

JOURNEY TO BAPTISMAL LIVING

NORTH AMERICAN ASSOCIATION FOR THE CATECHUMENATE

Leader's Guide

Ecumenical Rites for the Adult Catechumenate

Rites of the Adult Catechumenate, revised and adapted from the published rites of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, The Episcopal Church, The United Methodist Church, The Anglican Church of Canada, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, and the Rite of Christian Initiation of the Roman Catholic Church in the US. A group of scholars reviewed and adapted these rites for use by Journey to Baptismal Living: NAAC in official training and offer them to congregations as a resource for their own use.

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Introduction

Within these pages you will find the result of several years of prayerful and deliberative conversation among members of a *Journey to Baptismal Living* working group. Together, we have sought to develop from the richness of materials available across several Christian traditions (Roman Catholic, Episcopal, Anglican Church in Canada, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, and The United Methodist Church) a single resource at once fit to our shared understanding of the purposes of these rites and recognizable by our various traditions as well as useful in the training sessions we offer.

All of our traditions already share mutual recognition of the sacrament of baptism as offered by each other. We hope in offering these rites to be of mutual help to one another across our traditions as many of us are more fully claiming or recovering the roles of the whole of the congregation, through prayer enacted and spoken in corporate worship on the Lord's Day, to support those making a journey toward baptism.

Together we understand the process of becoming part of the community of the baptized as a journey led by the Holy Spirit and so never entirely predictable and certainly never programmatic. At the same time, as others before us have done, we recognize several distinct stages or thresholds in this journey. The Spirit draws people from no relationship to the Church toward some initial interest in learning more about it with us. Then, as they learn with us, the Spirit draws some of them to seek baptism and the fullness of life in Christ among us after and through a more intense period of spiritual preparation.

Each of the rites offered here provides an opportunity for the congregation to offer its prayers for those who seek to cross these thresholds and take up the work of these stages among us. We receive as hearers (or catechumens) those who are responding to a call to "come and hear" to discern whether and how the Spirit may be moving them toward a life of discipleship to Jesus. At some point along the way, some hearers become ready to take the more intensive formation in the life and way of Jesus with us. We welcome these as baptismal candidates, most typically at the beginning of Lent. And throughout the time of more intensive formation, there are weekly occasions for examination, intercession, and healing in public worship, in some traditions referred to as "The Scrutinies," so these candidates can know and feel themselves surrounded by the love and delivering power of Jesus with the whole congregation as they finalize their journey toward baptism into the life of the Triune God and the living body of Jesus Christ.



As we have developed these rites, we sought to be attentive to several things at once. We looked across our traditions for words that best align with and point to the core of the actions most appropriate for the rites in question. For those rites that may happen on particular Sundays in the liturgical year (especially during the Sundays in Lent), we sought to draw on images and ideas from the scriptures to be read that day so the ministry of the word and rite for the day are mutually reinforcing. Generally, we found one or more of the existing texts across our traditions apt or adaptable for what we were seeking. Occasionally we found ourselves working together in our regular online meetings either to tweak existing language or write new language we believed may be more compelling or more to the point. Sometimes we brought in as consultants others who had been part of producing some of these rites to help us answer our own questions about them and gain a deeper understanding of the logic and the history that informed them. Always, we engaged our work with a deep sense of reverence for one another, for the gifts our traditions had already brought forth, and for the differing ways our various traditions or individual congregations in them may use or perhaps further adapt our work to suit their contexts more fully.

With shared love in our one Lord, Jesus Christ, and shared passion for the work of preparing and supporting those who seek to live his way with us, we offer our work and these rites.

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Terminology

A key to terminology used in this resource

*1. For the **rites** themselves*

a. Receiving Hearers/Catechumens

“Welcome” is too vague because it both says too little and too much. What specifically are they being welcomed into and welcomed to do? What is the community doing in the rite?

b. Calling to Baptism (and Enrollment)

Enrollment is too limited since the core of the rite is the community calling the seekers to proximate preparation and the expression of their desire to do so. Yet the rite is written so that Enrollment can be omitted in some traditions.

c. Rite of Healing and Deliverance from Evil [and Restoration]

Rite of Healing and Deliverance from Evil [and Restoration] seems clear since everyone in the community, whether baptized or not, is still in need of repentance. Scrutiny is too ambiguous because it is not clear who is being scrutinized by whom.

