to the requisite follow up mystagogical reflection appropriate to liturgical catechesis. The Rite demonstrates that the same Word of God forms the child as well as the adult. The child

⁷³Jackson, *Journeybread for the Shadowlands*, 27.

⁷⁴*Ibid.*, 29.

⁷⁵*Ibid.*, 31.

⁷⁶*Ibid.*, 34.

catechumen begins to understand that Jesus is not just a brother or a friend, but much more; Jesus is Savior, son of God. The child learns in the midst of the community that each person is in need of the salvation Jesus offers. In the presence of a powerful proclamation of the inspired Word of God and attentive to the homily that begins to break open this Word, the children are physically called forth. They are called by name because of the personal conversion they have experienced. The presider asks a second question after ascertaining their intention at the beginning of the ritual action: “Have they listened well to the word of God?”⁷⁷ Indeed they have. Not just at the Rite of Election have they listened, but as part of their lengthy formation throughout the catechumenate, they have been formed by God’s word.⁷⁸ In the mystagogical reflection following the ritual, these children consider how they are called to be among the elect in the context of these scriptures.

Intercessions

The Intercessions for the Elect,⁷⁹ themselves constitutive of liturgical catechesis, voice prayers that the season of Lent will be a time of Christian renewal for everyone. Asking the Lord to hear the prayer of the assembly, the petitions focus on human effort and divine assistance to counter human failings: “that we may grow this Lent in our love for God and neighbor;” “that these catechumens may be freed from selfishness;” that “parents,

⁷⁷RCIA, no. 283.

⁷⁸Ibid., nos. 75, 256, 277. See also Vatican Council II, *Decree on the Church’s Missionary Activity (Ad Gentes)*, no. 14; and the National Statutes, nos. 18, 19.

⁷⁹RCIA, no. 287.

godparents, and catechists may be living examples of the Gospel;” that “teachers may convey to them the beauty of God’s word;” that “the children may share with others the joy they have found in their friendship with Jesus;” that “together with the adults who have been elected they may learn to love the Church;” and that “our community may grow in charity.” Compared to the two forms for the adult intercessions, the adapted rite has only one set of seven intercessory prayers, which are reordered and which manifest adapted language. One addition to the adapted rite that is missing in the intercessions for adults is the prayer that the elect adults, as well as the elect children, will “learn to love the Church.” In the mystagogical reflection following this rite the children recall what they have heard: that all are in need of God’s help and that they are called by name to prepare spiritually for the sacraments of initiation through the Lenten retreat.

Prayer Texts

Two prayer texts in the adapted Rite of Election are also constitutive of liturgical catechesis. The first is directed to “Recognition of the Godparents”⁸⁰ and the second is the “Prayer over the Elect.” In the liturgical instruction prior to the Recognition of the Godparents, the celebrant is encouraged to speak to “the new relationship which will exist between the parent and godparent of the elect.” This prayer lacks acknowledgement of the

⁸⁰On the permanency of the godparents’ role see Frederick McManus, “The Office of Sanctifying the Church,” in *The Code of Canon Law: A Text and Commentary*, prepared by the Canon Law Society of America, ed. James A. Coriden, Thomas J. Green and Donald E. Heintschel (New York: Paulist Press, 1985), 629-30. On the catechetical role of godparents see James A. Coriden, “The Teaching Office of the Church,” in *The Code of Canon Law: A Text and Commentary*, 556.

Holy Spirit and also tends toward the didactic, mixing prayer for the godparents with a single line of prayer for the children, to which the parents and godparents respond: Amen.

The Prayer over the Elect⁸¹ is recognizable as the celebrant, with outstretched hands over the elect, invokes one of the two options provided. Form A is addressed to God with a blessing for the children. Form B is exactly the same as that for adults:

Father of love and power,
it is your will to establish everything in Christ
and to draw us into his all-embracing love.
Guide the elect of your Church:
strengthen them in their vocation,
build them into the kingdom of your Son,
and seal them with the Spirit of your promise.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.
R. Amen.⁸²

The mystagogical reflection that completes liturgical catechesis for this element helps the elect to recall that God initiates and the elect respond to God's call all the days of their lives. It is important that children grasp that they have been chosen for election.

Ritual Action

Gathering for the Rite of Election itself is a significant ritual action. The prior liturgical catechesis that gives instruction about the rite should help the children, their families, and godparents understand that this annual gathering has a specific purpose. If it is held at the cathedral or other suitable location for a large diocesan-wide gathering, the

⁸¹RCIA, no. 288.

⁸²Ibid., no. 135.

magnitude of the gathering will itself speak volumes about the universality of the *ecclesia*. When children celebrate the adapted rite at the parish, they also need to experience a ritual that communicates election clearly, for this is the purpose of the ritual.

Three ritual actions deserve attention: the presentation of candidates, the act of enrollment, and a cluster of actions that ends with the dismissal. First, the elect are called by name for the Presentation. This can be made into a major or minor action, depending on the available space, the number of people to be presented, and the allotted time. The Rite directs that the children should “come forward and stand before the celebrant.”⁸³ Sometimes this is possible; sometimes the ritual action may be reduced to the action of rising and standing in place as one’s name is called. The calling of names could be limited to the action of a pastor or catechist representative coming forward to call out names. The children’s names could be presented in this manner to the bishop or his delegate at a diocesan-wide gathering. Liturgical catechesis on naming takes on special significance in light of this element in the Rite of Election.

Second, the ritual action of enrolling the names of the elect is critical to the intention of the rite and has proven to be among the more challenging elements to choreograph for some diocesan-wide ritual experiences. In whatever way this action is handled, the signing of the Book of the Elect, which constitutes the act of enrollment, conveys meaning because the signing is associated with the intention for baptism. The Rite directs that the children may inscribe their names, or a child’s godparent or the minister may make the actual inscription as

⁸³RCIA, no. 282.

the children call out their names. For children who have participated in a Rite of Sending at the parish with adults, the inscription of names is more possible at that time before going to a diocesan-wide gathering. If the Rite of Election is not held in conjunction with the bishop at the cathedral (an option given in the adapted Rite) the children have more opportunity to inscribe their names. However, with appropriate liturgical catechesis, a child is capable of recognizing the connection between, on the one hand, the ritual action of inscribing names at the parish Rite of Sending in preparation for the Rite of Election at a diocesan-wide gathering, and, on the other hand, the ritual action associated with presenting the Book of the Elect (which contains those names) to the presiding bishop at a diocesan-wide Rite of Election.⁸⁴

This Book of the Elect serves not only as a record of those who are called to new life in baptism, but also as a means of holding godparents responsible for the elect.⁸⁵ In some instances the godparent's name is added next to the name of the elect. The celebrant, too, may handle the book in a grand manner or not, as the space and situation allow. Further, the Rite directs that the ritual action of signing the book be accompanied by music and appropriate songs,⁸⁶ for music underscores the importance of what is occurring. Signing the Book of the Elect, a critical ritual action, signifies the purpose of the Rite of Election. Using

⁸⁴Ferrone, *Forum Essays: On the Rite of Election*, 70. RCIA, no. 120, establishes the bishop or his delegate as the usual presider of the Rite of Election. RCIA, no. 127, establishes the cathedral as the normal setting for the Rite of Election. The Rite of Sending, designed to occur at the parish, is one of the adaptations made available in 1988 for dioceses of the United States.

⁸⁵Ferrone, *Forum Essays: On the Rite of Election*, 81.

⁸⁶RCIA, no. 284.

the Book of Elect and showing the signatures in a mystagogical reflection following the ritual helps children recall the sequence of events that led up to the moment when they signed their name and what this signing means.

Finally, the dismissal culminates the rite, which includes a cluster of ritual actions worth noting: hand on the shoulder, standing, outstretched hands in prayer, and dismissal. Some are brief or solemn. All serve to accentuate the communal nature of our prayer together—for we are not just individuals who happen to be praying at one time, but rather we are a people called by God to prayer.

When the celebrant invites parents and godparents to place a hand on the shoulder of the newly elect, a ritual action that accompanies the Act of Admission or Election, it is an extension of the election signified by Signing the Book. This gesture affirms that the godparents will be with the elect in solidarity and support during this journey of faith. Since the relationship of the godparent to the elect is life-long, the gesture is truly significant.

Standing (during the opening prayer, the gospel and the intercessions) is a ritual action that reinforces the “communal choreography” of the liturgy that mere words cannot convey alone.⁸⁷ For example, intercessions are prayers of the community, by the community and for the community directed to God in Christ. The Elect, already part of the community, are continually being trained in the appropriate liturgical postures that carry meaning and in which they will engage for the rest of their lives. Standing at prayer is one of these postures.

⁸⁷See John F. Baldovin, Introduction (“An Embodied Eucharistic Prayer”) to *The Postures of the Assembly During the Eucharistic Prayer*, by John K. Leonard and Nathan D. Mitchell (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 1994), 1-11. Leonard and Mitchell also explore that bodily gesture is capable of bearing transcendent significance. Standing is an ancient prayer posture.

When the celebrant raises outstretched hands for the Prayer over the Elect, this is no mere act of pontificating. Are these outstretched hands akin to laying on of hands or imposition of hands? Balthasar Fischer addresses the gesture of outstretched hands specifically as an ancient gesture with profound meaning. The Assyrians had a word for prayer that meant open the fist, which in the ancient world, was a profound gesture, given the symbolic nature of the fist as signifying a threatening stance, highhandedness, grasping, or even violence. The open hand signifies our emptiness before God:

I have nothing that I have not received from you, nothing that you have not placed in my empty hands. Therefore I do not keep a frantic hold on anything you have given me; therefore, I desire not to strike and hurt but only to give and to spread happiness and joy. For I myself am dependent on him who fills my empty hands with gifts.⁸⁸

Finally, the act of Dismissal of the Elect is a kindly ritual gesture. While the Elect are among us, they are not yet fully initiated and thus are not yet invited to the Table of the Lord. Following this dismissal, there needs to be a thorough, mystagogical, reflective liturgical catechesis concerning the entire ritual experience as prelude to the spiritual formation during the period of purification and enlightenment.

Symbols

In addition to the symbolic ritual actions above, tangible symbols in this ritual include the calling out of names and inscribing names in the Book of Elect. These signify the act of election that has more to do with what God is doing in and through human beings than our human interpretation of the divine decision. While the setting in the cathedral with or without

⁸⁸Fischer, *Signs, Words & Gestures*, 26-28.

a presiding bishop helps to situate election within the perspective of the universal church, it does not provide the rationale for the rite.⁸⁹ Ferrone's analysis on the meaning of election within initiation contextualizes the meaning of the symbols in the rite:

The Rite of Election does not claim that God's election is limited by what goes on in our liturgical celebration of election. (God certainly may choose more people than turn up at the Rite of Election!) Nor even is the mystery of divine election in the church exhaustively celebrated by the rite. Baptism itself is the epicenter of the church's celebration of divine election.⁹⁰

Some assume that the bishop is a key symbol, and in one sense he is a symbol of the *ecclesia* as the shepherd of the diocese. However, even the rite allows for the bishop to delegate the role of presiding celebrant to another.⁹¹ The symbolic value of the bishop and the cathedral is that the ritual step of election is "made by the Church" that is "founded on the election by God, in whose name the Church acts."⁹²

Images

Images as constitutive elements of liturgical catechesis have special importance since ancient and biblical images woven throughout the Rite of Election expand a child's religious imagination and alter personal horizons considerably. Whether the Rite is celebrated as a diocesan-wide event or at the local parish, the children can take comfort in experiencing the community of the faithful that gathers and in knowing that they are not alone in this journey

⁸⁹Ferrone, *Forum Essays: On the Rite of Election*, 72.

⁹⁰*Ibid.*, 57.

⁹¹See RCIA, nos. 12, 121.

⁹²*Ibid.*, no. 119.

of faith. A political understanding of the word *election* fades once these child catechumens learn what election in God really means. The image of God's initiative and human response communicates to them the attitude and perennial stance that the Christian has before God for the rest of their lives: God calls; we respond.⁹³ After celebrating the Rite of Election, an American-style understanding of freedom is also remediated and replaced with notions of what it means to be free in Christ. After Signing the Book of the Elect, these children realize that they have truly been called by God and they have truly responded by signing on the dotted-line: there is no going back. This rite impresses on them that something truly significant is happening to them. The children learn something extraordinary about profound commitments and committed communities in experiencing the Rite of Election.⁹⁴

The scriptural images that frame the rite also advance the education the children are receiving in God's Word. Children are capable of apprehending that God speaks life-giving words, that God is not to be put to the test, and that God alone is to be worshipped and served. Understanding what obedience and disobedience are in their life-experience, these children are encouraged to draw closer to Christ, who is the answer to the human dilemma in light of Adam's sin of disobedience. Jackson sums up the images in the readings in this way:

In the readings taken together, both the reality of evil and the picture of true humanity created in the image of God and restored through Jesus have been starkly presented;

⁹³United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord: A Resource to Guiding the Development of Lay Ecclesial Ministry* (Washington, DC, USCCB, 2005), 7. These opening words of the document reinforce that all the faithful are called into the Lord's service, a disposition that the catechumenal process supports and promotes.

⁹⁴On the value of the role of the community in formation see Rosemary Haughton, "The Formation Community," in *The Transformation of Man* (Springfield, IL: Templegate Publishing, 1967, repr. 1980), 211-41.

both what it means to be deceived and under the power of sin, and what it means to be an obedient son have been vividly portrayed. The catechumens have been shown the parameters of the Lenten journey “Then the devil left Him, and behold, angels came, and ministered to Him”. At this point the catechumens have had enough of the lying Destroyer for one day. As their sponsors [godparents] come to present them for enrollment, they indeed seem like ministering angels.⁹⁵

Children understand. They often startle adults who journey with them at their depth of understanding of such profound realities. The ritual seal in enrollment of names helps them to weather the desert contest ahead. They have heard about Lent and are now about to experience it first hand. The contest in the gospel as framed within the forty days of Lent is one thing. The contest that lasts for the rest of their lives is quite another—and for that, they need the sacraments. Before they are fully initiated with the sacraments of initiation, the Penitential Rite (Scrutiny) will help them traverse the desert and understand repentance as a way of life for the Christian.

Conclusion

As a catechetical method worthy of the catechumenal process, liturgical catechesis based on the liturgical elements of the rituals for children of catechetical age contributes significantly to spiritual formation. The principle of adaptation is an important factor in the rituals for children; not only are the rites in Part II, Chapter 1 already adaptations of the adult rites, but in some cases there is a need for additional adaptations. Additionally, the importance of music in relation to ritual performance cannot be underestimated. It should be used as a facilitator when conducting liturgical catechesis sessions, whether in the

⁹⁵Jackson, *Journeybread for the Shadowlands*, 35-36.

preparation or mystagogical phase of the three-fold movement: prepare, celebrate and reflect. The Rite of Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens is the first ritual step that may or may not be preceded by minor rites (anointings, blessings and exorcisms). The Rite of Election, an optional rite, occurs between step one (Rite of Acceptance) and step two (Penitential Rite [Scrutiny], Presentations and Preparatory Rites). Following the rites that precede and follow the first ritual step, a child elect is spiritually prepared to enter the desert and participate in celebrating the rituals that facilitate purification and enlightenment. These rituals are a rich source of liturgical catechesis based on the liturgical elements found in the rites: structure, scripture readings, intercessions, prayer texts, ritual action, symbols and images. Continuing an analysis of the liturgical elements that require liturgical catechesis, Chapter Six: Analysis of the Rites, Part II, Chapter 1: Second Step, focuses on the Penitential Rite (Scrutiny) Presentations and Preparatory Rites.

CHAPTER 6
ANALYSIS OF RITES,
PART II, CHAPTER 1
SECOND STEP:
PENITENTIAL RITE (SCRUTINY) AND MINOR RITES

Introduction

The Penitential Rite (Scrutiny) adapted for children is celebrated after the Rite of Election and within the period of purification and enlightenment that coincides with the season of Lent, if the catechumens are to be initiated at Easter.¹ If initiation is to be celebrated at another time due to “serious pastoral reasons,” the readings and penitential tone for Lent are to be maintained.² It is considered a major ritual step and is not optional.

The liturgical catechesis elements in this adapted Penitential Rite (Scrutiny) need to be examined in light of the two analogous rituals. First, the three scrutinies for unbaptized adults (Part I) on the third, fourth and fifth Sundays of Lent provide the model ritual for all who approach baptism at Easter. In fact, the Rite calls the Penitential Rite (Scrutiny) adapted for children a “major occasion,” “a kind of scrutiny, similar to the scrutinies in the adult rite,” and states that guidelines for the adult rite (nos. 141-46) may be followed and adapted.³ The

¹RCIA, no. 294.

²Ibid., no. 26.

³Ibid., no. 291.

purpose of the adult scrutinies are 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.”⁴ As “major occasions,” both have a similar spiritual purpose: to “complete conversion of the elect and deepen their resolve to hold fast to Christ and to carry out their decision to love God above all.”⁵

The second analogous ritual to keep in mind is the Penitential Rite (Scrutiny) in Part II, Chapter 4D, for baptized adult candidates (second Sunday of Lent). It was written as a separate ritual to recognize and honor the baptism of candidates for full communion.⁶ Its value to this study is rooted in the penitential nature of the adapted rite with its link to the sacrament of Penance. While it is true that unbaptized children elect can successfully participate in the scrutiny rites with the adults on the third, fourth and fifth Sundays of Lent, they never participate in the ritual on the second Sunday of Lent with baptized adults.

It is noteworthy that the adapted Penitential Rite (Scrutiny) incorporates elements from the minor rites from Part I: blessings, anointing with oil of catechumens, and prayer for exorcism. Recognizing similarities and differences between and among the rituals for adults and the adapted Penitential Rite (Scrutiny) for children will help to inform the analysis of the

⁴RCIA, no. 141.

⁵Ibid., nos. 141, 259.

