

Introduction

Pre-Easter catechesis culminates in actual experience of the sacraments which is spiritual and real. *Personal encounter with the Risen Christ*. Presence of the Spirit in new Catholics opens them, if well disposed, to deeper understanding of them. Interior dispositions will correspond to their gestures and words in the celebration.

Includes impact on way of looking at self, others (family, community) and world, as well as inspiration for behaviour inspired by the graces received, especially works of charity.

What are those realities of grace now experienced? What do they mean for my life in all its dimensions? How do I see them at work in the lives of others, e.g. the saints?

Mystagogia refers to the teachings which “lead through the mysteries” those have already been initiated into them. The Mysteries refer to the sacraments. It’s teaching leading to a deeper understanding of the sacraments once they have been experienced.

BAPTISM

1. Understanding the various rites in the light of the events of our salvation.

Renunciation of evil and Profession of faith in God. Examples in the Old Testament [put idols away]; calls to repentance [Ezekiel, Jonah, Isaiah]. East and West. Quiet witness of billions who say no to sin daily. Martyrs. The renunciation is ONGOING every day.

Oil of catechumens. OT examples of anointing for consecration, strength and protection and against evil (prayers of exorcism): consecration of priests, anointing of kings, objects, prophets. Such strength and prayer for protection ONGOING. Get to know saints known for their strength in the face of great odds against them.

Rite of Water. Double edged. Water of creation. The Flood, Red Sea. Cleansing of Naaman prophet. Elijah and the sacrifice. Jordan River. The Baptist. Effect ONGOING every day, renewed in acts of contrition and especially sacrament of confession. Holy water at home good reminder. Billions of unsung saints who heroically responded to the grace of baptism.

Anointing with Chrism. Olive oil + balsam symbolizing Holy Spirit, strength and the “aroma of Christ.” Priest (be a go-between to bring others to God), prophet (judge your

actions in the light of the Word of God, evaluate those of others in the same, speak up to bring the light of God's Word to situations) and king (lead others to God by example, by being as Christ-like as possible). Consider lay people who became saints in these ways.

Clothing with white garment. OT symbolized purity [High Priest's attire, life of joy and purity; divine apparel in Daniel]. Develop a deep personal love for Christ and for the truth so as to reject sin and temptation. Pursue holiness. Examples of saints who seem to have fought evil head on in different ways.

Candle. Light of Christ. OT, Pillar of Fire, lampstand in Tabernacle, the Word as a lamp. When times seem dark for you or others, remember this candle and invoke its Light. "Lead, kindly Light, amid the encircling gloom." Saints who have lit up the centuries.

2. Meaning of the signs.

Priest. Exteriorly, he is his human self. But he carries the sacrament of Christ's power to baptize. It is in reality Christ who baptizes.

Words. Every word is a symbol of meaning and confers meaning on the actions and signs used. Throughout the rite of baptism, the words identify the meaning of the other actions and symbols used.

Oil. Symbol of the blessings God bestows on his people, chiefly of the Holy Spirit Himself, in different ways and degrees. Consecration with oil means being set apart by the Spirit for God. It also signals joy, abundance. Oil came from the pressing of the olives. Here, then, oil symbolizes the refining of our souls through challenges and suffering.

Baptismal Font. Christ's tomb which becomes the womb of the new creation [eight sides]. Paradox of death becoming doorway to eternal life. Rivers, deep pools, tubs, stylized today.

Water. Multiple meanings reflecting God's interaction with creation. Life and creation [Genesis 1-2]. Its abundance or scarcity are seen as God's blessing or judgment on his people. Purification & cleansing both physically and spiritually [Leviticus, Ezekiel, John 1, Acts 22]. Judgment and destruction [the Flood with 2 Peter 3; the Red Sea, Exodus 14]. Divine Provision and sustenance [water from the rock, Exodus 17 with 1 Corinthians 10; John 4 & 7]. Spiritual renewal and the Holy Spirit [Ezekial 26; John 7]. Eternal life and the new creation [Revelation 22.