*2. For **ministers** in the rites*

For convenience and adaptability in these rites the terminology from the ELCA has been used. It is meant to be adapted in actual performance to the denominational terminology of those using the rite.

a. Presiding minister (PM) = priest, pastor, minister

b. Assisting minister (AM) = deacon or lay assistant

If no such person is present then the PM takes over those words and functions as well.

c. Catechist = the person primarily in charge of catechesis of the participants. If the pastor is that person then another appropriate person should fulfill this role in the rite.

d. Sponsor = a member of the congregation who will walk with the hearer through the process all the way to Baptism.

*3. For the **participants***

a. Seekers = people entering the process

“Inquirers” is another good term, but “seekers” seemed to be the term most used in discussions today.

b. Hearers = people who have been received

“Catechumens” is the more traditional term, but the parallel with “seekers” seemed important.

d. Baptismal candidates = people who have been called to Baptism

“Candidates” by itself is too vague; what are they candidates for?

A Composite Rite for Receiving Hearers

[italics] indicates discussion of symbols for that portion of the rite.

[italics] indicates source of the portion of the rite

(. . .) indicates performance directions/rubrics

Part #1 Greeting – at the entrance

[The primary symbol for the first part of receiving is the community itself. No matter how many times unbaptized persons have attended worship, they have not entered into a formal relationship with Christ and the church. This first part gives both the unbaptized and the community such a moment of encounter.]

What requires sensitive discernment is where in the space Greeting should occur, especially if the worship space is not the familiar rectangular shape. In that space the doors in the rear or the space (if there are doors) at the back of the main aisle would be appropriate. In a more circular or fan-shaped space, wherever the seekers would experience themselves as standing at the threshold of the community would be the appropriate space.]

(Before the service begins, the person(s) being welcomed, the sponsor(s), and a catechist gather somewhere near the threshold of the assembly but still outside. If the pastor is the catechist, a lay person should take this role.)

The service opens as usual for the denomination with music and/or the presiding minister (PM) greeting the assembly.

An assisting minister (AM) indicates seekers have gathered at the threshold of the assembly and asks everyone to turn to turn toward them. The unbaptized seekers may knock on the doors.)

AM: (addressing the community)

The Holy Spirit has led these people here today seeking to hear the Word of God with us. Let us all turn towards XXX to welcome them here.

(The PM moves to the appropriate threshold of the assembly—along with the assisting minister (AM) and maybe a few people from the last few seats whom s/he asks to open the doors if there are any.)

PM: (addressing each seeker in turn) What is your name?

Seeker: (States name)

PM: What are you seeking?

Seeker: (responds in their own words, or words such as “to know Christ,” “new life in Jesus,” “to hear God’s word”)

(When all have answered, the PM addresses them all.)

PM: In the name of Christ this community welcomes (receives?) you here today.

AM: Come, join us in God’s household!

Part #2 Instruction to the Hearers and Mutual Promises – in the front or center of the community

[The primary symbol here is again the community which calls the seekers to their first commitment and then promises them mutual support.]

(The seekers are escorted with sponsors and catechist up to the front/center where they stand, facing the community with their sponsors behind them and the catechist to the side. Music! A song or refrain of welcome/reception would be appropriate.)

AM: (gestures for all to be seated)

PM: (standing in front, addressing the seekers)

Jesus said, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life.”

You have been drawn to Christ’s light,
and the way of the Gospel lies open before you.

Journey with us and learn to trust Christ.
Grow to believe in him with all your heart.
Jesus will show you how to love God and to love your neighbor
and will lead you to the fullness of life.

[Taken almost entirely from Come to the Waters.]¹

And so, I ask each of you:

PM: (addressing each seeker in turn)

PM: NN, Do you turn to Jesus?