⁶See 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: A Journal of Christian Initiation* 23, no. 2 (2001): 8-19. Until 30 April 1986, the Subcommittee on Christian Initiation had favored an original plan to include a combined rite with the baptized and unbaptized for the scrutinies, but theological concern for maintaining the dignity of baptism and concern for ecumenical sensitivity prompted a decision against a combined rite. This decision is evident in the separate penitential rite/scrutiny on the Second Sunday of Lent in Part II-4D.

elements for liturgical catechesis in the adapted Penitential Rite (Scrutiny).⁷ The analysis in this study does not extend to the liturgy for penance for baptized, peer companion children.⁸

During the period of purification and enlightenment the rites advance the interlocking themes of baptism, repentance for sin, and spiritual growth. The element of repentance before baptism found in the modern, restored catechumenate is consistent with the ancient catechumenate.⁹ Confession of sin, for example, was sometimes required before baptism in the fourth century. Tertullian linked baptism with confession of sins,¹⁰ while Augustine explicated the symbolism of the goat's hair used in the ancient scrutiny ceremony by calling attention to it as a traditional symbol for penance.¹¹ Cyril of Jerusalem expected those to be baptized to make a detailed confession before baptism, and the Emperor Constantine made a confession of sin on his knees shortly before death. John Chrysostom, however, thought confession to God alone was sufficient, and Ambrose did not think confession of sin was necessary because baptism alone was sufficient.¹² From one perspective, reconciliation, confession of sins, and penance were related to baptism; from another perspective, reconciliation, confession of sins, and penance were experienced in gradual stages over a

⁷RCIA, nos. 295-302.

⁸Ibid., no. 303.

⁹See Henry Ansgar Kelly, *The Devil at Baptism: Ritual, Theology, and Drama* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985); and Edward Yarnold, *The Awe Inspiring Rites of Initiation: The Origin of the RCIA* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1994).

¹⁰Kelly, *Devil at Baptism*, 15.

¹¹Ibid., 9

¹²Ibid., 16.

period of time, in order to effect deeper conversion.¹³ The rites in the modern catechumenate are rooted in the rites of the ancient catechumenate and are meant to further spiritual progress and conversion during the forty-day retreat that coincides with Lent.

Notwithstanding the need for true repentance before baptism (in both the ancient and modern catechumenate), the inclusion of the liturgy of the sacrament of penance with this adapted ritual step for unbaptized children introduces more than a little confusion. The adapted rite acknowledges that the sacrament of penance is not appropriate for an unbaptized child catechumen, who is now elect.¹⁴ If the ritual is a type of combined rite for the child catechumens and baptized peer companion children who are completing the sacraments of initiation, it reverses the decision made by the subcommittee of the Bishops' Committee on the Liturgy that was charged with adapting and expanding the provisional text for the Church in the United States.¹⁵ The committee decided *against* a combined rite for unbaptized and baptized adults and *for* a separate Penitential Rite (Scrutiny) in Part II, 4D for baptized

¹³Regis A. Duffy, "Penance," in *Systematic Theology*, vol. 2, ed. Francis Schuesler Fiorenza and John Galvin (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1991), 231-50.

¹⁴See RCIA, nos. 295, 303. On the relationship of Penance as a sacrament of reconciliation and forgiveness insofar as it is related to the eucharist, see David N. Power, "The Sacramentalization of Penance," *Worship, Culture and Theology* (Washington, DC: Pastoral Press, 1990), 219.

¹⁵The debate on this issue appeared at the onset of the implementation of the restored catechumenate in the United States, but was clouded with a more pressing concern of the place of uncatechized, baptized Roman Catholics, some alienated from the church, who were incorporated into the catechumenal process. The development of this debate is found in the Minutes of the Subcommittee of the Bishops' Committee on the Liturgy, November 1984. For an overview of the argument for making ritual distinctions between the unbaptized and the baptized in the catechumenal process, see Ron Oakham, *One at the Table: Reception of Baptized Christians* (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 1995).

adults.¹⁶ While the focus of this study is on the adapted rite for children of catechetical age in Part II, Chapter 1, reference to some aspects of the two rites above for adults are instructive for an analysis of liturgical catechesis of the adapted rite, which demonstrates internal inconsistencies.

The Penitential Rite (Scrutiny) adapted for children is both complicated and enhanced by the presence of baptized peer companions from the catechetical group. On the one hand, the Rite assumes these baptized peer companions will participate in this adapted penitential rite.¹⁷ This accommodation is found in RCIA, no. 254.1:

Since the children to be initiated often belong to a group of children of the same age who are already baptized and are preparing for confirmation and eucharist, their initiation progresses gradually and within the supportive setting of this group of companions.

Having baptized peer companions present during the Penitential Rite (Scrutiny) for the unbaptized children could prove to be enriching.¹⁸ The presence of these baptized peer companions offers support for the catechumen child who is now elected for baptism.

Furthermore, their presence and participation in the sacrament of penance has a possibility of giving witness to the unbaptized children that one needs the sacrament of penance after baptism (a second baptism) as part of ongoing conversion in one's faith journey.

¹⁶See RCIA, no. 463: “. . . [T]hose scrutinies of the elect and this penitential rite for those preparing for confirmation and eucharist have been kept separate and distinct. Thus, no combined rite has been included in Appendix I.” Number 1 of the National Statutes reiterates the point: “Those who have been baptized but have received formation so far as necessary and appropriate, but should not take part in the rites intended for the unbaptized catechumens”

¹⁷Ibid., no. 293.

¹⁸Ibid.: “. . . [T]hese penitential rites are a proper occasion for baptized children of the catechetical group to celebrate the sacrament of penance for the first time. When this is the case, care should be taken to include explanations, prayers and ritual acts that relate to the celebration of the sacraments with these children.”

On the other hand, accommodating the ritual (a type of combined rite) to include these two groups of children obscures the true purpose of this ritual step for the elect child catechumen. This is especially evident in the prayers and intercessions in the adapted rite, which are also for the benefit of the baptized peer companion children. While intended to serve both groups, the prayers and intercessions in fact demonstrate a lack of focused purpose for the unbaptized children who are preparing spiritually for baptism.

For the unbaptized child, initiatory liturgical catechesis needs to anticipate the upcoming ritual steps: it must include catechesis on the purpose of the rituals, their underlying theological content, and the meaning of the primary liturgical symbols that the rituals incorporate. Both unbaptized and baptized candidates certainly receive catechesis on the doctrinal teachings of the church regarding repentance and reconciliation, but a group of children who have not been baptized need catechesis with differing starting points and at a different pace from children baptized at birth and steeped in Catholic traditions at a parent's or grandparent's knee. From a faith development perspective, the unbaptized children fare better with a group of children who are in "the same situation."¹⁹ The purpose of repentance before baptism, appropriate to the Penitential Rite (Scrutiny), is obscured in accommodating the baptized children in the prayers and intercessions that clearly have their circumstance in mind before they celebrate the Rite of Penance. As the next step *after* these catechumen elect children have been fully initiated, they will experience an appropriate liturgical catechesis on

¹⁹RCIA, no. 255, states, "For celebrations proper to this form of Christian initiation, it is advantageous, as circumstances allow, to form a group of several children who are in the same situation, in order that by example they may help one another in their progress as catechumens."

the Rite of Penance; it would be inappropriate to engage in such catechesis earlier. Introducing the concept of the sacrament of penance before full initiation is premature and could be confusing. The unbaptized children need liturgical catechesis that is consistent with the four periods of the catechumenate and the ritual steps in which they are expected to participate as the next step: Step Two, Penitential Rite (Scrutiny) is one of these rites. There are suitable occasions for bringing together the unbaptized and baptized children other than the ritual step adapted Penitential Rite (Scrutiny) that is merged with the Rite of Penance.

Due to the bifurcated purpose embraced by this adapted Penitential Rite (Scrutiny), two separate scenarios regarding sorrow for sin are present: repentance before baptism for the unbaptized child elect, and reconciliation after baptism for the baptized Catholic companion children from the catechetical group who will celebrate the sacrament of Penance for the first time. Regarding the unbaptized, the Rite states,

At least one penitential rite is to be celebrated, and, if this can be arranged conveniently, a second should follow after an appropriate interval. The texts for a second celebration are to be composed on the model of the first given here, but the texts for the intercessions and prayer of exorcism given in the adult rite (nos. 153-54; 167-168; 174-175) are used with requisite modifications.²⁰

After reading this directive, many seasoned catechumenal leaders judge that inviting the unbaptized children to participate in at least one and perhaps all three of the scrutinies with the adults in Part I is a far better formative ritual experience for the children. Having unbaptized elect of differing ages introduces no impediments or burdens for the elect children and provides a greater opportunity for more robust follow-up, reflective,

²⁰RCIA, no. 294.

mystagogical, liturgical catechesis about the meaning of repentance prior to baptism and the purpose of the Lenten journey for the unbaptized. Combining the unbaptized adults and the unbaptized children does not confuse the purpose of the ritual step as scrutiny. This option is also preferred to rewriting a second penitential rite on the model of the one given, as the Rite suggests.²¹

Regarding the baptized peer companions, the Rite signals a contingency with the word “if” (a sign of the subjunctive). Inserting such uncertainty or doubt in the directive, the Rite introduces the possibility that these baptized peer companion children could just as easily be absent from the adapted Penitential Rite (Scrutiny):

If the assembly includes baptized children who will receive the sacrament of penance for the first time, the celebrant turns to them and invites them to show by some external sign their faith in Christ and Savior and their sorrow for their sins.²²

It is curious that an added burden is given to the baptized children, who are to “show by some external sign . . . their sorrow . . .” for their sins during a ritual step that is first and foremost intended for the unbaptized elect.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* describes appropriate expressions of sorrow for sin.²³ One can only wonder what kind of expression of sorrow these baptized children are

²¹RCIA, no. 294

²²Ibid., no. 298.

²³*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 1434: “The interior penance of the Christian can be expressed in many and various ways. Scripture and the fathers insist above all on three forms, fasting, prayer, and almsgiving, which express conversion in relation to oneself, to God, and to others. Alongside the radical purification brought about by Baptism or martyrdom they cite as means of obtaining forgiveness of sins: efforts at reconciliation with one’s neighbor, tears of repentance, concern for the salvation of one’s neighbor, the intercession of the saints, and the practice of charity ‘which covers a multitude of sins.’”

expected to make in such a setting. Are the unbaptized elect exempt from such a visible display of “sorrow for their sins”? This introduces a confusing element in the ritual step and complicates the liturgical catechesis. The act of showing up for the sacrament of penance is typically interpreted as a sign that one comes freely having already engaged in an examination of conscience with proper instruction and guidance from catechists and parents.²⁴ If present at the ritual, the baptized companion children participate in the sacrament of penance after the dismissal of the unbaptized elect children. The baptized peer companion children do not participate in the exorcism, anointing with oil of catechumens or the laying-on-of-hands. Given this background, the analysis of the constitutive elements for liturgical catechesis in the adapted Penitential Rite (Scrutiny) will be conducted in this study from the perspective of their efficacy for the unbaptized elect child catechumen with secondary consideration of the baptized peer companions who may or may not be present.

Analysis of the Rite

Structure of the Rite

The ritual structure for the adapted Penitential Rite (Scrutiny) occurs in the context of an appropriate gathering for the Liturgy of the Word. After greeting the assembly, the priest

²⁴Children who are properly prepared usually have no difficulty with the sacrament of penance for the first time. They may show up at the encouragement of parents and catechists, but no one can force a child to visit with a priest for sacramental confession if the child is not ready for this encounter. Children have been known to avoid the face-to-face visit with the priest until such time as they are ready, even though they have participated in the introductory rites and celebration of the Word with the assembly that precedes the Rite of Penance.

gives an instruction about the combined group of unbaptized and baptized in the assembly by explaining in these or other words:

[T]he rite will have different meanings for the different participants: the children who are catechumens, the children who are already baptized, particularly those who will celebrate the sacrament of penance for the first time, the parents, godparents, catechists, priests, etc. All these participants in their own different ways are going to hear the comforting message of pardon for sin, for which they will praise the Father's mercy.²⁵

Following the instruction before the scripture readings, an opening prayer that captures the reason for the gathering incorporates notions of forgiveness, pardon, mercy, repentance, and being cleansed of our sins. The Rite offers six scripture options plus the three gospels used in the scrutinies for the adult rite (the woman at the well, the man born blind, and the raising of Lazarus); four options for a responsorial psalm are provided, each of which communicates trust in and joyful thanksgiving for God's mercy. The homily is followed by intercessions, an exorcism, and anointing with the oil of catechumens (which is also one of the minor rites) or laying on of hands, if the children have been anointed already. The rite concludes with a dismissal for the unbaptized.²⁶

Scripture Readings

The scriptural options provided are Ezekiel 36:25-28 (a new heart and a new spirit); Isaiah 1:16-18 (cleansing of sin); Mark 1:1-5, 14-15 (repent and believe the Good News);

²⁵RCIA, no. 295.

²⁶Ibid., no. 303. The liturgy of the sacrament of penance then begins for the baptized children who will celebrate this sacrament for the first time.

Mark 2:1-12 (healing of the paralytic); Luke 15:1-7 (parable of the lost sheep); 1 John 1:8-2:2 (Jesus our Savior), John 4:1-14 (Samaritan woman); John 9:1,6-9, 13-17, 34-39 (man born blind); and John 11:3-7, 17, 20-27, 33b-45 (raising of Lazarus). One or several readings may be chosen. If more than one is selected, then one of the following responsorial psalms from the ritual Masses, “Christian Initiation apart from the Easter Vigil,” or another from the same Mass, may be used: Psalm 23:1-3a, 3b-4, 5-6 (The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want); Psalm 27:1, 4, 8b-9abc, 13-14 (The Lord is my light and my salvation); Psalm 32:1-2, 5, 11 (Happy are those whose sins are forgiven); Psalm 89:3-4, 16-17, 21-22, 25, 27 (For ever I will sing the goodness of the Lord).²⁷

At this point in the catechumenal process, the children are accustomed to liturgies of the word, which have been a primary liturgical element in their formation. Whether these particular scriptures are familiar or not, the themes of repentance and the mercy of God they communicate are not new. From the beginning of the faith journey, the catechumenate has facilitated “stirrings of repentance” and “calling upon God in prayer.”²⁸ Accustomed to hearing how God’s people in the Old Testament return to God and in touch with a catechesis that teaches God’s healing forgiveness, the children experience the scriptures as reinforcement of their desire to trust in Jesus, Son of God, Savior. While liturgical catechesis certainly needs to acknowledge the reality of sin in the world and as part of the human

²⁷RCIA, no. 297.

²⁸Ibid., no. 42.

condition (original sin), it also needs to deliver a balanced catechesis that counters sin with the love and mercy of God through Jesus Christ.

Intercessions

The intercessions follow the homily that explains the sacred texts. During the homily or after it, in preparation for the intercessions, the presider speaks to the meaning of conversion and repentance. The Rite inserts this instructive liturgical catechesis to situate more clearly the ritual that follows for a dual purpose; the catechesis could also be provided to mitigate confusion among those in attendance about the purpose of the ritual. Periods of silent reflection during the ritual are encouraged. While the Rite introduces doubt or a contingency about whether baptized children are to be included in the rite, the intercessions as given assume that they are present along with an assembly of baptized faithful. Right before the intercessions, the Rite directs the presider to consider using the intentions of the intercessions in the adult rite (nos. 153, 167, 174) with requisite modifications. The continual references to the scrutiny rites in Part I attest to their suitability for use with the child catechumens.²⁹

Within this divided context, the Rite provides a dual address to those who are “preparing themselves for the sacrament of Christian initiation and for those [who will receive God’s forgiveness in the sacrament of penance for the first time...]” (brackets in the

²⁹In the intercession for adults, prayers for families, the faithful, and the world are included, but the language positions the prayers in the context of the approaching baptism for the elect, unlike the intercessions in the adapted Penitential Rite (Scrutiny) for children.

original). Six intercessions are intended to address the child catechumen elect; baptized, peer companion children; and accompanying adults.³⁰ The intercessory prayers ask that we “open our hearts to the Lord Jesus;” “try to know our failures and recognize our sins;” as children of God (appropriate for the baptized) “admit our weakness and faults;” “express sorrow for our sins;” “be delivered from present evils;” and “learn from our Father in heaven to triumph by love over the powers of sin.”³¹

For the elect children, the intercessions in this ritual step are intended to address “uncovering and then healing what is weak, defective and sinful.” While these intercessions focus more on how the children have failed to measure up to divine and human expectations, they resoundingly fail at “uncovering” what is weak, defective or sinful. More accusatory in tone, these intercessions omit any reference to prayer for strengthening what is “upright, strong and good,” as is the case in the intercessions for adults in Part I.³² While several of the intercessions in Part I also appropriately address the needs of the baptized in the assembly, the focus on the unbaptized is not lost. The intercessions in this adapted rite sound more like an examination of conscience before sacramental confession suitable for the baptized companion children and adults. The benefit and effectiveness of these intercessions (as given) for the unbaptized child elect, however, is questionable.

³⁰RCIA, no. 299.

³¹Ibid.

³²Ibid., no. 141. See also no. 35: “. . . intercessions may always be shortened, changed or even expanded with new intentions, in order to fit the circumstances or special situation of the candidates . . . ”

If this adapted Penitential Rite (Scrutiny) is expected to advance the stated purpose of the scrutinies for adults, then the intercessions for the children should integrate the frame for the rite (the scriptural readings) with every other aspect of this ritual step, which is considered a major occasion. It also needs to attend to a balanced approach toward what is weak and what is strong within a person, especially a child of catechetical age. A symbiotic relationship between the many options available for the readings and these intercessions is lacking, especially if the readings of the scrutinies for adults are used (which is, in fact, an option). One could rewrite the intercessions to connect better with not only the chosen scriptures but also with the baptized in the assembly. Why would one do so when the scrutiny for adults is a viable option for these unbaptized children? Liturgical catechesis based on these intercessions will prove problematic without appropriate further adaptations to bring them in better alignment with the scriptures and the full intention of this ritual step for the unbaptized elect children.

Prayer Texts

The Penitential Rite (Scrutiny) provides five possible prayer texts: 1) the opening prayer, 2) the prayer for exorcism, 3) the prayer for anointing with the oil of catechumens or laying on of hands, or 4) the blessing of the oil for anointing, and 5) an optional blessing before dismissal in RCIA, no. 97. The opening prayer has two forms compared to a silent prayer before the exorcism in the adult scrutiny (Part I) and a prayer for repentance that opens the penitential rite for baptized adults (Part II, 4-D). Neither Form A nor Form B of the

opening prayers in the adapted Penitential Rite (Scrutiny) seeks to deepen intentionally an appreciation for baptism. Form A addresses “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 . . .” Form B begins “Lord, grant us your pardon and peace, so that cleansed of our sins we may serve you with untroubled hearts . . .”³³ These prayers do not speak to the reality of the unbaptized child, for their sins have not yet been forgiven through baptism and they have not yet been regenerated in Christ. There is no mention of the Holy Spirit in either form of the opening prayer.

The prayer for exorcism bears little relationship to the exorcism prayers in the scrutinies for adults. While the prayer for exorcism is inappropriate for the baptized companions, the Rite does not specify that the prayer of exorcism is only for the unbaptized.³⁴ Further, the prayer texts can cause confusion. The baptized will be cleansed from sin through the sacrament of penance following the adapted Penitential Rite; the unbaptized will not be cleansed of sin at this adapted (Scrutiny) ritual and will have to wait until baptism at the Easter Vigil.

