

Mystagogy and the Neophyte Year

Mystagogy is the final period of the catechumenal process, continuing through the 50 days after Easter to Pentecost Sunday. Mystagogy is also a new spiritual reality for those initiated - not only for this period, but through the neophyte year and beyond. The root of mystagogy comes from the Greek word "agogos," meaning "to lead." So mystagogy is a process of leading into the mysteries - that which is not yet fully revealed. This is how all Catholics live, pray, and worship - we all live within the mysteries that will only be fully revealed at the end of time. This is what the neophytes will begin to do after Easter Vigil and continue throughout their lives with the ongoing support and assistance of the community that brought them to the fullness of faith.

"The period of mystagogy...is a time for deepening the Christian experience, for spiritual growth, and for entering more fully into the life and unity of the community." (n. 7.4)

Pastoral Aspects

- ❖ "During the period immediately after baptism, the faithful should take part in the Masses for neophytes, welcome the neophytes with open arms in charity, and help them to feel more at home in the community of the baptized." (n.9.5)
- ❖ "This is a time for the community and the neophytes together to grow in deepening their grasp of the Paschal Mystery and in making it part of their lives through...doing the works of charity." (n.244)
- ❖ To strengthen the neophytes...the community of the faithful, their godparents and their pastor should give them thoughtful and friendly help." (n.244)
- ❖ "With the help of their godparents, [neophytes] should experience a full and joyful welcome into the community and enter into closer ties with the other faithful." (n. 246)

Catechetical Aspects

- ❖ "This is a time for the community and the neophytes together to grow in deepening their grasp of the Paschal Mystery and in making it part of their lives through meditation of the Gospel."(n.244)
- ❖ "The neophytes are, as the term 'mystagogy' suggests, introduced to a fuller and more effective understanding of mysteries through the Gospel message they have learned...Out of this experience...they derive a new perception of the faith, of the Church, and of the world." (n. 245)

Liturgical Aspects

- ❖ This is a time for the community and the neophytes together to grow in deepening their grasp of the Paschal Mystery and in making it part of their lives through...sharing in the Eucharist. (n. 244)
- ❖ The neophytes should begin the period of mystagogy by participating in the principal Sunday Eucharist of the community throughout the Easter season...They should do this as a body in company with their godparents and those who have assisted in their Christian formation." (Ap. III, n .22)
- ❖ [At the Masses for the neophytes], special places in the congregation are to be reserved for the neophytes and their godparents." (n. 248)

Mystagogy and the Neophyte Year – Living the Life of Grace

- Prepare neophytes to gather the week after initiation to share stories and pictures of their Easter Vigil celebration. In the weeks following, discuss the Scriptures for the Sundays of Easter in light of their sacramental experiences.
- Avoid the temptation to use the six weeks of Easter as a time for recruitment for parish service – information is fine – but no one should be pressured or feel obliged to join any ministry. Ministry flows from the experience of being a member of the parish and being called. Some neophytes ready to jump right in. For others, it takes time and reflection on what it means to be a “regular Catholic in the pews.”
- Be sure to prepare neophytes before Pentecost for their First Reconciliation if they have not yet experienced this sacrament. Too often this is forgotten.
- Consider having a weekly, bi-weekly, or even monthly neophyte bible study. There are many programs to choose from and many groups enjoy continuing to gather to learn and share their faith together.

Pentecost

“To close the period of postbaptismal catechesis, some sort of celebration should be held at the end of the Easter season near Pentecost Sunday.” (n.249)

- Offer a special invitation to neophytes to participate in various sacramental experiences throughout the year, and then to reflect on them together. Possibilities include first Communion, communal penance services, communal anointing of the sick, confirmation of the youth, and infant baptisms.
- Hold a special gathering each year for those having come into the Church from all previous years. Consider having the gathering during the Easter Season or at Pentecost time; perhaps with a speaker and a special meal.
- Some important directives for the Neophyte Year indicated by the rite include:
 1. Plan for monthly gatherings following the Pentecost celebration and look forward to experiencing with the neophytes their first year of full membership in the church. Plan with them from the beginning of Lent to celebrate the first anniversary of their initiation at the Pentecost that concludes their neophyte year. (n. 250)
 2. Ask neophytes to participate in the General Intercessions & Preparation of the Gifts. (Ap. II, N. 22)
 3. Use the Easter Season Cycle A readings at Masses where neophytes are present with the homilies prepared for them in mind. (n. 244)
 4. Invite the local bishop to visit with the neophytes during their first year as fully initiated Catholics. (n.251)