Seeker: I turn to Jesus.

PM: NN, Do you seek Jesus as your Teacher?

Seeker: I seek Jesus.

PM: NN, will you follow Jesus, the Way, the Truth, and the Life?

Seeker: I will follow Jesus.

[Adapted from the Church of England’s Common Worship.]²

PM: (addressing the catechist)

NN, their teacher, do you affirm that these seekers sincerely wish to follow Christ?

Catechist: I do.

PM: (addressing the sponsors)

Sponsors, will you be the faithful companions of these seekers as they seek to grow in faith?

Sponsors: Yes, I will.

PM: (turning to address the congregation)

Sisters and brothers, if you are also willing to help these seekers learn to follow Jesus, please answer: Yes, I am ready! (Music?) to these questions.

PM: With the Spirit's help and God's grace, are you ready to help N&N come to know and follow Jesus?

All: Yes, I am ready! (Music?)

PM: Are you ready to care for them with your prayers and fellowship?

All: Yes, I am ready! (Music?)

PM: Are you ready to support them with the witness of your Christian life?

All: Yes, I am ready! (Music?)

[Questioning of the community inspired by the RCIA]³.

PM: (addressing the seekers)

God's grace and mercy have brought you here and given you the desire to follow Jesus!

Today your teachers, sponsors, and the whole community have promised their support.

We welcome you now to hear with us the Word of God!

(applause)

AM: Now receive the sign of Christ's way of life.

Part #3 Marking with the Sign of the Cross

[The primary symbol here is the act of marking of the seekers with the cross along with the words both of the PM and of the community. The refrain is best if it addresses the hearers directly as a call to come to know Christ. The Marking is positioned here to prepare them to hear the Word of God with the community.]

AM: (addressing the sponsors)

Sponsors, please stand beside your hearer/catechumen and turn to face them, in order to mark them with the sign of the cross of Jesus Christ.

PM: Receive the sign of the cross on your forehead, +

It is Jesus Christ himself who now strengthens you with this sign of his love.

Learn to know and follow him.

All: Musical refrain

PM: Receive the + cross on your ears, that you may hear the gospel of Christ, the word of life.

All: Music

PM: Receive the + cross on your eyes, that you may see the light of Christ, illumination for your way.

PM: Receive the + cross on your lips, that you may sing the praise of Christ, the joy of the church.

All: Music

PM: Receive the + cross on your heart, that Christ may dwell there by faith.

All: Music

PM: Receive the + cross on your shoulders, that you may bear the gentle yoke of Christ.

All: Music

PM: Receive the + cross on your hands, that Christ's mercy may be known in your work.

All: Music

PM: Receive the + cross on your feet, that you may walk in the way of Christ in your faith journey.

All: Music

[Adapted from the ELCA.]⁴

PM: Let us stand and pray.

Merciful and most high God, creator and life-giver of all that is,
you have called all people from darkness into light,
from error into truth, from death into life.

We ask you: grant grace to [names] and bless *them*.
Raise *them* by your Spirit. Revive *them* by your word.
Form *them* by your hand.

Bring our *hearers/catechumens* to the water of life,
and to the bread and cup of blessing,
that with all your people *they* may bear witness to your grace and praise you
forever through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All: **Amen.**

Part #4 Presentation of the Bible

[The primary symbols here are not just the Book but the act of hearing it with the community.]

(A catechist presents a Bible to each hearer/catechumen.)

AM: Receive this Bible. Learn and tell its stories.
Discover its mysteries. Honor its commandments.
Rejoice in its good news.
May God's life-giving word, sweeter than honey,
inspire you and make you wise.
Now join us in hearing God's Word.

[From ELCA]⁴

God's word is like bread to our hearts; we cannot live without it.
God's word is like rain that comes down upon the earth;
it brings forth fruit in our lives.

Come now and share with us in hearing the word of the Lord.

[From ACC]⁵

(AM may direct hearers, sponsors, and catechist to go to their seats. The service continues with the readings.)

If the hearers/catechumens are being dismissed, it would be appropriate to do the presentation of the Bible at that point in the service.)