³³RCIA, no. 296.

³⁴On exorcism in the ancient catechumenate, see Kelly, *Devil at Baptism*. Kelly traces the historical development of exorcism associated with the unbaptized. While there is acknowledgement that demonology deals with “the continual warfare of the evil spirits against those who have been baptized as Christians,” exorcism is and has been reserved for the unbaptized. In the 1972 ritual for children of catechetical age (RCIA), the references to original sin and Satan’s domination of the world have been eliminated, and the same is true of simpler forms of the adult ritual issued at the same time. The accompanying prayers of exorcism in the adult rite are not adjurations addressed to possessing demons or even prayer to God to expel such possessing demons. Literal exorcisms were removed, much to the dismay of Pope Paul VI, who questioned the wisdom of eliminating the old forms of exorcisms from the baptismal liturgy (Ibid., 272-78).

A further complication emerges in the exorcism prayer. In the RCIA, Part I, the “imprecatory” tone of an exorcism that appears to curse the devil gives way to a “deprecatory” or epicletic pleading for the grace of Christ. The baptismal exorcisms for adults have not been abolished in name, but the texts have been emptied of meaning, so much so that all that remains is a protest against evil.³⁵ There is little risk that the prayers in the adapted Penitential Rite (Scrutiny) could be considered exorcisms in either the imprecatory (addressing Satan directly) or deprecatory (praying to God about evil) sense.³⁶ The prayers of exorcism in the adapted rite neither adhere to the deprecatory model given in the adult ritual nor admit to the existence of the devil or the devil’s role in temptation.

Prayer Form A is more benign; prayer Form B puts a heavy burden on the children. Form A prayer addresses “Father of mercies,” asks for rescue “from the slavery of sin,” and advances that these young people “. . . have already experienced temptation . . . they acknowledge their faults.” “Cleanse them from sin,” the prayer implores, and “guide them safely through life.” In this sense, the prayer uncovers what is weak, defective and sinful, but it is questionable that it could be broadly interpreted as a deprecatory exorcism prayer. The language associated with healing that is proper to the ritual is postponed to the anointing or

³⁵Balthasar Fischer, “Baptismal Exorcism in the Catholic Baptismal Rites after Vatican Council II,” *Studia Liturgica* 10, no. 1 (1974): 48-55.

³⁶For background on the role of exorcism in both the ancient and modern catechumenate, see Kelley, *Devil at Baptism*, 265: “But it is true . . . that the formulas finally enshrined in the new rituals give little or no sense of the possibility that the devil or other spirits might be witnesses to, or even obstructers of, the ceremony. Fischer justifies that deprecatory form of the exorcism as traditional, and so it is. But since he and his fellow commissioners have attempted to avoid the language of the corporeal possession, most of the resulting formulas designed as exorcisms can hardly be considered to be exorcisms in any traditional sense.”

laying on of hands. This form of the prayer is more appropriate for the baptized peer companion children.

Form B is more appropriate for the elect. It addresses “God of mercy and father of all, look upon N. and N., who will soon be baptized.”³⁷ But the text of the prayer is troubling on two counts. First, the language and format are psychologically problematic; the phrase, “free these young people from whatever could make them bad,” for example, labels the child rather than the child’s actions as “bad,” which is not consistent with acceptable language for young children in the concrete operational stage of development. Labeling an action as “bad” or “unloving” is a more appropriate approach.³⁸

Second, with regard to language that describes a child’s actions as pleasing or not pleasing God, there is a further difficulty. The prayer phrase “If they stumble on the way and do not please you . . .” is problematic due to a child’s literal understanding of language. Such a phrase implants an image that the child can produce pleasure or displeasure in God. While there are Old Testaments images to support phrases describing God’s anger or displeasure over sinful activity in the world at humankind’s hands, such language is not consistent with what is considered developmentally appropriate language with young children. Hearing prayer Form B, a child could easily come away from this ritual thinking that he/she is the

³⁷RCIA, no. 300.

³⁸Dr. Joseph White (Diocese of Austin), interview by author, 16 July 2010. Children at this stage of development receive information in concrete terms and thought processes are in “cause and effect” categories. They take language literally. A better approach is to say that we do bad things and need God’s help to act in loving, respective ways. For example, White posits that a good way to describe what the intercession intends (after altering the language and through the liturgical catechesis) is to tell the child that everybody makes some choices that are not part of God’s plan for us. God’s plan for us is always what is best for us. In this way chances for misunderstanding are lessened.

cause of sin and has the capacity to control God's "feelings." Personification language about God has its place; this, however, is not one of them. One needs to be careful in employing such language with children who manifest what James Fowler has termed the mythic-literal stage of faith development.³⁹ There are only two phrases that call on God's help: "help them always to walk in your light" (an image often used in the sacrament of penance services and songs with children) and "Help us, Father, to follow him [Jesus]," a generic call for help. Form B also fails as a prayer of exorcism.⁴⁰

The third concern is that the prayer poses an added difficulty in expecting the children to give responses in a question-answer form. As constructed, the prayer does not make it possible for the children to give spontaneous responses, as in the Rite of Acceptance to the Order of Catechumens. The responses would instead have to be memorized or read from a printed page. In either case, while perhaps intended to engage the children in the ritual, this format could actually diminish a child's unencumbered participation. The child is more likely to be preoccupied with concern for remembering the words or reading the words correctly from the printed page. These prayers that are supposed to deepen conversion for a child elect, and "to bring out, then strengthen all that is upright, strong and good" appear to dwell more on "uncovering all that is weak, defective or sinful," without much attention to healing the same. These prayers for children who are preparing for baptism are admonishing, blaming the children themselves for "not pleasing God", and even for being "bad." A robust

³⁹See James W. Fowler, *Stages of Faith Development: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1981), 135-50.

⁴⁰RCIA, no. 330, Form B.

instructive liturgical catechesis prior to the ritual would be difficult because the purpose and intent of the rite is obfuscated in trying to attend to the needs of baptized and unbaptized in a kind of combined rite. A catechist would want to instruct the children regarding (original) sin in the world or the forces of evil that are obstacles to grace. However, without a ritual that includes such concepts, liturgical catechesis would falter. The three-fold movement of liturgical catechesis (preparation, celebration, and reflection) needs internal coherence of all three based on the ritual. A catechist would be challenged to engage these children in reflective, mystagogical liturgical catechesis on these prayers following a ritual experience based on the rite as given.

The third prayer, Anointing with the Oil of Catechumens, extends the prayer for exorcism in that it acknowledges that God is the source of our strength.⁴¹ It is important that the children receive liturgical instruction on oil used in Catholic rituals for healing and strengthening. The oil is special and

symbolizes their need for God's help and strength so that, undeterred by the bonds of the past and overcoming the opposition of the devil, they will forthrightly take the step of professing their faith and will hold fast to it unfalteringly throughout the lives.⁴²

⁴¹On the anointing with the oil of catechumens see Gerard Austin, *Commentaries: Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, ed. James Wilde (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 1988), 18. Two of the ritual determinations voted on by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops in November 1986 dealt with the oil of catechumens. RCIA, no. 33.7, states that the anointing with the oil of catechumens is considered as a kind of "rite of passage" and therefore can be used during the period of the catechumenate. Number 33.9 approved using the oil of catechumens during the period of the catechumenate and the period of purification and enlightenment but omitting it in the preparation rites on Holy Saturday and in the celebration of the initiation at the Easter Vigil or another time. This anointing with the oil of catechumens is approved as a repeatable rite during the catechumenate and not reserved or used as a ritual for the Easter Vigil or in preparatory rites on Holy Saturday.

⁴²RCIA, no. 99.

This prayer with anointing is a positive prayer that calls on God to help the catechumen to “rejoice in baptism and to partake of a new life in the Church as true children of your family.”⁴³ In this way, it points to baptism and mitigates the admonishing tone in both exorcism prayer forms that precede it. It does offer an occasion for enriching the liturgical catechesis regarding oil, if “for pastoral reasons, the priest chooses to bless oil for the rite.” This prayer of blessing the oil is a rich source of liturgical catechesis and reinforces the power of God to strengthen and defend the young people.⁴⁴

It is curious that the instruction before the anointing directs the presider to use Option B, Laying on of Hands, if the children have been anointed earlier with the oil of catechumens. This directive is contrary to the instruction in Part I regarding the anointing with the oil of catechumens, in which the Rite states that this anointing “may be celebrated several times during the course of the catechumenate.”⁴⁵ The prayer for laying on of hands is brief; its power is inherent in the silence that accompanies the ritual action more than in spoken words. The Rite does not clarify the purpose of eliminating the anointing with oil of catechumens in favor of laying on of hands. In either case, these prayers and ritual actions complete the purpose of the adapted Penitential Rite (Scrutiny) that is intended to “bring out, then strengthen all that is upright, strong and good.”⁴⁶

⁴³RCIA, no. 301.

⁴⁴Ibid., no. 301.

⁴⁵Ibid., nos. 33.7, 100.

⁴⁶Ibid., no. 141.

The anointing with the oil of catechumens or blessed oil in the adapted Penitential Rite (Scrutiny) may be followed by a blessing of the catechumens (Part I), which may also be given at the end of a celebration of the word or at the end of a meeting for catechesis throughout the catechumenate.⁴⁷ Located in Part I of the Rite, seven of the nine options for blessing include a blessing for baptism, one refers to the initiation sacraments as “your holy mysteries” (a phrase used with adults in place of the initiation sacraments), and one is specifically directed to those adults who have to overcome “false worship.” None of these prayer texts mention the Holy Spirit.⁴⁸

Ritual Action

The ritual actions in the adapted Penitential Rite (Scrutiny) are few in number. Other than standing for the opening prayer and the gospel, which is usual and customary, there are no directions for postures during this ritual step. The assembly could stand during the intercessions, as is the custom during Mass. The child catechumen elect could kneel or stand for the prayers of exorcism and anointing with the oil of catechumens or laying on of hands.⁴⁹

⁴⁷RCIA, nos. 97, 301.

⁴⁸Ibid., no. 97.

⁴⁹Due to the height of the children in relation to the adult, in some cases it may be preferable to have the child remain standing rather than assume a kneeling posture. For a history of kneeling as a sign of repentance see John K. Leonard and Nathan D. Mitchell, *The Postures of the Assembly During the Eucharistic Prayer* (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 1994): 31-32.

The anointing with the oil of catechumens is traditionally conferred on the breast,⁵⁰ as this rite instructs, or on the hands, or even on other parts of the body, if this seems desirable.⁵¹ The celebrant lays his hands on the head of each child for the laying-on-of-hands option.⁵² The ritual action is impoverished by lack of a specific role for the sponsor; the usual and customary posture of standing with or placing a hand on the shoulder of the elect during the prayer of exorcism, however, is not prohibited. The sponsor could also be invited to lay hands on the head of the child along with or following this ritual gesture by the presiding celebrant. Both oil and laying on of hands are symbolic liturgical elements as well.

Symbols

Two ritual symbols that deserve attention are the oil of catechumens and laying-on-of-hands. Oil of catechumens or blessed oil is an important symbol in the adapted Penitential Rite (Scrutiny), for oil signifies healing; in the ancient catechumenate, it also signified strengthening one for doing battle with the devil.⁵³ The anointing of the hands, associated

⁵⁰Fischer, *Signs, Words and Gestures*, 6-8.

⁵¹RCIA, no. 301.

⁵²Fischer, *Signs, Words, and Gestures*, 10. Fischer notes how it is remarkable that this gesture of laying on of hands changes its meaning according to the context in which it is used. It can be a sign of authority, forgiveness of sins, and a gesture of the reassuring and consoling power of healing. In this ritual step, laying on of hands also signifies strengthening.

⁵³ See Kelly, *Devil at Baptism*; and Maxwell E. Johnson, *The Rites of Christian Initiation: Their Evolution and Interpretation* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2007), 53, 161. Johnson situates a pre-baptismal anointing with oil based on *Didascalia Apostolorum* (3rd-century Syrian Church Order) in which the very high point of the baptismal rite appears to be this pre-baptismal anointing of the head. Pre-baptismal anointing with “exorcised oil” is also evident in the “Canons to the Gauls” (ca. 400), a collection of Roman responses to various inquiries from Gallican bishops. Johnson states, “in Canon 8 is the first clear indication of the Roman use of ‘exorcised oil’ within the rites after the witness of the *Apostolic Tradition*, and that the

with ordination of priests, may anticipate the universal priesthood of the baptized. Fischer recalls that historically anointing of the hands of the priest was a reminder of the location of the nails “which left a mark for all eternity on the Master’s hands.”⁵⁴ All the baptized are called to servant leadership, so this anointing of the hands can take on multivalent meaning (as Fischer notes in his treatment of the laying on of hands). As a multivalent symbol, oil lends itself well to the kind of reflective mystagogical catechesis following the ritual that will benefit the child elect.

Laying on of Hands is another ritual gesture that serves as a symbol the children will not soon forget. Fischer recalls that the imposition of hands “changes its meaning according to the context in which it is used, without there being any need of expressly calling attention to the change.”⁵⁵ Used at the ordination of a priest, with the sacrament of penance to signify forgiveness of sins, and a gesture of reassuring and consoling power associated with the anointing of the sick, this symbol is always associated with what Christ does through the power of the imposition of hands. Liturgical catechesis needs to attend to a reflection on oil, its many uses, and the ancient gesture of laying on of hands.

Roman tradition has come to know three scrutinies during the period of final preparation for baptism.” This anointing on the head (or breast, or hands) with oil in the adapted Penitential Rite (Scrutiny) adverts to this pre-baptismal anointing.

⁵⁴Fischer, *Signs, Words and Gestures*, 17.

⁵⁵Ibid., 10-11.

Images

Sin and repentance, purification and enlightenment, prayer, and soul-searching are images that the adapted Penitential Rite (Scrutiny) intends to convey. If the readings from the adult scrutinies are used, the imagery is rich with living water that foreshadows regeneration in baptism, the veil of blindness eliminated by Jesus' healing touch, and the raising of Lazarus from death to new life. Any reading chosen needs to imprint images of our need and helplessness in light of our sins and failings. We are utterly dependant on God, and on the saving, healing presence and touch of Jesus. Images of gesture and touch convey the healing that is at the heart of the Penitential Rite (Scrutiny) even when prayer texts sometimes falter.⁵⁶ A central image emerging from the adapted Penitential Rite (Scrutiny) is one of authentic conversion or change of one's desires that manifest themselves as rehabilitated attitudes and behaviors. These images are appropriate for a reflective, mystagogical catechesis that helps a child express and appropriate a turning more and more toward Jesus, who brings liberation and freedom.

⁵⁶Daniel J. Miller, "An Elegant Sufficiency: Symbol and Gesture in Christian Initiation," *Catechumenate: A Journal of Christian Initiation* 24, no. 6 (November 2002): 2-13.

Minor Rites – Period of Purification and Enlightenment

The Presentations: Creed and Our Father

If the scrutinies for adults and adapted Penitential Rite (Scrutiny) for children are for purification, then the presentations are for their enlightenment.⁵⁷ Without celebrating the presentations as well as the preparation rites that are integral to spiritual formation in the period of purification and enlightenment, a child elect is robbed of a complete, balanced catechumenal formation, with ritual emphasis on purification and no ritual attention to enlightenment. According to Dominic Serra, associate professor of liturgy and sacramental theology at The Catholic University of America, “two seemingly opposite actions of purification and enlightenment work in concert to produce a single act of conversion.”⁵⁸ Moral conformity to Christ does not occur in a straight, unbroken line; rather, it occurs through “alternating waves of divine grace and human actions.”⁵⁹ During Lent, the elect are expected to be presented with “precious possessions: the symbol of faith and rule of prayer.”⁶⁰ It is the presentation of the Creed and the Our Father, made in the context of Lenten exorcism, that completes the enlightenment component of this period.⁶¹

This intended purpose of the period of purification and enlightenment applies for children as well as for adults. There are no adaptations for these presentation rites for

⁵⁷ Dominic E. Serra, “Exorcisms that Make Lent a Joy,” *Catechumenate: A Journal of Christian Initiation* 32, no. 2 (March 2010): 24.

⁵⁸Ibid., 26.

⁵⁹Ibid.

⁶⁰Ibid., 24.

⁶¹Ibid., 24-26.

children, and adapting them is not really necessary.⁶² It is better for the children of catechetical age to celebrate the presentation rites with the adults or as an age-specific cohort (following the directives provided for adults) than not to have access to the ritual presentations. Omitting these presentations in the period of purification and enlightenment renders the enlightenment aspect of spiritual formation for children of catechetical age both fragmented and incomplete. In one breath, the child is saying that he/she turns away from Satan⁶³ and in the next that he/she embraces belief in God. These statements evoke powerful images befitting proximate preparation for baptism.

The child is presented the Creed and the Our Father orally within the context of Liturgy of the Word, if not at Mass, with an assembly present. In this way, the Church continues an oral tradition in the presentations of passing on the tradition (Creed and Our Father) from “mouth to ear; from heart to heart.”⁶⁴ Such a ritual presentation makes clear that the Creed is integral to the life of every baptized Christian.⁶⁵ The presentation of the Creed

⁶²RCIA, no. 258: “The rites for the presentation for the Creed (nos. 157-162) and the Lord’s Prayer (nos. 178-183), adapted to the age of the children, may be incorporated.”

⁶³Given the intercessions and prayers, children will need an appropriate catechesis on sin, evil, Satan coupled with love, mercy and grace that counters and defeats the aforementioned. These themes would have been addressed earlier in the catechumenal process before and after the Rite of Acceptance to the Order of Catechumens; however, the period of purification and enlightenment is the appropriate time for the children to be formed in an intentional spiritual catechesis on the Lenten season and its retreat-like posture and experiences.

⁶⁴Michael E. Novak, “The Presentation of the Creed: A Significant Detail in the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults,” *Catechumenate: A Journal of Christian Initiation* 32, no. 2 (March 2010): 28-33.