The Pouring of Water. Known as a libation, pouring water symbolized the pouring out of the heart or life in repentance and confession. It implies an irreversible commitment because it cannot be gathered again. Outpouring of the Holy Spirit through the death of Christ as the promise of eternal life. The pouring of water in baptism is a symbol of

entering into Christ's death, burial and resurrection and that the catechumen does it in the Name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Death to sin and resurrection to Trinitarian Life.

Paschal Candle. Symbolizes the risen Jesus Christ as the "Light of the World" overcoming the darkness of sin and death. Lit during the Easter Vigil, it represents the pillar of fire that led the Israelites and symbolizes Christ's resurrection and presence.

Fire & Light. Light represents purity, truth and the divine presence [Gen 1], God's holiness and righteousness as opposed to darkness and sin. Light as divine guidance, clarity and salvation [Psalm 27; Psalm 119]. Fire is seen as God's presence, judgment against sin [Exodus 3 – the burning bush; Genesis 19, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah; Revelation 2-, the final judgment and the lake of fire]. Fire as purification and refining of believers [Malachi 3]. Fire of the Spirit to empower to purify [Acts 2, Pentecost].

Passing of lit candle from godparent to newly baptized. Symbolizes the sharing and continuation of the "Light of Christ," representing the spread of faith, the Gospel, and the passing of spiritual responsibility from one person to another. This act embodies the idea that believers are meant to share their faith and not hide it.

Being clothed with White garment. Passive: it's a gift of grace. Purity and holiness; righteousness and justification; divine approval and glory; repentance and transformation.

Ephphatha (blessing of lips and ears). “Be opened.” It symbolizes spiritual awakening, the unlocking of divine potential, and the tearing down of barriers—emotional, mental, and physical—that prevent people from hearing God's voice and living in the fullness of his purpose, often representing a transformative "Ephphatha moment."

3. Significance of the rites for the Christian life in all its dimensions – work and responsibility, thoughts and emotions, activity and repose.

Demonstrate how the mysteries celebrated in the rite are linked to the missionary responsibility of the faithful. “The mature fruit of mystagogy is an awareness that one's life is being progressively transformed by the holy mysteries being celebrated. The aim of all Christian education, moreover, is to train the believer in an adult faith that can make him a ‘new creation’, capable of bearing witness in his surroundings to the Christian hope that inspires him” (Pope Benedict XVI).

Baptism initiates a new life, impacting daily actions, community belonging, and spiritual identity.

Significance for Christian Life Dimensions:

Work and Responsibility (Mission & Obedience): Baptism marks the beginning of a discipleship journey, as an ongoing act of obedience to God. It commits the believer to live openly and, if necessary, publicly in accordance with Christ's teachings, transforming daily work into a service for God and the community.

Thoughts and Emotions (New Life & Inner Transformation): The rite symbolizes being "made new", cleansing, and receiving the Holy Spirit. It enables a shift away from darkness/sin towards a life guided by faith, fostering inner peace through the assurance of being a child of God. It sets us on a path of inner healing and the reconciliation in harmony of all the conflicts and contradictions within.

Activity (Worship & Service): Baptism is a public declaration of faith and an entry into the parish community. It involves active participation in the sacramental life of the Church and a commitment to communal worship. It also implies a daily commitment to renounce sin and grow in the spiritual life using the means of sanctification provided by the Church (prayer, Scripture, the sacraments). Finally, it implies a desire to perform to the best of one's possibilities the spiritual (counselling the doubtful, instructing the ignorant, admonishing sinners, comforting the afflicted, bearing wrongs patiently, forgiving offenses, and praying for the living and dead) and corporal (feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, clothing the naked, sheltering the

homeless, visiting the sick, visiting the imprisoned, and burying the dead) works of mercy.

Repose (Rest in Grace & Identity): It offers spiritual rest through the assurance of belonging to God's family. It serves as a permanent, foundational identity as a child of God, providing rest from the need to earn salvation through works, focusing instead on grace.