DISMISSAL WITH BLESSING

[The act of dismissal continues the ancient practice of catechumens and hearers being sent for further learning rather than staying to participate in the Eucharist. They receive a full Trinitarian blessing from both the pastor and the congregation, as they are now understood to be attached to the whole body, even if not yet fully members incorporate of it]

AM or lay person: (invites the hearers forward to face the community. The Presentation of the Bible, above, may occur here instead).

Pastor:

Candidates and sponsors,
go forth with the blessing of our Triune God,
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,

Congregation:

and with our blessing. Amen.

(The hearers and sponsors may be dismissed to their formational group for reflection and prayer about what has happened today and the journey that now lies ahead.)

REFERENCES

1. "First Acceptance of the Gospel" from the service "Welcoming a Hearer" is taken from the book *Come to the Waters: Baptism and Our Ministry of Welcoming Seekers and Making Disciples* (page 110), by Daniel T. Benedict Jr. Copyright (c) 1996 by Discipleship Resources, Nashville, Tennessee. All rights reserved. Used by permission. p. 109.
2. "The Decision," *Common Worship*, pg. 353.
3. *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA)*, US Conference of Catholic Bishops, Chicago: LTP, 1988, questioning of congregation inspired by #53.
4. *Evangelical Lutheran Worship: Leaders Desk Edition*, Copyright 2006, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Published by Augsburg Fortress Publishers. "Welcome to Baptism," pp.593-5.
5. Calling to be a Hearer, "Welcoming Inquirers," *Making Disciples*, Anglican Church of Canada, pg. 9, <https://www.anglican.ca/makingdisciples/>

INTRODUCTION TO THE RITES OF INTENSE PREPARATION

In the preaching of John the Baptist, the prophet admits that his baptism brings only the forgiveness of sins while the One who comes after him will baptize in water and the Spirit. In Christian initiation the believer is reborn as a living member of Christ's Body, transformed in heart, mind, and life into the Savior.

This transformation begins with repentance. In the Synoptics Jesus's first proclamation is: "Repent and believe!"—two interconnected spiritual components of the journey to rebirth in Baptism and an ongoing life of discipleship.

The Rites of Healing and Deliverance and the Presentation of the Creed are meant to help the baptismal candidates to fulfill both of Jesus's commands by helping them to encounter him as Lord and Savior in the midst of the community and to trust in him more deeply—all under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. At the same time, these rites are meant to renew the Christian community as they accompany the baptismal candidates on their journey to the font and the Table.

The catechumenal rites of the North American mainline churches as adapted in the late 20th Century tended to emphasize the presentations. These composite rites attempt to reclaim the element of repentance as well through the Rites of Healing and Deliverance.

Practical Considerations


1. Where to enact the rites? The primary actor in these rites is the gathered community, this part of Christ's Body. It is they who surround the baptismal candidates with their presence and prayers; they who recite the words of the Creed to the baptismal candidates; they who model Christian living as they share in reflection and prayer along with the baptismal candidates. These rites therefore need to unfold in the spot in the worship space where the baptismal candidates will best experience the community's supportive presence.

Yet the role played by the catechists, sponsors, and clergy is also crucial. As the early Fathers say, these are the midwives in the Church's process of giving birth in the Spirit.

2. Touch is a crucial part of these rites in imitation of Jesus's practice in his ministry. The sponsors should usually have a hand on the shoulder of the baptismal candidates throughout. The person laying on hands must do so reverently and slowly. The words spoken should be memorized if possible.

Word of warning: some people are phobic about touch. If someone cannot be comfortable with hands *upon* their head, then perhaps on their *shoulders* would work. As a last resort, hands *over* their head could still be powerful.

3. If at some point there is to be an anointing of the baptismal candidates' hands



(another of Jesus's healing gestures), then the container of oil should preferably be glass so that all can see its contents, sitting in a prominent place from the beginning, and with a towel available for the person anointing. The baptismal candidates need only rub their hands together to work the oil in (Mark 6:7,13.)