⁶⁵*Ibid.*, 31.

also anticipates reciting it publicly prior to the profession of faith: that is, the *traditio* presumes a *reditio*.⁶⁶

In concert with the presentation of the Creed is the presentation of the Lord's Prayer. The child prepares to call God "Father" not just because God is creator, but because God will "recreate" the child through the waters of baptism. Serra explains that this adoption gathers the elect into the very life of the Trinity. Here the elect will be so identified with the Son that they, too, will call God "Father." Learning the words of the "Our Father" is not just about learning the "best prayer in the world;" it is an enlightenment about a new existence and relationship with the Trinity.⁶⁷ The structure for both presentation rites is within a Liturgy of the Word, with prescribed scripture readings, a homily, prayer and dismissal. The scriptures relate to the Creed and Our Father; there are no intercessions, and the prayer texts (prayers for continuing conversion) point to the coming baptism. The ritual action is minimal, with the elect coming forward to receive both the Creed and Lord's Prayer in the midst of the assembly, signifying the *traditio*. The practice in some communities of handing the elect printed copies of these texts has, perhaps, an unintended consequence of minimizing the power of the oral tradition. The Creed and Lord's Prayer are themselves the symbols, rich in meaning and pregnant with possibility for reflective, mystagogical catechesis. The Creed, symbol of faith, and the Our Father, rule of prayer, are tangible and intangible images that are expected to become fused with the identity of these new and very young catechumens.

⁶⁶Novak, "Presentation of the Creed," 33.

⁶⁷Serra, "Exorcisms that Make Lent a Joy," 26.

Preparatory Rites

Like the Presentations, the Preparatory Rites are important for a complete catechumenal formation of a child catechumen and require a little liturgical *savior faire* on the part of the pastor and catechetical leaders.⁶⁸ The preparatory rites may include the Lord's Prayer, if it has been deferred;⁶⁹ the recitation of the Creed;⁷⁰ and the Ephphetha Rite.⁷¹ The choosing of a baptismal name is not required, but is allowed.⁷² These rites are intended to be proximate preparation for the sacraments of initiation.⁷³ They were formerly detached from the Triduum and were part of one "marathon liturgy" for adult baptism when it was celebrated outside of Easter Vigil, as we know it, and with only a few people present. This practice changed with the restored catechumenate and the revision of the Easter Vigil. The baptismal rites were judiciously dispersed throughout the catechumenate with the intent to respond to the spiritual needs of the individuals. Some of these rituals have become the preparatory rites assigned to Holy Saturday prior to the Easter Vigil.⁷⁴

⁶⁸Paul Turner, "The Preparation Rites of Holy Saturday," *Catechumenate: A Journal of Christian Initiation* 28, no. 2 (March 2006): 3-4. The pieces of the preparatory rites are like a "jigsaw puzzle" according to Turner, who notes various scenarios and gives a model for ordering the ritual (*ibid.*, 8-9). See also RCIA, nos. 33.6-7.

⁶⁹RCIA, nos. 149, 178-80.

⁷⁰*Ibid.*, nos. 193-96.

⁷¹*Ibid.*, nos. 197-99.

⁷²*Ibid.*, nos. 200-202. See also no. 33.4 regarding the United States cultural context in terms of not giving a new name.

⁷³*Ibid.*, no. 185.

⁷⁴Turner, "Preparation Rites of Holy Saturday," 3.

Children benefit from these preparatory rites prior to full initiation when they are celebrated with adults who are also anticipating full initiation at the Easter Vigil. The presence of a community beyond parents and godparents is also important. The ordering of these rites is determined by particular circumstances. For example, if the recitation of the Creed and the Ephphetha Rite are both celebrated, then the Ephphetha Rite immediately precedes the “Prayer before Recitation.”⁷⁵ A model for structuring the order of the Preparatory Rites is suggested in the Rite: gathering with song; greeting; reading of the Word of God (Matthew 16:13-17, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God” or John 6:35, 63-71, “To whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life”); homily; and celebration of rites, for example ephphetha, recitation and concluding rite that includes a prayer of blessing and dismissal. This cluster of prayer, ritual action, symbols and images are rich fare for liturgical catechesis before the rites, through the rites, and after the rites.⁷⁶

Conclusion

The Penitential Rite (Scrutiny) is complicated by attempting to serve two different purposes in one ritual: repentance before baptism and reconciliation after baptism through the sacrament of penance. According to the intent of the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, the adapted Penitential Rite (Scrutiny) for children is more like the Scrutinies for adults in Part I than it is like the Penitential Rite (Scrutiny) for baptized adults in Part II, Chapter 4D. The

⁷⁵RCIA, nos. 186-94.

⁷⁶For an alternative model, see Turner, “Preparation Rites of Holy Saturday,” 8-9.

addition of the Rite of Penance is not included in the 1974 English translation of the original 1972 edition.⁷⁷ In fact, the adaptation as presented in the 1988 edition of the ritual text is more like a combined rite, which is an adaptation for the cultural context of the United States by the Bishops' Subcommittee on the Liturgy. One wonders why the Rite provides such a combined rite for the children of catechetical age, who are more likely to be confused than adults by the dual purpose in the Penitential Rite (Scrutiny), when the Bishops' Subcommittee on the Liturgy clearly denied a combined scrutiny rite for the adults. The same concerns raised about the suitability of the exorcism prayers noted in the scrutinies for adults are echoed in the adapted ritual for children of catechetical age. The intercessions and prayer texts would benefit greatly from additional adaptations to bring out more clearly the intent of the ritual for unbaptized children. The Minor Rites for this period are a necessary ritual element to ensure that the period of purification also contains ritual elements to effect enlightenment. Thus, even for children of catechetical age, the Presentations (Creed and Our Father) and Preparatory Rites should not be neglected. The Presentations and Preparatory Rites follow the Penitential Rite (Scrutiny) to ensure that the child elect is spiritually prepared (with both purification and enlightenment) as he/she approaches the baptismal waters and full initiation with confirmation and eucharist in the third ritual step. An analysis of the liturgical elements that deserve liturgical catechesis follows in Chapter Seven:

Analysis of the Rites, Part II, Chapter 1: Third Step.

⁷⁷United States Catholic Conference, "Rite of Initiation for Children of Catechetical Age—Scrutinies or Penitential Rites," in *The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults—Provisional Text* (Washington, DC: International Committee on English in the Liturgy, Inc., 1974), 108-113.

CHAPTER 7
ANALYSIS OF THE RITES,
PART II, CHAPTER 1
THIRD STEP:
SACRAMENTS OF INITIATION

Introduction

The purpose of the third step in the adapted rite, Sacraments of Initiation, is ordered toward full Christian initiation with the conferral of the sacraments of baptism, confirmation and eucharist at the Easter Vigil.¹ An analysis of the entire complex of rituals that make up the Easter Vigil (lighting of the fire, liturgy of the Word, sacraments of initiation, liturgy of the eucharist) is beyond the scope of this study. However, the Easter Vigil is the context and standard for analyzing the rites that constitute the third step in the adapted rite.² The Rite assumes that children will celebrate full initiation at the Easter Vigil, whether or not adults are present.

This ritual step once again marks a name change for the person—from elect to neophyte—or one who joins the ranks of the faithful.³ This change in canonical status is

¹RCIA, no. 304.

²See *Ibid.*, nos. 17, 23, 26, 31.

³See James H. Provost, “The Christian Faithful,” in *Code of Canon Law: A Text and Commentary*, prepared by the Canon Law Society of America, ed. James Coriden, Thomas Green, Donald Heintschel (New York/Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1985), 119-26, on the ordering of the *triplex munus Christi*, i.e., the priestly, prophetic, and royal office of Christ. Treating the rights and duties of all Christians, then those of lay persons, followed by the rights and functions of sacred ministers, was an intentional ordering. The threefold *munus* is

significant and deserving of liturgical catechesis before and following the ritual experience of full initiation. Such catechesis can have a lasting influence on how a young neophyte grows into the love and life-long embrace of being a disciple of Christ within the community of the faithful people of God.

Full initiation, however, remains a pastoral problem that deserves attention before proceeding to an analysis of the rites for liturgical elements that constitute liturgical catechesis in this third step, especially since withholding or delaying confirmation continues to occur in pastoral practice. This concern was identified as a problem in *Journey to the Fullness of Life*, a report of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops.⁴ The *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* (RCIA) is clear that the conferral of confirmation is to occur at the time of baptism,⁵ notwithstanding three pastoral options that introduce a level of ambiguity for pastoral ministers in the following paragraphs: RCIA, nos. 14 and 24 (postponing confirmation); RCIA, nos. 23 and 208 (conferring sacraments of initiation outside the usual time); and RCIA, nos. 12 and 207 (when the bishop confirms at this third step).

expressed in Canon 204.1: "The Christian faithful are those who, inasmuch as they have been incorporated in Christ through baptism, have been constituted as the people of God; for this reason, since they have become sharers in Christ's priestly, prophetic and royal office in their own manner, they are called to exercise the mission which God has entrusted to the Church to fulfill in the world, in accord with the consideration proper to each one." On the definition of "neophyte", see also Canon 1042.3: "traditionally understood as one who is [legitimately] baptized absolutely in the Catholic Church as an adult" (ibid., 731).

⁴See *Journey to the Fullness of Life*, 41, 49. See also John M. Huels, "Delaying Confirmation," in *The Catechumenate and the Law: A Pastoral and Canonical Commentary for the Church in the United States* (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 1994), 29-35.

⁵RCIA, nos. 253, 254, 256; National Statutes, nos. 14, 18, 19; *Code of Canon Law*, 852-83.

The options in RCIA, no. 14, refer to RCIA, no. 24: “In certain cases when there is a serious reason, confirmation may be postponed until near the end of the period of postbaptismal catechesis, for example, Pentecost Sunday.”⁶ There are two issues with this statement: the introduction of the term “serious reason” and the phrase “postponed until near the end of postbaptismal catechesis.”

Canon Law scholars clarify that serious reasons in the Rite refers to grave reasons for delaying confirmation in the Code of Canon Law. There are three such possibilities: unavailability of the proper minister for confirmation (i.e., a priest), danger of death, and lack of chrism.⁷ Furthermore, Canon 885.2 requires a priest to use the faculty to confirm that is given for this purpose: “A presbyter who has this faculty must use it for those in whose favor the faculty was granted.”⁸ Neither the Code nor the Rite grants license for a priest / pastor to delay or withhold confirmation of children of catechetical age for any other reasons.

The option noted in RCIA, no. 24, which allows postponing confirmation until Pentecost at the end of the period of mystagogy, is curious. It introduces no small degree of confusion for those not familiar with the background on how the Rite was developed. Canon

⁶See RCIA, nos. 24, 249. For a thorough discussion on why not conferring confirmation is contrary to the intent of the RCIA and Canon Law, see Steven Francis Callahan, “Canonical Considerations on the Requirement to Confirm Immediately Children of Catechetical Age Who Are Baptized or Received into the Church” (J.C.L. diss. The Catholic University of America, 1994): 26-28. This option is rooted in Canon 866, which requires that adults (and therefore children of catechetical age) be confirmed immediately after being baptized and that they also receive first eucharist at the same celebration. See also Canon 852.1: “Unless a grave reason prevents it, an adult who is baptized is to be confirmed immediately after baptism and participate in the celebration of the Eucharist, also receiving Communion.

⁷Callahan, “Canonical Considerations,” 26-28. See also John Huels, *Disputed Questions in the Liturgy Today* (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 1983), 13; Paul Turner, *Confirmation: The Baby in Solomon’s Court* (New York/Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1993), 14; and Frederick McManus, “Canons and Commentary on the Sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation,” in *The Code of Canon Law: A Text and Commentary*, 625.

⁸McManus, “Canons and Commentary on the Sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation,” 637.

Lawyer S. Callahan's thorough analysis of *Coetus* 22 (study group for the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*) and *Coetus* 20 (study group for the *Rite of Confirmation*) sheds light on the inclusion of the feast of Pentecost in the promulgated Rite. Both study groups, Callahan notes, were in contact with each other as the rites were being developed. In fact, working from the principle of preserving the unity and sequence of the initiation sacraments, *Coetus* 22 responded unfavorably to a proposal that arose during the experimentation phase with adults that confirmation be delayed so that it concluded the period of mystagogy. This proposal was rejected on the basis that the unity and sequence of the sacraments would be compromised.⁹ It has been argued that a possible error in the final editing or an intentional alteration of the text accounts for the reference to delaying confirmation until Pentecost in the promulgated text of the RCIA.¹⁰ Based on his analysis of *Coetus* 22, Callahan advances that

[i]n rejecting the proposal to delay confirmation, the *Coetus* recognized the appropriateness of some type of liturgical celebration with the neophytes to conclude the period of mystagogy. However, they did not intend that such a celebration would include confirmation.¹¹

RCIA, nos. 23 and 208, accommodate celebrating full initiation outside the usual time. This deferral in no way diminishes the vision of the unity and sequence of the

⁹Callahan, "Canonical Considerations," 8-17.

¹⁰Ibid., 8-18. See also Michael Balhoff, *The Legal Interrelatedness of the Sacraments of Initiation: New Canonical Developments in the Latin Rite from Vatican II to the 1983 Code of Canon Law* [Legal Interrelatedness], Canon Law Studies 511 (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1984), 139-42. The possible misunderstanding could have occurred in confusing the suggestion to delay postbaptismal anointing in the baptismal rite with delaying confirmation to the end of mystagogy. However, RCIA, no. 249, states that "to close the period of postbaptismal catechesis, some sort of celebration should be held at the end of the Easter season near Pentecost Sunday."

¹¹Callahan, "Canonical Considerations," 18. An example of such a celebration as suggested in RCIA, no. 249, is not given.

sacraments of initiation or the primacy of the Easter Vigil as the usual time for full initiation. Rather than giving license to ignore the primacy of full initiation at the “usual time” (that is, at the Easter Vigil), these paragraphs communicate a pastoral sensitivity and approach to candidates whose individual circumstances may be challenging. For example, when because serious illness or the death of a family member occurs, disrupting life’s calendared events, it is necessary to confer full initiation “outside the usual time.” However, even in this unusual circumstance, the faculty that the priest receives from Canon Law to confirm is not restricted to an occasion like the Easter Vigil.¹²

The reference to age fourteen in RCIA, nos. 12 and 207, introduces a challenge regarding conferral of these sacraments by the bishop. No one expects the bishop to appear at each Easter Vigil in a diocese to confirm those who are children of catechetical age and also fourteen years old. However, introducing the option for the bishop to confirm those who are fourteen years of age or older (RCIA, nos. 12 and 207) may suggest that delaying confirmation until the annual or biannual visit of the bishop for confirmation in the parish is a viable option that can override the unity and the sequence of the initiation sacraments. Paul Turner, pastor and liturgical theologian, reminds those seeking an explanation for including these paragraphs that the origins of this instruction seem to come from the 1917 Code of Canon Law, not the current 1983 Code. He notes that the age of fourteen is connected with adulthood that is traceable to Roman law, which set adulthood at the onset of puberty (about age fourteen). Therefore, the Rite contains two conflicting notions on adulthood: 1) at the age

¹²Paul Turner, “Envy and the Confirmation of Children of Catechetical Age,” *Catechumenate: A Journal of Christian Initiation* 27, no. 2 (March 2005): 3.

of discretion or catechetical age, that is, about age seven (which is also the age of reason when one is considered an adult in the 1983 Code), and 2) at the age of puberty, that is, age fourteen (previously considered the age of adulthood in the 1917 Code). This conflict can only be resolved by adverting to the theology of the unity and sequence of the sacraments of initiation.¹³ The conflict is also informed by RCIA, no. 14, and Canon 884.1 in that there is “a preference for maintaining the unity of the sacraments of initiation instead of requiring the bishop to be the minister of confirmation.”¹⁴

Do these pastoral options, then, suggest a perceived underlying tension between a theology for infant baptism and the initiation theology presented in the RCIA? Based on his read of the original schemas for the *Coetus*, S. Callahan says no. He highlights that *Coetus 22* consistently referred to adult baptism as the starting point for the theology of the initiation sacraments and not the rite of infant baptism. Though the RCIA was promulgated after the revised rite of infant baptism, the reform of the rite for the baptism of children (infants) was to have its roots in the adult form of the rite from which it derived.¹⁵ It is undeniable that the tensions that exist in current pastoral practice, which is a concern in this study, can be traced to the concerns that were originally considered by *Coetus 22*, the working group that developed the adult initiatory rite.

¹³Paul Turner, *Confirmation: The Baby in Solomon's Court* (New York/Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1993), 20.

¹⁴Callahan, “Canonical Considerations,” 13. See also “Minister of Confirmation,” *Bishops' Committee on the Liturgy Newsletter* 11 (1975): 457.

¹⁵Callahan, “Canonical Considerations,” 14-16.

Liturgist Catherine Vincie presents a different perspective to the same question of whether there are competing theologies inherent in the Rite. Based on her analysis of the General Introduction (*Praenotanda*) (GI) and the “Introduction” to the Rite (IR), she identifies a perceived theological disconnect between the two introductions, even though IR was part of the ritual promulgated in 1972. Since the 1988 edition of the Rite is the only text to which most pastoral ministers have access, her analysis is worthy of consideration, although it has been substantially countered by Callahan and Turner.

The GI, composed in 1968, provides doctrinal foundations for the Rite rather than pastoral guidelines for its implementation. As such, Vincie deduces that it reveals a theological predilection for a theology of baptism founded in the infant rite of baptism presented in the pre-Vatican II Roman Ritual. Using this theological lens, the GI presents a nearly exclusive treatment of baptism that fails to link confirmation and eucharist to baptism in the same integrated way in which these three sacraments of initiation are connected and presented in the IR. The IR, composed as part of the ritual promulgated in 1972, was shaped by the concern for pastoral implementation and ritual celebration. It presents an integrated and comprehensive understanding of baptism, confirmation and eucharist as Christian initiation.¹⁶

The GI begins, “In the sacraments of Christian initiation we are freed from the power of darkness and joined to Christ . . . confirmation makes us more completely the image of the Lord and fills us with the Holy Spirit . . . coming to the table of the eucharist, we eat the flesh

¹⁶See Catherine Vincie, “The Liturgical Assembly in the Magisterial and Theological Literature and in the 1988 *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*” (Ph.D. diss., The Catholic University of America, 1990), 268-75.

and drink the blood of the Son of Man so that we may have eternal life . . .”¹⁷ The GI continues that the three sacraments of Christian initiation “closely combine” to accomplish their ends. After GI, no. 2, in which this statement occurs, the rest of the *Praenotanda* addresses the Dignity of Baptism, Offices and Ministries of Baptism, Requirements for the Celebration of Baptism, Adaptations by the Conferences of Bishops and Adaptations by the Minister of Baptism. The only other reference to confirmation in the GI concerns the sacramental status of godparents and the obligation to assure that godparents have been fully initiated, that is, that they have received confirmation, before being so named.¹⁸

The IR presents an initiation theology that gives adult initiation priority and situates Christian initiation within the divine-human dynamic of conversion to Jesus Christ.¹⁹ Even so, within this context of the unity and sequence of the three sacraments of initiation, conversion is necessary for children of catechetical age. Such conversion, appropriate to the age and stage of faith development of these children, is clearly facilitated by the complement of ritual steps that constitute the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*.

The IR embraces the “markedly paschal character” of the initiation process with the Easter Vigil “regarded as the proper time for the sacraments of initiation.”²⁰ At the same time, this “Introduction” acknowledges pastoral accommodations for initiation apart from the

¹⁷General Introduction (*Praenotanda*) to the RCIA, no. 1, xiv.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, no. 10.3, xvi.

¹⁹RCIA, nos. 1, 9.

²⁰*Ibid.*, nos. 8, 17, 23, 26, 207, 304, 306; National Statutes, nos. 15, 18, 21.

Easter Vigil.²¹ Yet, the foundational theology for Christian initiation in IR intends to guide the pastoral decisions relevant to the adapted rite for children. The directives found in the adapted rite, too, allow for options (which have been explicated above) for what should be rare occasions when the initiation sacraments are not celebrated at the Easter Vigil.²²

Unfortunately, this pastoral accommodation is not always understood within the context of rare occasions, a comprehensive understanding of Part I of the Rite, or a clear understanding of the integral unity and sequence of the sacraments of initiation when navigating real-life pastoral situations with children of catechetical age. Interpreted as license for pastoral ministers to “adapt” by celebrating full initiation outside of the primacy of the Easter Vigil and the “normative character of the unity and sequence of the sacraments of initiation,”²³ some pastoral decisions revert to the practice of separating confirmation from baptism, not merely by several weeks from Easter to Pentecost, as provided in the Rite,²⁴ but by several years, so that these children can celebrate confirmation with the adolescent peers.²⁵ Such a decision in the name of pastoral sensitivity is not consistent with the underlying theology or intent of the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* adapted for children.

²¹RCIA, nos. 14, 23, 24, 208.

²²Ibid., nos. 257, 306.

²³See Callahan, “Canonical Considerations,” v.

²⁴RCIA, nos. 24, 249.

²⁵See Turner, “Envy and the Confirmation of Children of Catechetical Age,” 2-10.

Unnecessarily unhinging confirmation from baptism limits the ritual formation for children of catechetical age, thereby undercutting their ritual formation according to the catechumenal process. On a positive note, these pastoral accommodations could be interpreted as providing for pastoral options to address future ambiguous situations that could neither be defined nor predicted at the outset. On the other hand, it could also be interpreted as an intentional subversion of the renewal of sacramental practice emerging from the liturgical reform of Vatican Council II and the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*.²⁶ The degree to which both the Rite and the *Code of Canon Law* have been set aside in favor of previous usual and customary practice is troubling.

The efforts to restore in practice the unity and order of the Christian initiation sacraments (baptism, confirmation, and eucharist) began to develop during the initial implementation of the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*.²⁷ At this point in history, it is fair to assume that the Rite allows for the adult rite and its adaptations to be implemented in multiple circumstances, including occasions when baptism takes place outside the Easter Vigil. Granting the faculty to confirm these children of catechetical age (whether at the

²⁶See RCIA, no. 13: "Priests, in addition to their usual ministry for any celebration of baptism, confirmation, and the eucharist, have a responsibility . . . to be diligent in the correct celebration and adaptation of the rites throughout the entire course of Christian initiation (See no. 35)."

²⁷Several dioceses adopted the restored order only to reset the ritual clock to the default position inherent in the theology for the rite of infant baptism. The Dioceses of Sacramento and St. Paul-Minneapolis were among the first to adopt the restored order and then revert to an interrupted sequencing of the sacraments of initiation. The Diocese of Portland, Maine, adopted the restored order in 1997 under Bishop Joseph J. Gerry, O.S.B. While the diocese retains this practice, the emergence of considerations for strengthening adolescent catechesis using confirmation as a centerpiece pulls strongly in the direction of undoing the restored order practice. See Joseph J. Gerry, "Confirmation: A Sacrament of Initiation. A Pastoral Letter on the Celebration of Confirmation and First Communion," 21 September 1997.

Easter Vigil or at another time) was important enough for it to be provided for in the revised Code of Canon Law. Furthermore, the unity and sequence of the sacraments of initiation are echoed not only in the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, but also in the *Rite of Confirmation*.²⁸ The *Catechism* also clearly indicates the important connection between baptism and confirmation: “By the sacrament of Confirmation, [the baptized] are more perfectly bound to the Church and are enriched with a special strength of the Holy Spirit.”²⁹ Notwithstanding pastoral situations that call for those rare occasions when confirmation is delayed or full initiation does not occur at the Easter Vigil, the theology that grounds the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* and its adaptations for children of catechetical age is the unity and sequence of the three sacraments of initiation.

The Adapted Third Step for Children of Catechetical Age:

While the Rite is clear that the adapted rite, third step, can be used in several circumstances of initiation, it is also clear that the Easter Vigil is the preferred time (RCIA, no. 304). It is noteworthy that *Rite of Baptism for Children*, no. 9, also demonstrates the primacy of the Easter Vigil for the baptism of infants. However, one needs to ask, is the adapted rite (third step) really intended for the Easter Vigil, since the Litany of the Saints is omitted? Here the Rite is ambiguous. According to Turner:

If you have only children to be initiated at the Vigil, one would start at RCIA 309, because it is the liturgy of the Church. But if one argues that the Vigil includes the

²⁸See *Rite of Confirmation*, no. 7b.

²⁹*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 1285.

litany of the saints when water is to be blessed (See Roman Missal III), then the litany is included. Some presiders would be tempted to omit the litany because RCIA 309 is the adapted baptismal liturgy for children, and the ritual provided would logically be followed at such a Vigil.³⁰

The RCIA is not the primary text for all aspects of the Easter Vigil: for that, one needs to consult the Roman Missal. If there are only children of catechetical age to celebrate this third ritual step, full initiation that honors the unity and sequence of the sacraments should be celebrated at the Easter Vigil as the first choice. Other options, depending on circumstances, are on Easter Sunday or at another time, as determined by circumstances, including the Feast of Pentecost.

Structure of the Rite

The structure of the adapted rite includes the Celebration of Baptism, Celebration of Confirmation, and Liturgy of the Eucharist. The adapted ritual corresponds substantively to the third step in Part I with two distinctions: 1) the litany of the saints is omitted, and 2) the community's profession of faith occurs before the children's profession of faith. In Part I, the profession of faith for the community is situated later in the ritual after the candidates' profession of faith and confirmation.

³⁰Paul Turner, interview by author on the adapted third step for children, 25 July 2010.

Celebration of Baptism

The Celebration of Baptism includes a Presentation of the Candidates before the Invitation to Prayer³¹ and Prayer over the Water, which can be a blessing of the water for the first time or it could be a prayer of Thanksgiving over the Water, if the water has already been blessed.³² The Community's Profession of Faith may follow the Prayer over the Water and precede the Children's Profession of Faith, if circumstances are appropriate.³³

The Children's Profession of Faith begins with an address from the presider regarding their "long time in preparation" and acknowledging their request to be baptized. The candidates are instructed that "Before you are baptized, reject Satan and profess your faith here in the presence of God's Church."³⁴ Instructional catechesis about Satan will be a necessary component in the liturgical catechesis that prepares for the third step because the name of the deceiver (Satan) is not mentioned in the Penitential Rite (Scrutiny), as currently provided in the Rite. The Rite is clear that the renunciation of Satan is explicit in the renunciation of sin. RCIA, no. 33.8, explains that the formularies for renunciation "should not be adapted."³⁵ The tripartite Renunciation of Sin may be followed by an optional Anointing with the Oil of Catechumens (if this has not been celebrated at another time).³⁶

³¹RCIA, no. 310.

³²Ibid., no. 311, Form A or Form B.

³³Ibid., no. 312.

³⁴Ibid., no. 313. Form A or Form B.

³⁵Ibid. See also no. 33.8: "The National Conference of Catholic Bishops has established as the norm in the dioceses of the United States that the formularies of renunciation should not be adapted. But for those cases where certain catechumens may be from cultures in which false worship is widespread it has approved leaving

Turner notes that one of the changes in the liturgies of initiation in the *Missale Romanum* (Third Edition) relates to the anointings. If the anointing of the elect was not done on Holy Saturday morning, it is to occur between the renunciations and the profession of faith at the liturgies of initiation, third step. This joining of the anointing with the renunciations joins the oil of catechumens with its exorcistic function. It is presumed that the elect have been anointed during the catechumenal process. The anointing may be repeated, for oil seals exorcisms. Following the renunciations, the anointing completes the work of the scrutinies: evil is driven out and the elect are “sealed tight” before rebirth in the rush of baptismal waters.³⁷

The specific Profession of Faith³⁸ in the adapted rite, a three-part formulary for belief in God, belief in Jesus Christ, and belief in the Holy Spirit, immediately precedes the baptism. This profession of faith may be delivered individually or as a group, if there are a great many children to be baptized. The Explanatory Rites following the Profession of Faith and Baptism may include an optional Anointing after Baptism and an optional Clothing with a Baptismal Garment. While the anointing after baptism is given only if the confirmation of those baptized is separated from their baptism,³⁹ the concluding explanatory rite (that is, the

to the discretion of the diocesan bishop this matter of making more specific and detailed the formularies of renunciation in the rite of acceptance into the order of catechumens and in the celebration of baptism.”

³⁶RCIA, no. 315.

³⁷Paul Turner, “The Christian Initiation Masses in the *Missale Romanum*,” *Catechumenate: A Journal of Christian Initiation* 26, no. 2 (March 2004): 8.

³⁸RCIA, no. 316.

³⁹Ibid., no. 319.

Presentation of a Lighted Candle) is not optional. This part of the structure closes the Celebration of Baptism in the Rite.

Celebration of Confirmation

The Celebration of Confirmation immediately follows baptism according to the ritual structure. Baptism may occur by immersion (option A), in which arrangements for changing into dry clothes is accommodated, or by pouring of water (option B). In either case, confirmation follows baptism and begins with an invitation to share in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit that strengthens the candidates in becoming more like Christ. Laying on of Hands is then followed by an Anointing with Chrism, which seals baptism and confers the sacrament of confirmation.⁴⁰

Liturgy of the Eucharist

The Liturgy of the Eucharist begins with the general intercessions and the procession of the gifts to the altar, in which the new initiates (neophytes) may participate along with their parents and godparents. Eucharistic Prayers I, II, or III with special interpolations from the Roman Missal, the ritual Masses, “Christian Initiation: Baptism” may be used. If the ritual occurs outside of the Easter Vigil, then Eucharistic Prayer IV, with its special interpolations, indicated in the same ritual Masses, may also be used.⁴¹ Communion is

⁴⁰Gerard Austin, “The New Rite of Confirmation,” *The Rite of Confirmation: Anointing with the Spirit* (New York: Pueblo Publishing Company, 1985), 41-64.

⁴¹Turner, interview with author.

received under both kinds (bread and wine) for the neophytes. In fact, everyone in the assembly may receive under both kinds. A special reminder from the presider concerning the preeminence of the eucharist, “the climax and center of the whole Christian life,” may precede “This is the Lamb of God.” These remarks from the presider constitute instructive liturgical catechesis within the ritual celebration. If any children of catechetical age who have been previously baptized are to receive communion for the first time with the newly baptized and confirmed children, they should be acknowledged and also receive communion under both kinds.⁴²

The liturgical catechesis based on the structure needs to reference previous liturgical catechesis concerning the flow of ritual, thereby helping children (and their godparents and parents) enter into this more robust ritual in an unencumbered manner. If the children are in need of an expanded vocabulary based on the ritual structure, then one begins with new words that may be part of the ritual experience. When considering a liturgical catechesis for the third step, one needs to recall that the entire ritual process has been building toward full initiation and the children should have acquired a certain liturgical *savoir faire* at this point, if the liturgical catechesis has been consistent and delivered well.

⁴²RCIA, no. 329.

Scripture Readings

The scripture readings, determined by the day within the liturgical season that the third step is celebrated, frame the rite and the liturgical catechesis that flows from the ritual. RCIA, no. 306, is worth noting:

If the sacraments of initiation are celebrated at a time other than the Easter Vigil or Easter Sunday, the Mass of the day or one of the ritual Masses in the Roman Missal, “Christian Initiation: Baptism” is used. The readings are chosen from those given in the Lectionary for Mass, “Celebration of the Sacraments of Initiation apart from the Easter Vigil”; but the readings for the Sunday or feast on which the celebration takes place may be used instead.

In other words, the scripture readings are chosen to be appropriate for the mass in question. The complement of nine readings is appropriately used at the Easter Vigil, just as the appropriate Sunday readings are used on Easter Sunday. If initiation, as this third step, takes place at a mass during Ordinary Time, then the readings for the Ritual Masses of Baptism may be used. The presiding celebrant consults the Introduction to the Lectionary for Mass for guidance.⁴³

Regarding the delivery of an appropriate liturgical catechesis using any of the possible reading options as the frame for the ritual step, the catechist will need to work with the presider / pastor regarding the time of year that the children will be fully initiated and then prepare for an appropriate liturgical catechesis based on the readings. The scripture readings for the Easter Vigil are called “the fundamental element” because they are “that on which everything else is built.”⁴⁴ The nine readings for the Easter Vigil consist of seven

⁴³Turner, interview with author.

⁴⁴Gabe Huck, *The Three Days* (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 1992), 116.

readings from the Old Testament (Gn. 1:1-2:2; Gn. 22:1-18; Ex. 14:15-15:1; Is. 54:5-14; Is. 1-11; Bar. 3:9-15, 32-4, 4; Ez. 36:16-28) plus the epistle from Rom. 6:3-11 and, depending upon the year, either the gospel from Mt. 28:1-10, Mk 16:1-7, or Lk 24:1-2.⁴⁵ The story of our salvation unfolds in a rhythmical pattern of listening and quiet reflection, aided by psalmody, that leads to prayer.⁴⁶ The readings for Easter Sunday are three: Acts 10:34, 37-43; epistle from Col. 3:1-4; and the gospel from Jn. 20:1-9.⁴⁷ The readings for Pentecost Sunday are Acts 2:1-11; depending upon the year, either the epistle from 1 Cor. 12:3-7, 12-13, Gal. 5:16-25, or Rom. 8:8-17; and the gospel, again depending upon the year, from Jn. 20:19-23, Jn. 15:26-27; 16:12-15, or Jn. 14:15-16, 23b-26.⁴⁸ An analysis of each of the possible options above or of other scriptural options that could be possible for this third step is beyond the scope of this study. What is important is that a catechist needs to be attentive to the time of year when initiation occurs and know the readings that are appropriate to each circumstance in order to deliver an appropriate liturgical catechesis following full initiation. For example, the first three Old Testament readings at the Vigil in the current lectionary are historical and the next four are prophetic.⁴⁹ Even a limited instructional liturgical catechesis on the types of readings selected helps a child neophyte learn to listen with ears that are

⁴⁵See *Lectionary for Mass for Use in the Dioceses of the United States* (Chicago, IL: Liturgy Training Publications, 2002), no. 41ABC.

⁴⁶Huck, *The Three Days*, 117.

⁴⁷See *Lectionary for Mass*, no. 42ABC.

⁴⁸See *Ibid.*, nos. 63A, 63B, 63C.

⁴⁹Michael H. Marchal, "The Structure of the Readings at Easter Vigil," *Catechumenate: A Journal of Christian Initiation* 25, no. 6 (November 2003): 2-7.

primed to receive the message contained and to listen attentively to the homily as the first point of instruction in breaking open the word. A reflective, mystagogical liturgical catechesis based on all or even a select few of these scriptures is rich with possibilities. The overarching and recurring themes of God's everlasting love for humankind, our salvation rooted in Christ Jesus, and incorporation into the Body of Christ are concepts that the children can comprehend, apprehend and learn to revisit with new eyes and ears based on new experiences. Children learn through such liturgical catechesis that this good news is meant for sharing with others.

Intercessions

The intercessions are constructed locally; therefore, an analysis of these Prayers of the Faithful is not possible here. Two points are worth consideration, however, regarding liturgical catechesis based on the intercessions. First, if the catechumenal process has been followed with integrity and the catechumens have been dismissed for ritual catechesis following the Liturgy of the Word Sunday after Sunday, then this will indeed be the first time that they will have the opportunity to exercise their right as a member of the faithful to join in these intercessions at liturgy, a key point related to joining the ranks of the faithful that deserves appropriate liturgical catechesis. Children can reflect on what it means to be part of the Body of Christ as the faithful, and what it means to pray in community for the needs of others. Children can also consider and appreciate how these intercessions reinforce the Church's social teachings. Through reflective, mystagogical liturgical catechesis they acquire

a habit of thinking of, praying for, and actively helping others in need. Even children who are still centered on self can begin to develop such habits that lead to a change in attitude and behavior.

Second, liturgical catechesis can alert children to the order for constructing these intercessions. A catechist needs to understand how these intercessions are constructed and examine them in advance so that an appropriate mystagogical, reflective liturgical catechesis can help the children become attuned to how to listen and join in these prayers. The intercessions begin with the universal or macro level and move to the particular or micro level of concern. The prayers progress from those who are far away geographically and perhaps not in our immediate sphere of influence to those whose needs are known to us and who may live in close proximity. One prays for the Church and its leaders, the pope, bishops, pastors and those in ministry on behalf of the gospel. One prays for the needs of the world, for an end to war, for those who suffer due to natural disasters. The assembly also prays for the newly initiated, that they will stay faithful to Christ and the Church. Through these intercessions, the children begin to adopt the stance of being a Christian in the world. They learn to see, hear and attend to the needs of others: the universal church; the world; the local faith community (those who are newly incorporated into the Church through baptism, those who are sick, and those who have died); and the local civic community (those who are unemployed or homeless). The children also experience what it is like to pray in the silence of the heart for personal needs and to hear members of the faithful voice a special prayer for

someone close to them who is in need. In this way they are groomed to give praise and honor to God through liturgy and also develop a habit of praying for others in the context of liturgy.

Prayer Texts

In the Celebration of Baptism, five required prayers deserve attention: Prayer over the Water⁵⁰ or Thanksgiving over the Water Already Blessed,⁵¹ the Renunciation of Sin,⁵² Profession of Faith,⁵³ Prayer of Baptism,⁵⁴ and Prayer for the Presentation of a Lighted Candle.⁵⁵ Three optional prayers may also be used: Anointing with the Oil of Catechumens,⁵⁶ Prayer of Anointing after Baptism,⁵⁷ Prayer for Clothing with a Baptismal Garment.⁵⁸

The repetition of the trinitarian formula for prayer, addressing the prayer to God, through the Son, in the power of the Holy Spirit, makes liturgical catechesis on the Trinity much more accessible to the children who will hear and experience these prayers in the Blessing of the Water and Prayer of Thanksgiving Over the Water Already Blessed; the

⁵⁰RCIA, no. 311, Form A.