This anointing in the ancient world often was part of the final rite of healing and deliverance to end that process with a forceful gesture.

4. In the ancient world over time the presentations were of many things: the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, the Psalms, the Gospels, etc. Yet the oldest and most central is that of the Creed because the baptismal candidates were entrusted with the core tenets of the biblical faith into which they were soon to be baptized. (Cf. 1 Corinthians 15, 1-8.) The most common Sunday for its presentation was 6th Lent, antedating its celebration as Palm Sunday. Today that celebration does not need another rite added to it.

The Sunday that is "open," though, is 2nd Lent. For some churches that can be the Transfiguration, a gospel selection that which works well with the theme of enlightenment. The Gospels and other readings of the Revised Common Lectionary also work well with presenting the Creed.

5. To accompany and reinforce the Presentation of the Creed, the Ephphetha is another gospel gesture available. The same concerns about touch need to be considered here as well. (Cf. Mark 7, 31-37.)

6. The other Presentations might be combined with the Rite of Healing and Deliverance for that Sunday if that is the custom of that denomination. Or they might be anticipated before Lent begins.

ADDITIONAL BACKGROUND FOR THE RITES OF INTENSE PREPARATION


Throughout the Western Church in antiquity those involved in the final stages of preparation for Christian initiation participated not only in catechetical sessions but in rituals of healing and deliverance which were known as scrutinies because the community wished to see if God was truly at work in these people. The earliest phrase to describe how catechumens were growing in faith was to see if they were “capable of hearing the Word.” With those catechumens who presented themselves for final preparation, the question was whether they had shown authentic repentance by putting that Word into practice. Were their minds, hearts, and behavior already being transformed?

Jesus and his disciples were not post-Enlightenment, post-scientific revolution, “modern” people. An element of the Gospels that is often downplayed is clearly seen in Mark. When Jesus sends out the apostles in pairs to proclaim repentance, he gives them power over evil spirits; and they go forth as itinerant preachers, laying on hands, curing the sick, and casting out demons. The preaching of the kingdom involved not just a spiritual transformation but an emotional, moral, and even physical transformation in the midst of a world and a society where the powers of evil were seen as concretely at work.

The ancient rituals of healing and deliverance therefore sometimes involved a physical examination of the candidates and always a strongly exorcistic element with multiple hand-layings and anointings, tasting of the salt of wisdom and breathing in the candidates’ faces to expel the evil which was being commanded directly to depart. Meanwhile the candidates were asked to examine their own lives to show proof, not that they were *worthy* of initiation, but that they were *ready*, and to deepen their relationship with Jesus in the Spirit. Were they yearning that the chains of evil which bound them in many ways might be broken by rebirth and new life in the Spirit in the waters of the font?

The post-Vatican II reformers took this ritual treasure-house from antiquity and tried to adapt it to a more modern understanding—even though they knew that in parts of Africa and Asia especially the process would be used with people with a pre-modern mentality. (An optional RCIA rite as part of becoming a catechumen is the Renunciation of Fetishes and Amulets.) The clearest indication of their adaptation is that the powers of evil are no longer commanded in the second person of the verb to depart but are rather prayed against in the third person.

The Reformers portray this time of intense preparation as different from ordinary catechumenal catechesis; the focus is now on preparing the candidates for the *experience* of sacramental initiation by asking them to move more deeply into self-awareness by encountering the Word, specifically the Johannine gospel selections of the 3th, 4th, and 5th Sundays, in an intimate way. Using one of the techniques of spiritual direction, they are asked to become through their imaginations the Samaritan Woman, the Man Born Blind, Mary and Martha, and Lazarus. They are asked not only to see what within them needs to be healed or strengthened but also to discern how Jesus desires to transform them. The modern prayers of the scrutinies are filled with such scriptural imagery as the community intercedes for their transformation.



In most RCIA processes the catechetical sessions before the Sunday rituals are focused upon a careful reading and examination of the coming Sunday's selection, filling out a reaction sheet with several questions to help jumpstart their imaginations, and sharing reflections with the group. In some places this discussion is the basis for a litany over the participants at the Sunday service.