⁵¹Ibid., Form B.

⁵²Ibid., no. 314.

⁵³Ibid., no. 316.

⁵⁴Ibid., no. 217.

⁵⁵Ibid., no. 321.

⁵⁶Ibid., no. 315.

⁵⁷Ibid., no. 319.

⁵⁸Ibid., no. 320.

Community's profession of faith; the children's profession of faith; the baptism "in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit;" and, if used, the prayer for Anointing after Baptism. Through liturgical catechesis following the third step, the children can recall that this trinitarian formula echoes the first time the catechumens received the sign of the cross at the Rite of Acceptance in the Order of Catechumens.

The Blessing of the Water is one of the most crucial components of the baptismal ritual. It is the moment in the rite where liturgical reform passes over into liturgical renewal.⁵⁹ According to liturgical theologian, David Power, the blessing of the water in the course of the Easter Vigil "completes the scriptural proclamation and derives its own evocative power from its integration of scriptural imagery and type."⁶⁰ He explains that the traditional structure of blessing is maintained by combining

an act of thanksgiving to God for creative and salvific action with prayer for sanctification of the element to be used, couched preferably in the form of an epiclesis or prayer for the coming of the Spirit. It makes clear the sacramental quality of elements blessed, that is their relation to the sanctification of the persons who take part in the ritual of their use.⁶¹

The concept of blessing alerts us to the fact that God blesses us, so we bless God and all those material things that we use in order to glorify God and sanctify humankind. Gifts from

⁵⁹Michael H. Marchal, "'Make Holy This Water': The Role of the Water Blessing in Christian Initiation," *Catechumenate: A Journal of Christian Initiation* 23, no. 1 (January 2001): 34-35.

⁶⁰David Power, "Blessing of the Baptismal Water," in *Commentaries: Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, ed. James A. Wilde (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 1988), 91.

⁶¹*Ibid.*, "Blessing of the Baptismal Water," 92.

God deserve praise from us, and so we “hallow” the things of the earth that we use in the process of praising God.⁶²

The blessing mirrors the scriptural themes for the Easter Vigil: water as gift, spirit hovering over the waters of creation, waters of the great flood, waters of the Red Sea, waters for baptizing Jesus in the Jordan, water with blood flowing from the side of Christ, dying and rising with Christ, and the command to spread the good news, to become an evangelizer.⁶³ The prayer concludes by calling on the power of the Holy Spirit to unseal the water for the purpose of baptism:

We ask you, Father, with your Son
to send the Holy Spirit upon the waters of this font.
May all who are buried with Christ in the death of baptism
rise also with him to newness of life.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.
R. Amen.⁶⁴

No other element in the rite has been afforded such ceremonial qualities as has the Blessing of the Water. It has been set to music and given specific accompanying ritual gestures.

While the Prayer for the Renunciation of Sin and Presentation of a Lighted Candle do not invoke the Trinity in this same way as the Blessing of the Water, these two prayers are essential and specific. The first may need specific liturgical catechesis, as the Renunciation of Sin incorporates the language of “sin,” “Satan,” and “evil.” Unless the children experienced the Scrutiny Rites with the adults on the third, fourth and fifth Sundays of Lent,

⁶²Marchal, “Make Holy This Water,” 34.

⁶³Power, “Blessing of the Baptismal Water,” 93.

⁶⁴RCIA, no. 311.

or the intercessions and prayers of exorcism in the adapted Penitential Rite (Scrutiny) are further adapted to include these words and concepts in age appropriate ways, the message that this prayer is meant to convey may be less than clear. Prior instructive liturgical catechesis concerning the content of this prayer is warranted. Furthermore, mystagogical, reflective liturgical catechesis is essential to help the children make the appropriate connections. The prayer for the Presentation of a Lighted Candle is more easily understood in the context of a tangible object such as a candle and fire. Liturgical catechesis that precedes and follows this prayer will necessarily focus on Christ as our light.

The three optional prayers (Anointing with the Oil of Catechumens, Prayer of Anointing after Baptism, and Prayer for Clothing with a Baptismal Garment) are a source of liturgical catechesis. The Clothing with a Baptismal Garment follows the optional Anointing after Baptism, but here it is treated first. If the children are baptized by full immersion (or submersion), this white garment (or a garment of another color that is more suited to local custom) expresses the reality that the children have been washed clean of sin in the waters of baptism. The garment is literally “put on.” The prayer clearly distinguishes the neophyte as one newly baptized who is a “new creation” in Christ, having “clothed yourself in Christ.”⁶⁵ Liturgical catechesis around the baptismal garment may include referring to it as a sign of everlasting life. Further, the Church gives us an ongoing means to keep the “baptismal garment” unstained through the eucharist and the sacrament of penance.

⁶⁵RCIA, no. 321.

The optional Prayer for Anointing with the Oil of Catechumens recalls that the oil of salvation is given in the name of Christ our Savior. A more robust prayer that accompanies the optional Anointing after Baptism incorporates the trinitarian formula and is used only if the confirmation of those just baptized is separated from their baptism.⁶⁶ The prayer that accompanies this anointing refers back to baptism and new life through water and the Holy Spirit.

The prayer with anointing that is essential to maintain the unity and sequence of the sacraments of initiation is for Confirmation. The celebration of the sacrament of Confirmation begins with the trinitarian prayer for Laying on of Hands, which calls for an outpouring of the gifts of the Holy Spirit:

Give them the spirit of wisdom and understanding,
the spirit of right judgment and courage,
the spirit of knowledge and reverence.
Fill them with the spirit of wonder and awe in your presence.⁶⁷

The prayer accompanying the Anointing with the Chrism with a cross on the forehead is direct and unambiguous:

N., be sealed with the Gift of the Holy Spirit.⁶⁸

Having already experienced liturgical catechesis based on the uses of oil in the Anointing with the Oil of Catechumens during the catechumenate and in the adapted Penitential Rite (Scrutiny), as well as its possible use in the Preparatory Rites on Holy Saturday morning, the

⁶⁶RCIA, no. 319.

⁶⁷Ibid., no. 325.

⁶⁸Ibid., no. 326.

children will already be familiar with the healing and strengthening properties associated with oil. Such familiarity is a bonus in building a deeper foundation for the role of anointing in the church throughout the life-cycle.

In this context, liturgical catechesis based on the Anointing with the Oil of Chrism for Confirmation is also more easily delivered and understood. Anointing associated with Confirmation calls upon the Holy Spirit in a special way and seals the gift of the Holy Spirit given at baptism.⁶⁹ The liturgical catechesis for confirmation will distinguish between and among the various anointings the children have received. It would be advantageous to recall with the children each of the prayers that have accompanied the anointings so that children better apprehend what they have undergone with regard to anointing with oil. It also affords expanded liturgical catechesis on the Holy Spirit.

Although not part of the ritual text, an analysis of the prayers associated with the liturgy of the Eucharist would be remiss if it did not give due attention to the eucharistic prayer. The eucharistic prayer consists of thanksgiving (i.e., preface); acclamation (i.e., *Sanctus*); epiclesis (i.e., call on God's power to consecrate gifts of human hands and transform us as well); institution narrative (i.e., consecration); anamnesis (i.e., memorial acclamation); offering (i.e., "May all who share in the body and blood . . ."); intercessions (i.e., for the Church, the pope, the bishops, the dead, and the community); and final doxology

⁶⁹See Gerard Austin, *The Rite of Confirmation: Anointing with the Spirit*. See also Diana Dudoit Raiche, *Confirmation: Anointed and Sealed with the Spirit, A Journal for Younger Candidates* (Denver, CO: Living the Good News, 1997).

(i.e., Amen).⁷⁰ The principles for catechesis on the eucharistic prayer help to inform the kind of liturgical catechesis that children can appreciate. These principles include 1) unity, 2) thanksgiving and praise, 3) Christ's action in and through the community, 4) the response of the community to God's call, and 5) memorial or remembrance of all that Christ has done for us.⁷¹

Once children have the language to name what is going on in the eucharistic prayer, they learn to recognize the elements of the eucharist prayer through experience. Children need to know that the eucharistic prayer is the heart of the liturgy. Provided with an appropriate but uncomplicated liturgical catechesis on its main components, the children can listen for these components instead of getting lost in a sea of words during Mass. The eucharistic prayer is ordered toward praise and thanksgiving to God for all he has done for us in the power of the Holy Spirit. The prayers are Christocentric and Trinitarian, and children can be primed to listen for addresses to Christ and the Holy Spirit and taught the appropriate responses in dialogue with the presider through liturgical catechesis.

First, the principle of unity in the Eucharistic prayer is made manifest through the musical setting, which literally moves the prayer forward as an integral whole. Thanksgiving and praise, a second principle, are a continual song that runs throughout the prayer: "We give you thanks and praise." The presider prays (or sometimes sings) this eucharistic prayer in dialogue with the assembly and in union with the action of Christ, the third principle. In

⁷⁰James Dallen, "The Congregation's Share in the Eucharist Prayer," in *Living Bread. Saving Cup*, ed. Kevin Seasoltz (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1982, repr. 1987), 113-25.

⁷¹This analysis is based on Course 780: Liturgical Catechesis at The Catholic University of America with Dr. Catherine Dooley, O.P.

earlier liturgical catechesis, the children have learned that God calls and we respond. This fourth principle, our response to God's call, is made tangible in the eucharistic prayer for Christ's action in the prayer calls for a response from the assembly, for example in the dialogue response: *Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus* (Holy, Holy, Holy). The fifth principle of remembering elicits a response from us as we recall all Christ has done for us in the Memorial Acclamation and our affirmation in the Great Amen. Through the Eucharistic prayer we remember and we give thanks that Christ gives himself to us in the eucharist. Liturgical catechesis will prepare children for appropriate responses and reflect with them following the third step what is happening through the Eucharistic prayer.

Liturgical catechesis also needs to help children understand that when they receive communion, they are receiving more than mere bread and wine. The children need a liturgical catechesis that lays a firm foundation about transformation, which will include teaching about transubstantiation, that the bread and wine are substantially changed, transformed into the body and blood of Christ. Liturgical catechesis also needs to incorporate teaching that Christ calls forth and needs our presence at Mass so that together with the priest, eucharist can be made present within the community. In this way it is possible for us to be transformed, to become more like Christ: that is, to become what we receive. It is the way Christians are fitted to go out into the world to transform it into the kingdom of God. That is a tall order, of course, but not beyond the ability of children of catechetical age to begin to grasp. Liturgical catechesis communicates to the children that they have been initiated into a mystery that one grows into over the course of one's life.

Ritual Action

Next to the sacraments themselves, blessings are the chief sacramental actions of the Church.⁷² Therefore, it is fitting that the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* sets the Blessing of the Water to music.⁷³ The celebrant touches the water with his right hand before he prays that the Holy Spirit comes upon the waters of the font. At the Easter Vigil, if it can be done conveniently, the celebrant also lowers (plunges) the Paschal Easter candle into the water once or three times and then holds it in the water until the acclamation at the end of the blessing.⁷⁴ According to the *Missale Romanum* (Third Edition), all are called to the front of the assembly for their baptism. Movement to the baptismal font is an essential action in the Celebration of Baptism; however, there is no procession to the font if baptism takes place in the sanctuary.⁷⁵

Naturally, the baptism is rich with ritual action during the immersion or pouring of water. Receiving a baptismal garment and lighted candle are significant ritual actions. When the lighted candle presented after baptism takes its light from the Easter candle, the children ritually receive the light of Christ, which they have just received within at the baptism. The baptismal garment is also an outward sign of the inward cleansing that baptism effects.

⁷²J. R. Quinn, "Liturgical Blessings," in *The New Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 2 (New York: McGraw Hill, 1976), 613-15.

⁷³RCIA, no. 311, option A. When baptism is celebrated at the Easter Vigil, the celebrant blesses the water, using option A; outside the Easter Vigil, he may use either Option A or the other blessing formularies given in no. 215 as options B and C to bless the water.

⁷⁴*Ibid.*, no. 311.

⁷⁵Turner, "Christian Initiation Masses in the *Missale Romanum*," 8.

The posture of outstretched hands, as the gesture of Laying on of Hands, will be familiar to the children, for they have experienced this ritual action during the Penitential Rite (Scrutiny). However, the Laying on of Hands and the imposition of hands in the Rite are somewhat convoluted. The Pontifical Commission for Interpreting the Decrees of Vatican II determined that anointing with the thumb signified the imposition of hands in confirmation.⁷⁶ The gesture of imposing hands while calling upon the Holy Spirit and invoking the power of God is one of the oldest and most significant liturgical gestures, and is used in confirmation, the Eucharist and ordination.⁷⁷ Thus, in the conferral of confirmation the Rite preserves Laying on of Hands as hands outstretched over the entire group; it also preserves the imposition of hands as conjoined with the anointing with Chrism. This Anointing with Chrism occurs as the minister of the sacrament dips his right thumb in the chrism and makes the sign of the cross on the forehead of the one to be confirmed.⁷⁸ After standing to pray the intercessions, the neophytes and their godparents may be part of the ritual procession to bring forward the gifts. Such ritual actions signify that the children are baptized and confirmed

⁷⁶See AAS 64 (1972): 526, as cited in Austin, *Rite of Confirmation: Anointing with the Spirit*, 45, 61.

⁷⁷Thomas A. Krosnicki, "Gesture and Movement in the Liturgy," in *The New Dictionary of Sacramental Worship*, ed. Peter E. Fink (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1990), 497.

⁷⁸RCIA, no. 326. See also Balthasar Fischer, "Anointed on the Forehead with Chrism," in *Signs, Words and Gestures*, trans. Matthew J. O'Connell (New York: Pueblo Publishing Company, 1979), 6-8: "It is no accident that chrism, the noblest of the three oils, should be used for the sign of the cross in confirmation. Chrism is produced by adding aromatic essences (especially balsam) to olive oil. . . . the element of public manifestation that is proper to confirmation exercises its influence . . . Whenever Christians live their baptism and confirmation in an authentic way, they emit as it were a 'strong and wholesome fragrance.'"

members of the assembly.⁷⁹ Yet, initiation is not complete until the children participate in the ritual action of coming forward for the reception of communion.⁸⁰

Symbols

In the context of the Easter Vigil, the primary symbols that deserve liturgical catechesis in the adapted rite, third step include fire, water, oil, the Word of God, bread and wine, the altar, the cross, and the faithful gathered believers (which includes the presider). The children will need the tripartite movement of liturgical catechesis before the third step, ritually during full initiation, and following full initiation in mystagogical, reflective liturgical catechesis. These liturgical symbols are not new. Woven throughout the ritual formation appropriate to the catechumenal process, the fire of lighted candles has been constitutive of most rituals. The Word of God has been a staple during the entire formation process. The children were ritually introduced to the cross and the Word of God at the Rite of Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens. They have experienced the Christian community in a number of liturgical settings and have begun to absorb what it is like to be seated among the assembly and then dismissed from the assembly Sunday after Sunday. At the Sunday Liturgy of the Word, the priest, the altar and the assembly have been constants in the ritual equation. First introduced as a liturgical symbol in the anointing with the oil of catechumens, oil has been a recurring symbol that threads its way through multiple rituals for healing and

⁷⁹RCIA, no. 327.

⁸⁰Ibid., no. 329.

strengthening. At the third step, the anointing with chrism for confirmation takes on special significance as a sealing of the Holy Spirit given at baptism in the blessed water.

The bread and wine, consecrated and transformed into the body and blood of Christ, are new symbols around which a fuller liturgical catechesis is expected and required. Eucharist, the only repeatable sacrament of initiation celebrated as the liturgy of the church, constitutes the summit and the source of our Christian identity.⁸¹ Because these are primary and recurring liturgical symbols, there is ample opportunity for children to be enriched by the repetition that is part of the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* adapted for children of catechetical age.

Images

The images associated with water are cleansing, death and regeneration. From the beginning of the ritual formation in the adapted rite, the children have experienced movement, processions, and name changes that signify they are on a journey and that changes are happening within them. Liturgical catechesis can help the children name this journey in faith and interior changes as conversion to Jesus Christ. The images of people in the community helping the children make this journey is imprinted in the child through experience of the support from parents, sponsors, godparents and the entire community. Needing this community to make the journey in faith, they have now become one with this community and join those who pray for and reach out to others in need. In and through this

⁸¹Vatican Council II, *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (Sacrosanctum Concilium)*, 4 December 1963, no. 10.

community, the children discover and encounter the sacraments: baptism, confirmation and eucharist. Sin is washed away; the Holy Spirit is the seal of strength upon their forehead and within one's being; incorporated into the community, the children are nourished with the real presence of the Lord in eucharist. The images drawn from the Rite are meant to be imprinted indelibly in the mind and heart of children of catechetical age. It is a school of faith and a process of formation that is meant to communicate a Catholic identity that withstands the storms of life and the test of time.

Conclusion

An analysis of the third step focuses on the essential unity and sequence of the sacraments of initiation. The chief pastoral problem associated with full initiation in the third ritual step concerns withholding or delaying of the sacrament of confirmation. An analysis of key paragraphs in both the Rite and the Code of Canon Law make it clear that confirmation is to follow immediately the baptism of children of catechetical age in the adapted rite. An analysis of liturgical catechesis based on the ritual structure, scripture readings, intercessions, prayer texts, ritual actions, symbols and images indicates that liturgy is essential and fundamental to the transmission of the central teachings and Tradition of the Church. Furthermore, catechists need to understand the ritual steps in order to grasp more fully the ritual elements that require a careful systematic, complete catechesis prior to and after the celebration of the rites. Eucharist, the only repeatable sacrament of initiation, is not an optional or occasional event in the life of a disciple. Sunday by Sunday faithful disciples

gather for eucharist, which is necessary for continual spiritual growth and deepening faith knowledge. In the final chapter, Chapter Eight, the attention turns to Focus on Pastoral Practice in Light of Part II, Chapter1.

CHAPTER 8
FOCUS ON PASTORAL PRACTICE
IN LIGHT OF RCIA
PART II, CHAPTER 1

Introduction

The *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* (RCIA) has proven to be a key factor both in promoting catechetical renewal in a post-Vatican II era and also in challenging preconceived notions about catechetical approaches with older, unbaptized children.¹ The Rite, itself the product of a process of conversion, calls for continuing conversion on two levels: first, of those who come to the catechumenal process as seekers and inquirers; and second, of those who are responsible for implementing the catechumenal process as expressed in the Rite. This chapter addresses that second level of conversion, which catechetical leaders need to consider in relation to catechesis and catechetical methods. Recalling Bernard Lonergan's analysis of conversion as a self-correcting process of examining the parts to apprehend the meaning of the whole,² this chapter first exposes the catechetical aspects of the catechumenal process that pastoral ministers, catechists, and the faith community at large need to reexamine in order to embrace the next horizon of interpretation to which the Rite calls us.