In trying to produce something contemporary American Protestants might be at ease with and find spiritually effective, we have tried to put the Word front and center. In Protestant rites the reflective questions used in the catechetical sessions may form the actual litany so that the baptismal candidates encounter the Word in the context of Sunday worship, and then encounter a gesture of healing and deliverance related to what they have heard.

The hand-laying gesture used in the third scrutiny is scriptural. In the third scrutiny in the RCIA there is often also an anointing with the Oil of Catechumens. We are not certain how people in general would react to the anointing, but in some traditions it might be effective. The framing texts from the ELCA and the prayers from the RCIA and the ACC were already available for adaptation.

These rites are also written so that the entire community participates in the reflection and prays not only for the baptismal candidates but for themselves. Although Christian initiation is meant to be a definitive transformation of the whole person, even the ancient world knew the reality of post-baptismal sin. And so they created a process similar to the catechumenate in which "penitents" were given a second chance to claim Christ's victory over sin and death.

That is why the entire community is called on Ash Wednesday to relive their call to repentance and to a deepening of their life in the Spirit—leading up to their reaffirmation of the Baptismal Covenant on Easter. (Some denominations still have the custom of Confession and Absolution before Easter.)

A Composite Rite for Calling to Baptism (and Enrollment)

This rite is given two possible names to denote different ways it may be embodied in different traditions. Some traditions have a practice of candidates for baptism signing a candidate book. For these, this action is ritually significant enough to call this a rite of enrollment. Others do not have such a practice or would find it strange or forced. For these, the term Calling to Baptism more adequately captures the intention of this rite. For either, the First Sunday in Lent or Advent would be the most appropriate time for such a rite.

The gospel reading for the First Sunday in Lent regularly focuses upon Jesus being driven into the wilderness during or just after which he was tempted by Satan. While some existing rites of Calling/Enrollment do not include specific acts of renunciation, such acts are proposed as an integral part of this rite.

The Spirit's Calling through the Church and the Response of the Hearers

This rite properly takes place as a response to the sermon or homily.

(Proposed candidates for baptism are called forward by name to stand before the congregation with their sponsors, facing the people.)

If the congregation has a catechist who supervises the entire process of baptismal formation, the catechist presents the candidates and their sponsors to the congregation. Otherwise, an AM or the PM does so, with these or similar words.)

Catechist/AM: *(addressing the baptismal candidates in the community)*

Sisters and brothers,
by God's grace you have been drawn to this community,
and with your sponsors have been learning together
what it means to turn to Christ,
to accept Christ as Teacher,
and to follow Christ as Way, Truth, and Life.

You have done this by attending worship together,
by reading and discussing the scriptures,
by engaging in acts of service with the vulnerable,
and by growing in the spiritual disciplines of prayer and fasting.

{Language based on the General Rule 3 of the early Methodist Societies, and grounded in the questions to sponsors in Apostolic Tradition}

PM: *(to the community)*

And so, people of God, on this First Sunday in (Lent/Advent),
what is your call to these people now?

Congregation:

**In the name of Christ, and in the power of the Spirit,
we call you to the sacrament of baptism at Easter (Epiphany).
Turn from every evil way.
Prepare to die and rise with Christ,
that you may walk in newness of life.**

{Based on Romans 6}

PM (**addressing baptismal candidates, one by one**)
(*First Name*), how do you respond to this call?

Baptismal Candidates (**responding one by one**):
I receive the call, seek to turn from every evil way,
and desire to be baptized at Easter (Epiphany).

PM to sponsors:
Testify to the growth in Christ of the one you sponsor,
in heart, mind, and actions.

*Each sponsor introduces herself or himself and offers a brief testimony to the
growth of the one each sponsors.*

PM to Congregation:
You have heard the willingness of the candidates,
and the testimony of their sponsors.
Will you support them with your prayers,
your presence,
your service,
and your witness
as they learn to live more fully as disciples of Jesus
in the covenant of Holy Baptism?