¹Since the baptismal catechumenate is considered an inspiration for all catechesis, this study also has relevance for baptized children. See *General Directory for Catechesis*, nos. 29, 59, 90.

²Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (Toronto: Catholic University of Toronto Press, 1971), 159.

Second, by focusing on pastoral practice within the context of the guiding principles of the catechumenate that apply to the adapted rite in part II, Chapter I, pastoral challenges that catechetical leaders need to address are made more clear.

Considering the conversion needed at the pastoral level, Bernard Lonergan's analysis of context as "the interweaving of questions and answers in limited groups" is helpful.³ A single topic, according to his analysis, can be indicated in a phrase or two, yet unfolded in an often enormously complex set of subordinate and interconnected questions and answers:⁴

One reaches that set by striving persistently to understand the object, understand the words, understand the author, and if need be, understand oneself. The key to success is to keep adverting to what has not been understood, for that is the source of further questions, and to hit upon the questions directs attention to the parts or aspects of the text where answers may be found.⁵

The previous chapters in this study contribute to that ongoing task of improving the implementation of the adapted rite at the level of pastoral practice by addressing a number of interrelated questions.

Chapter One of this study has examined the catechumenal process with the perspective of the pastoral needs of the child catechumen. Who are these children? What is their cultural context? What are the challenges that prevent the adapted rite from being appropriately implemented with initiatory catechesis on their behalf? To address these questions, for example, it was first necessary to profile the multifaceted problematic conditions that hinder children of catechetical age from receiving a truly catechumenal

³Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 163.

⁴Ibid., 164.

⁵Ibid.

formation in faith. This involved an examination of the cultural context in which the children and their families live, the formative nature of liturgy, a proper understanding of *ordo*, the principle of adaptation in liturgical celebrations, and attention to the pastoral issues identified in *Journey to the Fullness of Life: A Report on the Implementation of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults in the United States*.

Chapter Two addressed two questions: What elements constitute initiatory catechesis? How do the rituals of the Rite adapted for children bring initiatory catechesis into sharper focus? To answer these questions it was necessary to trace the semantic evolution and development of the term initiatory catechesis within a broader context of catechesis in catechetical documents. In the process of mining these sources for the constitutive elements of initiatory catechesis, the interconnection of initiatory catechesis with its orientation towards conversion to Jesus Christ through the catechumenate and its link with liturgical catechesis, helped to bring initiatory catechesis into sharper focus.

Chapter Three explored the historical contributions of the liturgical catechetical renewal to the Vatican II era in order to address questions concerning the contributions of the liturgical and catechetical movements to the restored catechumenate that informs a liturgical catechesis as both a catechesis and a method of catechesis. It also addressed how the primacy of baptism of adults informs and influences the catechetical formation for the adapted rite with children of catechetical age. Tracing the connection between liturgical catechetical renewal of Vatican Council II and the liturgical and catechetical movements that were so fraught with recurring cycles of tribulation and triumph puts the current pastoral problem and

its context into perspective: the task ahead is not simple and the changes called for involve a long-term project. These movements also informed a new understanding of the evolution involved in retrieving the primacy of the baptism of adults as a normative practice with formational implications for children of catechetical age.

In Chapter Four, the topic of liturgical catechesis in the post-Vatican II era prompted the following questions: What elements constitute liturgical catechesis? How do these elements relate to the Rite adapted for children? How does liturgical catechesis identified with mystagogical catechesis point to a method in initiatory catechesis? Naming the constitutive elements of liturgical catechesis and understanding them in the larger context of initiatory catechesis point to the theological content inherent in liturgy as a primary catechesis and formation in faith. Initiatory catechesis, which incorporates liturgical catechesis, presumes liturgical experience and is therefore essential liturgical formation for children of catechetical age in the catechumenate. Liturgical catechesis based on the liturgical elements inherent in the Rite involves a tripartite process of preparation (instruction), celebration (ritual experience), and reflection (mystagogical catechesis). This three-part process constitutes a methodology, which contributes to a comprehensive and complete catechesis called for in *Catechesi Tradendae* (CT) and articulated in the *General Directory for Catechesis* (GDC) and the *National Directory for Catechesis* (NDC).⁶ Further, these liturgical elements provide a framework for analyzing liturgical catechesis through the

⁶CT, nos. 23, 20, 21, 22; GDC, nos. 66, 67; NDC, no. 19d.

major ritual steps and the complement of rituals appropriate to children of catechetical age in the adapted rite.

Chapters Five, Six, and Seven addressed several questions, using liturgical catechesis elements as a framework for a systematic analysis of the major adapted ritual steps and the complement of rituals in the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* for children of catechetical age: What is to be learned by doing an analysis of the rituals in the Rite using liturgical catechesis elements as the framework? What do the children miss if they are denied access to liturgical catechesis? First, there is the concern of not having access to the rituals that are constitutive of the catechumenate as a “process of formation and a true school of faith.”⁷ This omission in the overall formation of unbaptized children of catechetical age further undercuts the interconnection among all six areas of the universal catechetical tasks: 1) knowledge of the faith through the Word of the God with its connection to the dogmas of the church through the liturgical year;⁸ 2) liturgical education about the meaning of the sacraments, the liturgical year, the liturgical symbols, and their meaning;⁹ 3) moral formation in Jesus Christ, prompted by conversion to him, which brings about a personal transformation to reorder desires and motivate one to embrace the social, moral, and ethical consequences of the gospel;¹⁰ 4) formation in prayer with other Christians through the liturgy, the Creed

⁷GDC, no. 91 and NDC, no. 35d.

⁸NDC, no. 20; and Vatican Council II, *Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation (Dei Verbum)* (DV), 18 November 1965, no. 8.

⁹NDC, no. 20; and Vatican Council II, *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (Sacrosanctum Concilium)* (SC), 4 December 1963, no. 7.

¹⁰NDC, no. 20; and CT, nos. 29ff.

(summary of dogma), and the Our Father (a summary of the gospels);¹¹ 5) formation through a community of faithful Christians who believe, live, celebrate, and witness to the faith, while at the same time “respecting the faith of others;”¹² and 6) formation in taking the gospel of Jesus into the world in a spirit of evangelization.¹³

This descriptive, historical, analytical and interpretive study, using the lens of the liturgical catechetical renewal of the Second Vatican Council and the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, calls attention to final questions: What assumptions about current pastoral practice does this analysis call into question? What pastoral conditions need to be in place for children of catechetical age to be given an optimal initiatory catechesis, which constitutes a catechumenal formation? The answers to the questions are inherent in the interlocking, foundational principles of the Rite that are rooted in the vision of the catechumenate advanced in the *Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity (Ad Gentes)*:

Those who, through the Church, have accepted from God a belief in Christ should be admitted to the catechumenate by liturgical rites. The catechumenate is not a mere expounding of doctrines and precepts, but a training period for the whole Christian life. It is an apprenticeship of appropriate length, during which disciples are joined to Christ their Teacher . . . But this Christian initiation through the catechumenate should be taken care of not only by catechists or priests, but by the entire community of the faithful . . .¹⁴

¹¹NDC, no. 20; and *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, nos. 2558-2865, especially no. 2761.

¹²NDC, no. 20; and CT, no. 32.

¹³NDC, no. 20; John Paul II, Encyclical *Redemptoris Missio*, 7 December 1990, no. 35; and Paul VI, *Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions (Nostra Aetate)*, 28 October 1965.

¹⁴Vatican Council II, *Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity (Ad Gentes)*, 7 December 1965, no. 14.

There is an obvious gap between the above vision of apprenticeship (and all that the concept of apprenticeship means) and the pastoral practices highlighted in *Journey to the Fullness of Life* that do not align with this vision of the Rite or the foundational principles. These pastoral practices that are, in fact, anomalies include the following: 1) failing to implement a catechumenal process for unbaptized children of catechetical age in parishes; 2) relying solely on a religious education model for sacrament preparation as a catch-up program for unbaptized children; 3) separating children in the catechumenate from the witnessing adult community; 4) denying or delaying rituals appropriate to the catechumenate for children of catechetical age, including withholding the sacrament of confirmation; 5) neglecting liturgical catechesis as an essential dimension of initiatory catechesis; and 6) failing to equip children with skills for mystagogical reflection on the sacred mysteries to support ongoing conversion and life-long formation (as the children mature physically, psychologically, spiritually, and emotionally). With limited access to the major ritual steps or the minor rites of the catechumenate, the liturgy of the Word on Sunday or at the beginning of a catechetical session, and liturgical symbols in the context of the liturgies of the church, unbaptized children do not receive initiatory catechesis consistent with the vision of the catechumenal process or its principles. Such practices diminish initiatory catechesis as a “comprehensive formation that includes more than instruction: it is an apprenticeship of the entire Christian life.”¹⁵

¹⁵GDC, no. 67.

The connection between the vision of *Ad Gentes* and the guiding principles of the catechumenate found in the General Introduction (*Praenotanda*) and the Introduction to the Rite is an important consideration. Pastoral, catechetical, and liturgical practices that ignore these guiding principles and disavow the catechumenate as a formation process need to be reexamined, rehabilitated, and replaced where necessary. The *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* adapted for children is no mere religious education program. Yet that is what continues in practice (more often than not) in the name of a catechumenate with unbaptized children of catechetical age. The principles that are the foundation of the catechumenate constitute a suitable standard for evaluating the adequacy of current pastoral practice. The catechumenate with children of catechetical age is guided by these same principles. Stated somewhat differently by various authors, the overarching thrust of the principles remains the same.¹⁶ Catechesis integral to the catechumenate needs to be congruent with these six principles.

Guiding Catechumenal Principles

Principle of Human Experience

The first principle acknowledges the importance of and respect for human experience that supports a person's faith journey, a journey that is gradual and does not follow a set

¹⁶For variations on expressing these principles see Frank C. Sokol, "How Did We Get Where We Are, and Where Do We Go From Here?" *Catechumenate: A Journal of Christian Initiation* 11, no. 2 (March 1989): 21-26; Diana Dudoit Raiche, "Focus on Children," in *The Baptismal Catechumenate: An Inspiration for All Catechesis*, ed. Joseph P. Sinwell (Washington, DC: National Catholic Educational Association, 2002).

time-table.¹⁷ Failing to take this principle seriously, pastoral ministers continue to use classroom groupings and methods oriented towards communicating a body of knowledge to a group rather than responding to the characteristics of initiatory catechesis that facilitate each child's coming to conversion in Christ.¹⁸ Conversion to Jesus Christ can never merely be assumed, especially with unbaptized children of catechetical age. Conversion is nurtured by proclamation of the Word of God and insertion into a community of faith that lives, prays, celebrates, and gives witness to what it believes. These are key components of apprenticeship called for in *Ad Gentes*. If initiatory catechesis is to function as intended (that is, as an instrument of evangelization that facilitates conversion), the whole community (not just priests and catechists) needs to honor the children as individuals on a faith journey. These children have a story worth telling and hearing, and their journey in faith progresses according to their humanity, as grace builds on nature. Children's natural inclination is to be welcomed and known as part of a community that has meaning.¹⁹ The sacraments that initiate one into the community (baptism, confirmation, eucharist) are not events from which one graduates, never to be seen again within the community of faith. This graduation model has been a major problem and a failed outcome of stand-alone sacramental preparation programs.

¹⁷RCIA, no. 76; GDC, nos. 89, 90.

¹⁸RCIA, no. 78.

¹⁹Danny Sullivan, "To Such As These the Kingdom of Heaven Belongs: Children's Spirituality and Our Contemporary World," in *The Candles Are Still Burning: Directions in Sacrament and Spirituality. Essays in Honour of Christiane Brusselmans*, ed. Mary Grey, Andree Heaton and Danny Sullivan (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1995), 143.

As an assistant in Liturgy and Sacramentology in the faculty of theology, Leuven, Susan K. Roll's description of the amount of time needed for conversion to be made manifest is clearly applicable to children of catechetical age in the catechumenate:

[T]he overall process and the progression of the rites themselves, embodies an openness to gratuitous time, time lived in dialogue with the will of a loving, trustworthy God. Genuine growth and progress is not always linear and sequential, sometimes it resembles more the procession of Echternach, "two steps forward, one step back," or let us say even a few steps sideways . . . A linear paradigm may have more to do with assumptions rooted in the Enlightenment about continual human progress and improvement, always in some way under human conscious control. By contrast, authentic growth in dialogue with a loving divine wisdom, however one perceives that wisdom working in one's life and relations, can sometimes be frustratingly messy.²⁰

In support of a non-programmatic approach to the catechesis appropriate to catechumenate, the Rite also states clearly,

[t]he duration of the catechumenate will depend on the grace of God and on various circumstances, such as the program of instruction for the catechumenate, the number of catechesis, deacons, and priests, the cooperation of the individual catechumens, the means necessary for them to come to the site of the catechumenate and spend time there, the help of the local community. Nothing, therefore, can be settled *a priori*.²¹

This first principle of attention to human experience (and indeed, our human condition) is not consistent with an instructional program constrained by a set time-table or a rigid curriculum.

A "program of instruction" cannot be interpreted as "an instructional program" according to the American educational mindset. A personal conversion on the part of pastors and

²⁰Susan K. Roll, "Time in the Sacraments and the Liturgical Year," in *The Candles are Still Burning*, 98.

²¹RCIA, no. 76.

catechetical leaders is needed to embrace an open-ended time-frame for formation of unbaptized children that is not merely curriculum-driven.

In the United States, parishes are still operating within a schooling model that is tied to an agrarian calendar (September to May). Once pastoral ministers relinquish that mindset and are free to focus on the spiritual needs of the particular child who is before them, then the possibility of engaging in the discernment that is necessary to identify signs of conversion in a child can become more the norm. The progress in conversion ought to determine the kind and quantity of information and instruction that the child needs at a particular point in time for instruction in the faith is also part of the catechumenal catechesis. However, instruction in *the* faith has to be distributed in relation to the child's coming *to* faith. Such a change in focus also incorporates attention to ensuring that the ritual steps celebrate what is authentic and true about a child's journey in faith. These adaptations to a religious education program approach with the catechumenate adapted for children of catechetical age are important shifts in a direction that appropriately honors the child's faith journey on a time continuum that cannot be pre-set.²²

Fully implementing a catechumenate adapted for children of catechetical age has proven to be challenging and problematic in pastoral practice.²³ A catechumenate adapted for

²²See Robert D. Duggan and Maureen A. Kelly, *The Christian Initiation of Children: Hope for the Future* (New York: Paulist Press, 1991).

²³"Statement on the Pastoral Challenge of Implementing *the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* for Children Who Have Reached Catechetical Age," in *Readings in the Christian Initiation of Children*, ed. Victoria M. Tufano (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 1994), 172-75.

children that is “a process of formation and a true school of faith”²⁴ competes with formation models and instructional methods used in teaching the faith to children baptized in infancy. The default approach of sacramental preparation programs for preparing these older children for baptism and first communion in the same manner that baptized Catholic children are prepared, wins out too often because it takes less effort, time and personnel.

Principle of Conversion

The second principle derived from the Rite is that conversion is the overarching goal of the catechumenate through each and every period and ritual step.²⁵ Theologian Karl Rahner contextualizes conversion as “a liturgical and social aspect of all religions, including Christianity (rites of initiation, baptism, penitential liturgy, revivalist meetings, etc.).” But more, conversion is a fundamental decision and a personal fundamental choice of faith and Christian life. Rahner contends that conversion is faith, because the recipient is concerned with the content of the call; it is hope, because the recipient trusts oneself to the unexpected; it is love, expressed as love of neighbor. His concern for pastoral theology is evident in cautioning that conversion is a “decisive function of pastoral care” and that there are dangers to conversion of which pastoral ministers need to be aware. The dangers consist of “merely” celebrating liturgical and sacramental celebrations, a tendency toward legalism, a tendency toward “mere” conventionalism, and a tendency toward conforming to the average level in

²⁴NDC, no. 35d.

²⁵RCIA, nos. 1, 4; and GDC, nos. 89, 90.

the Church.²⁶ This aspect of pastoral care is a critical factor in the catechumenate, especially with children of catechetical age. The rituals of the catechumenate are never “merely” liturgy and certainly not perfunctory celebrations; they are ordered toward nurturing initial faith and facilitating an ever-deepening conversion to Jesus Christ as Savior, son of God.

Does the Catholic Christian community truly accept that conversion is central to being a Christian and that children are capable of such conversion that reorders their desires, and thus their attitudes, perceptions, and behaviors? Prior to Vatican II, the topic of conversion was not part of the conversation for a homogeneous group of children coming from a homogeneous community of practicing Catholics. As demonstrated previously, distinctions between and among initiatory catechesis, post-baptismal catechesis, perfective catechesis, ongoing catechesis, mystagogical catechesis, etc., did not exist prior to the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, as they do now. Evangelization was a concern for mission lands, not for the citizens of the Christianized West. Today in the United States, however, an evangelizing catechesis is necessary in an increasingly pluralistic and multicultural society in order to facilitate conversion to Jesus Christ as an on-going, life-long process. As evidenced by the fact that so few Catholics are attending Mass each Sunday,²⁷ conversion within the Catholic community is an ever-growing concern, not just for encouraging initial faith, but also for promoting a re-evangelization of nominal Catholics. An initiatory catechesis that is

²⁶Karl Rahner, “Conversion,” in *Conversion: Perspectives on Personal and Social Transformation*, ed. Walter E. Conn (New York: Society of St. Paul, 1978), 203-211 passim.

²⁷Mark M. Gray and Paul M. Perl, “Sacraments Today: Belief and Practices Among U.S. Catholics” (Washington, DC: Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate, 2008), 2, 161.

capable of facilitating such conversion includes full, conscious, active participation in ritual experiences, as provided by the adapted Rite and accompanied by the preparatory and reflective components of a three-part liturgical catechesis.

A model of formation for the unbaptized, older child based on the catechumenate differs from a model of religious instruction with infant baptism as the paradigm and starting point. An assumption that children baptized as infants experience conversion to Jesus Christ first through the family and then through instruction in the religious education program that prepares them for penance, first communion, and later confirmation continues to permeate pastoral practice with the unbaptized children.²⁸ This model, which seems to be a permanent fixture in the Catholic sacramental landscape in the United States, reorders and separates the sacraments of initiation over a protracted period of time and assumes that teaching more content will bring about conversion, notwithstanding evidence to the contrary.

A practice of conferring all three sacraments of initiation (baptism, confirmation and eucharist) to older, unbaptized children does not operate with these same assumptions. Conferral of all three initiation sacraments together is rooted in an understanding that these older, unbaptized children need to be introduced to Jesus Christ first through evangelizing catechesis.²⁹ They require contact with and experience of a viable faith community, so that, through God's grace, they may come to an intellectual, moral, and affective conversion to

²⁸See Catherine Dooley, "Catechumenate for Children: Sharing the Gift of Faith," in *Readings in the Christian Initiation of Children*, ed. Victoria M. Tufano (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 1994), 79.

²⁹See Michael Horan's development of evangelizing catechesis in *Evangelizing Catechesis* (Washington, DC: National Catholic Educational Association, 2001).

Jesus that is appropriate to their age and stage of development.³⁰ Conversion for these children is neither assumed nor contrived through a program of instruction. Rather, conversion is discerned based on evidence. Consistent with the child's age and stage of development and life experience, discerning a child's spiritual progress associated with conversion and commitment to Christ is also an ongoing process.³¹

Principle of Scripture

A third principle grounds the catechumenate in the Word of God, which is also central to the process of formation and school of faith provided by the catechumenate in the adapted rite for children. God's word is a key starting point for presenting the mysteries and dogmas of the faith in a complete and systematic manner.³² The word of God is a window into the paschal mystery, which is Christ. The adapted rite arranges that the children experience the Word ritually through the unfolding of the liturgical year at Mass, through

³⁰On the various aspects of conversion see Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 338; Mark Searle, "The Journey of Conversion," *Worship* 54, no. 1 (January 1980): 35-55; Donald L. Gelpi, "The Converting Catechumen," *Lumen Vitae* 42, no. 4 (1987): 401-415; Luc Aereens, "Catechesis for Children and Conversions," *Lumen Vitae* 42, no. 4 (1987): 380-87; and Robert D. Duggan, *Conversion in the Catechumenate* (New York: Paulist Press, 1984).

³¹Donna Steffen, "Discernment in the Catechumenate: Part I," in *Catechumenate: A Journal of Christian Initiation* 31, no. 4 (July 2009): 19-26; and "Discernment in the Catechumenate: Part II," in *Catechumenate: A Journal of Christian Initiation* 31, no. 5 (September 2009): 11-21.

³²RCIA, nos. 75, 78; GDC, nos. 67, 90; Catherine Dooley, "The Lectionary As A Source of Catechesis in the RCIA," *Catechumenate: A Journal of Christian Initiation* 10, no. 3 (May 1988): 10-22; Dooley, "The Use and the Misuse of the Lectionary in Catechesis for Children," *The Living Light* 27, no. 3 (Spring 1991): 218-24; Linda Gaupin, "Separate Liturgies of the Word with Children?" in *Children in the Assembly of the Church*, ed. Eleanor Bernstein and John Brooks Leonard (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 1992), 65-80; Elizabeth Hoffman, "Using the Lectionary for Masses with Children," *Supplement, Liturgy* 90 (August – September 1993): 7-11; Robert D. Duggan, "The New Constellation of Catechesis," *The Living Light* 37, no. 4 (Summer 2001): 6-15.

opening catechetical sessions with the Word, and by a Liturgy of the Word that can accompany minor rites. This gradual distribution of the truths of the faith through scripture over time, accommodated to the age and stage of development of the children, is a recurring experience perfectly suited to the capacity of children. Such repetition of essentials of the faith differs from rote learning of faith facts out of context and is well-suited to the way children learn and appropriate habits of the heart. The catechumenate with children promotes familiarity with God's Word as it is prayed and celebrated with the witnessing community of faith. The ecclesial context in which the dogmas of the faith are transmitted is as important as the dogmas themselves, for the teachings of the Church from Scripture and Tradition are transmitted by the Church (the Magisterium in concert with the *sensus fidelium*) that interprets the content generation after generation.³³

Having reached the age of reason, children do not present themselves as a *tabula rasa*. When these children hear the Word of God for the first time, they have experiences that help them resonate and connect with this proclamation of revelation. Consistent with their age and stage of development, they have the capacity to reflect on the gospel in relation to their life and on who Jesus Christ is as savior and as son of God. A catechumenal approach for older, unbaptized children does not assume that conversion to Jesus comes through the

³³See Aidan Nichols, "The Sense of the Faithful," in *The Shape of Catholic Theology* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1991), 221: "If the age of the Fathers saw the emergence of council and creed as monuments of Tradition, permanently valid summations of Christian faith, and modes of arriving at a discernment of the content of revelation which are with us still, it should not be assumed that only the *Ecclesia docens*, 'the teaching Church,' is of theological interest. On the contrary, the *sensus fidelium*, the 'sense of the faithful' is also a monument or expression of Tradition."

family of origin or through mere instruction for sacraments. These two modalities of faith formation emanate from differing paradigms for initiation.³⁴

Principle of the Community of Faith

The fourth principle is founded on apprenticeship of the entire Christian life within and by the Christian community of faith.³⁵ As previously argued, when children are unfamiliar with how adults pray, what devotions they hold dear, how they participate in the Sunday liturgy, and how they incorporate into their lives the Word proclaimed and explored in the homily Sunday after Sunday, children are left with mere information about faith and not an example of faith lived in the real world. These unbaptized children do not come with the same faith experience of children baptized in infancy. Information separated from a faith context can seem irrelevant to young children and particularly to those who are approaching the teen years. Formation in the catechumenate is intended to launch a young person on a trajectory aimed at a life-long quest for knowing more about God, a hunger for the bread of life, and a thirst for justice.

Echoing *Ad Gentes*, the Rite states that the people of God are represented by the local Church, which should understand and show by their concern that the initiation of adults (and

³⁴For a discussion on catechumenal and pedagogical paradigms, see Steven M. Robich, "Christian Initiation of Children: No Longer a Class or a Grade Issue," in *Readings in the Christian Initiation of Children*, 112-14.

³⁵RCIA, nos. 9, 75; GDC, no. 90.

therefore children of catechetical age) is the responsibility of all the baptized.³⁶ Liturgist Kathleen Hughes' analysis of the vision of discipleship that the ritual of Christian initiation presents, especially at the Easter Vigil, takes the *lex orandi* seriously. Liturgy intends to form a community to remember its baptismal promises in relation to each other as well as to the Church's mission *ad gentes*.³⁷ James Schellman, executive director of the North American Forum on the Catechumenate, calls attention to the challenge that the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* poses for communities of faith who, often oblivious of the catechumenal process, know nothing of their role in the evangelizing and formational process.³⁸ Theologian Rosemary Haughton, explores what is necessary to form community and how the community itself must undergo transformation before it can become the formation community.³⁹

Sometimes the talk about community far exceeds the experience of community as a reality. This foundational principle of community as critical to forming catechumens (including children of catechetical age) far exceeds the sociological and psychological aspects of forming and maintaining community. The Christian community is born of love and

³⁶*Ad Gentes*, no. 14; RCIA, nos. 7, 9; GDC, no. 20 (Catechetical Task Five: "Catechesis prepares the Christian to live in community and to participate actively in the life and mission of the Church.")

³⁷Kathleen Hughes, "The Credible Community: Keeping Baptismal Promises," *Catechumenate: A Journal of Christian Initiation* 16, no. 23 (March 1994): 2-14.

³⁸James M. Schellman, "The Formation of Disciples Challenges the Initiating Community," *Catechumenate: A Journal of Christian Initiation* 24, no. 3 (May 2002): 6-16.

³⁹Rosemary Haughton, *The Transformation of Man: A Study of Conversion and Community* (Springfield, IL: Templegate Publishers, 1967, 1980), passim. Three chapters are of particular interest regarding community as positioned in the Rite: Chapter Five "Creating Community," Chapter Six "The Community of the Transformed," and Chapter Seven "The Formation Community."

acts out of love, devoid of fear.⁴⁰ While it is very likely unaware of its role as a teacher and formator of children (and others) coming into the faith, the community has, in fact, been teaching by example that faithful Sunday worship, faithful participation in the sacramental life of the Church, and life-long catechesis are options that compete equally with all other aspects of life. More often than not, these indicators of firm and deep faith are lacking among Catholic communities.

As is evident with baptized children, prevailing catechetical practices have resulted in children patterning their religious practices after the adults with whom they are in contact. Serious attention is needed regarding the impact and influence of the faith community on the faith formation of children. Not only do the unbaptized children need contact with a vibrant faith community, their catechetical program of instruction cannot exclude contact with these adults. The catechumenate puts forth an ideal community that may not be perfectly realized. However, unless there is consistent effort directed toward creating the formation communities called for in the Rite, then this missing link will further hinder the appropriate formation of children addressed in the adapted rite and the cycle of decline in which we find ourselves will progress unabated.⁴¹

⁴⁰Haughton, *The Transformation of Man*, 163, 174.

⁴¹Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 52-55.

Principle of Liturgical Formation

The fifth principle is rooted in the liturgical and sacramental life to which the catechumen is drawn and in which one wishes to participate.⁴² This principle has been amply explored throughout this study. Liturgical life is supported by prayer and liturgical celebrations. The relationship between faith and liturgy expressed in this fifth principle is mutually supporting, according to the document *Music in Catholic Worship*: “Faith grows when it is well expressed in celebration. Good celebrations foster and nourish faith. Poor celebrations may weaken and destroy it.”⁴³ Catechesis ideally should lead to full, conscious, and active participation in the liturgical life of the Church, and participation at liturgy should propel one to seek more catechesis and do the work of social justice. The implication of this principle is best described in the *Constitution on Sacred Liturgy*: “Liturgy is the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed; at the same time it is the fount from which all the Church’s power flows.”⁴⁴

Just as any habit has a formative quality, so too is liturgical action formative. Liturgies that prepare a person for the celebration of the eucharist, as does the Rite adapted for children, are at the heart of acquiring a Catholic identity. Discipline is a learned behavior: as such, submitting oneself habitually to liturgy is a necessary discipline, which children need to acquire. The repetitive ritual action associated with liturgy is itself a conditioning

⁴²RCIA, nos. 6, 75, GDC, nos. 88, 90.

⁴³U.S. Bishops’ Committee on the Liturgy, *Music in Catholic Worship* (1983), no. 6, in *The Liturgy Documents: A Parish Resource* (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 1991), 277.

⁴⁴SC, no. 10.

process, especially for children of catechetical age. Such conditioning is ordered toward ethical action beyond liturgy.⁴⁵

Principle of the Church's Mission

The sixth principle that is foundational for the catechumenate is oriented toward apostolic witness to the faith and commitment to the mission of the Church in the world.⁴⁶ The catechumenal process forms one in an understanding of living not just for oneself but also with care, compassion and concern for others. Through the catechumenate adapted for them, children of catechetical age (who are naturally ego-centric) are formed in the dispositions, attitudes, and habits that promote thinking of others when making a decision—for baptism ushers each person into a participation in building the kingdom of God, which is the mission of the Church. This kind of thinking is first and foremost rooted in the reality “that the love of God has been poured out into our hearts through the holy spirit . . .”⁴⁷ God has loved us first and calls us to participate with him in building a better world; for a child apostolic witness translates into living a life worthy of having been loved first by God and having been baptized in Christ Jesus to continue the work he modeled for us. Each child is capable of experiencing God's unconditional love and claiming publicly a self-identity consistent with gospel values and Church teachings without embarrassment or fear.

⁴⁵Frank C. Senn, *Christian Worship and its Cultural Setting* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), 77.

⁴⁶RCIA, nos. 7, 75; GDC, nos. 88, 90.

⁴⁷Romans 5:5.

Catherine Dooley connects this kind of consciousness with an awakening of the imagination through liturgy and the mystagogy connected to liturgical catechesis:

It is through mystagogy that imagination needs to be reawakened with regard to liturgy and its meaning for life. The purpose of mystagogy is not so much to explain the content of the Christian story, but rather to foster a way of entering the mystery. It is to offer a vision that enables one to see the world differently.⁴⁸

Seeing the world differently is the Catholic difference that is needed to evangelize, to witness to the faith and to imagine and work toward a new reality. The catechumenal process, with its initiatory catechesis that includes liturgical catechesis and the kind of mystagogical reflection that ignites the imagination, is needed not only among the children who are formed in the adapted rite, but also among the catechists and parents who walk the journey in faith with them.

Conclusion

What insights do these principles call forth in relation to current catechetical approaches? Christiane Brusselmans provided excellent examples of how to bring insights from the catechumenate into practical application through the sacramental preparation materials and Liturgy of the Word for Children workshops (based on the *Directory for Masses with Children*) for baptized children. Among the first pastoral theologians to create such catechetical materials inspired by her knowledge of the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* and the foundational catechumenal principles, Brusselmans honored the child as child and worked to include children in the life and story of the faith community.

⁴⁸Dooley, "Liturgy: Privileged Place for Catechizing the People of God," unpublished paper.

Danny Sullivan, Co-Director, (with Clive Erriker) of the “Children and Worldviews” research project to explore children’s religious and spiritual development and a former lecturer in religious studies at LSU College, Southampton, names a key point of this concluding chapter: that conversion can refer to more than religious conversion; it can also mean intellectual conversion that leads to changed behaviors or letting go of familiar, comfortable practices:

One major mistake we have made with Christiane’s materials on the Eucharist is to have reduced her human awareness and theological understanding into our obsession with “the programme.” The “rites” of the programme can become the order of the day as we work out how many monthly meetings will be needed to “qualify” for the completed programme and access to the Eucharist. In some instances missing meetings would appear to be the new sin that has replaced missing Mass. This is a long way from the theology of Eucharist to be explored and found in the gospels.⁴⁹

His critique of the way pastoral ministers implemented Brusselmans’ materials is apropos of the current situation regarding the implementation of the Rite adapted for children of catechetical age. Catechetical materials may be new, but the prevailing mind-set in implementing them appears to be wedded to a model of formation that is rooted more in Enlightenment thinking than in the ancient and original model of formation rooted in the Church Fathers’ understanding and development of the catechumenate. Regardless of words and phrases, such as “process-not-program” or “journey-in-faith that takes as long as it takes,” the catechumenate adapted for children lags behind the implementation of the Rite for adults. An appropriate implementation of the adapted rite for children of catechetical age is still very much a work in process. Sullivan’s research has shown that children have an innate

⁴⁹Sullivan, “To Such as These the Kingdom of Heaven Belongs,” 139.

and authentic sense of justice and peace, in effect, a sense of the kingdom of God. He suggests that if we continue to work with children within the church in ways that are too closely tied to a focus on content and to adult ways of thinking that leave out this sense of the values of the reign of God, then we should not be surprised that the children ultimately leave the church. Merely providing them with knowledge, schooling, or sacramental programs is not consistent with inviting them to become truly part of the community of faith where their stories are heard and where their lives make a difference.⁵⁰

What pastoral conditions are necessary for unbaptized children of catechetical age to experience liturgical catechesis as an essential dimension of initiatory catechesis? First, there needs to be a recognition that systematic catechesis is not authentic, comprehensive, or complete without integrating liturgy and catechesis and without providing children of catechetical age with an appropriate liturgical catechesis. There is not much fear that the instructive phase of liturgical catechesis before liturgy will be neglected, for that has all too often been the sum total of sacramental preparation. What is very much neglected, and even omitted in the adapted rite, is providing children with an authentic experience of ritual that punctuates their journey in faith coupled with the requisite skills to reflect on those ritual experiences through mystagogical reflection. While the words, symbols and gestures of liturgy overflow with meaning that can not be completely mined, such formation and training in reflection on the rituals early on better equips a child to enter into the sacred mysteries more fully with active and conscious participation—and not just in liturgy, but in life as a

⁵⁰Sullivan, “To Such as these the Kingdom of Heaven Belongs,” *passim*.

Christian.⁵¹ To this end there must be a recognition and a critical understanding that ritual and liturgical catechesis are critical links to strengthening Catholic identity.⁵²

Second, training catechists in relation to the rites and in liturgical catechesis urgently needs to be addressed. The *National Directory for Catechesis* challenges everyone in ministry with the bold statement that “the single most critical factor in an effective parish catechetical program is the leadership of a professionally trained parish catechetical leader.”⁵³ Certainly, diocesan catechetical enrichment days and ongoing training provided at catechetical institutes or national conferences, pastoral articles, websites, and blogs can make a difference in the quality of catechetical ministry. However, there is no substitute for foundational theological, liturgical, and catechetical training through Catholic universities (in conjunction with diocesan certification institutes) to ensure that training is both broad and deep enough to support the catechetical ministry of the Church. Before one can appreciate continuous mentoring or ongoing formation, there must first be a firm foundation upon which to build. Additionally, training for collaboration is essential. Collaboration of catechetical efforts and communication among catechetical and liturgical offices is essential if various aspects of catechesis are to move out of the “separate watertight compartments,” which the *National Directory for Catechesis* calls harmful to the catechetical enterprise.⁵⁴ If, as the

⁵¹Dooley, “Liturgy: Privileged Place for Catechizing the People of God.”

⁵²Walter E. Conn, “Affective Conversion: The Transformation of Desire,” in *Religion and Culture: Essays in Honor of Bernard Lonergan, S.J.*, ed. Timothy P. Fallon and Philip Boo Riley (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1987), 261-76.

⁵³NDC, no. 54b.5.

⁵⁴Ibid., no. 59.

NDC states, the baptismal catechumenate is a vital component in the organization of catechetics in the parish, and should be the “cornerstone of the parish catechetical plan,”⁵⁵ then everyone engaged in parish ministry needs to be well-formed in the vision and principles of the baptismal catechumenate.

Third, outreach to parents is especially needed, not just for those adults who have not benefited from any faith formation and yet approach the Church with their children. Concern for parent formation is also important for nominal Catholics who have neglected the baptism of their infant child and have provided no evangelization through the home. These are the adults who also need to see in the catechumenate an inspiration and model for all formation in faith and catechesis. This is so because the Church has remembered its original story concerning the catechumenate, initiatory catechesis, and liturgical catechesis. The catechumenate inherently links catechesis and liturgy. For this reason, it is a necessary and an appropriate approach for evangelizing and catechizing in a cultural context similar to the one in which the Fathers of the Church developed the catechumenate.

The adapted rite for children in the catechumenate calls attention to the fragmentation in the catechumenal process with children of catechetical age. Beyond addressing the critical needs of children, attention is drawn beyond the adapted rite to providing an authentic, systematic catechesis, training for catechists, and outreach to adults who are parents with *bone fide* liturgical catechesis. This is an essential dimension of initiatory catechesis in the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* adapted for children that is urgently needed in our time.

⁵⁵NDC, no. 61.

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