{Language from the membership vows of The United Methodist Church}

Congregation: **Yes, we will!** (**or musical response**)

PM (**to baptismal candidates**):
You have heard the call of the church,
the testimony of your sponsors,
and the eagerness of this congregation
to receive you as candidates for the sacrament of baptism at Easter (Epiphany).

For your part, you have received and committed yourselves to this call.
During the coming weeks, prepare to entrust yourselves fully to Christ,
turning from evil and learning to stand in his light here in the company of his
Church. (**Applause or musical response**)

[PART 2: ENROLLMENT]

Come now, each one of you,
and signify your commitment to this calling
by signing your name in the book of baptismal candidates.

The catechist or sponsor may announce the name of each candidate as each signs the book. And the congregation responds, perhaps with music, “Blessed be God, O blessed be God, who calls you by name, holy and chosen one.” (RCIA/GIA?) Or “Lord Jesus, you call your own by name and lead them to waters of life” (ELW), or “God who began a good work in you” (TFWS).

After all baptismal candidates have signed the book, the catechist, lay leader, deacon, or pastor may close it. It may be taken out to be presented and placed upon the Lord’s Table or on in another appropriate place at the time of the offertory later in the service.)

Part 2 or 3: Prayer over the Baptismal Candidates and Sponsors

(AM invites all to raise hands in blessing over the new baptismal candidates)

PM (and people):

**Merciful and most high God, creator and life-giver of all that is,
you have called all people from darkness into light,
from error into truth, from death into life.**

We ask you: grant grace to [Names] and bless *them*.

Raise *them* by your Spirit. Revive *them* by your word. Form *them* by your hand. Bring these candidates for baptism to the water of life

and to the bread and cup of blessing,

that with all your people *they* may bear witness to your grace and praise you forever through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen (*sung*).

[From the ELCA]¹

Part 3 or 4: DISMISSAL WITH BLESSING


{The act of dismissal continues the ancient practice of catechumens and hearers being sent for further learning rather than staying to participate in the Eucharist. They receive a full Trinitarian blessing from both the pastor and the congregation, as they are now understood to be attached to the whole body, even if not yet fully members incorporate of it}

PM: Baptismal candidates,
God bring you in peace and joy
to the day of your baptism
and the fullness of life in Christ.

Now go forth with the blessing of our Triune God,
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,

Congregation:

and with our blessing. Amen.



(The candidates and sponsors may be dismissed to their formational groups for reflection and prayer about what has happened today and the journey that now lies ahead.)

REFERENCES

1. *Evangelical Lutheran Worship: Leaders Desk Edition*, Copyright 2006, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Published by Augsburg Fortress Publishers. "Welcome to Baptism," pp.594-5.

RITE OF PRESENTATION OF THE CREED

LENT 2

[italics] indicates discussion of symbols for that portion of the rite.

[italics] indicates source of the portion of the rite.

(...) indicates performance directions.

Part 1: Invitation to the Profession – at the front or center of the space of the assembly

[The primary symbol for the first part of this rite is the community itself. Having received them as hearers and called them as candidates, the community's responsibility is to entrust the baptismal candidates with the Profession of Faith, with the core of the Baptismal Covenant which the baptismal candidates will profess before entering the waters of Baptism. The core gesture therefore is not handing them a printed copy of the Creed as a document but its living profession by the baptized in the hearing of the baptismal candidates.]

(After the homily or sermon the catechist or the assisting minister (AM) goes to the lectern and addresses the assembly.)

Catechist/AM: Sisters and brothers,
(last Sunday) this parish/congregation took on the responsibility of leading N&N/
these baptismal candidates to the waters of the font (at Easter Vigil).
Together, we are involved in their preparation.
Individually, each of us is called to support them with our prayers, our fellowship,
and the witness of our Christian lives.
Today we begin their final preparation for Baptism
by handing over to them within this community that Creed which is the
expression of our common faith and of our common life in God.

[Inspired by the RCIA]¹

AM: Candidates, as I call your name, come forward with your sponsor.
(When called, they come forward and line up in the front or center, facing the
assembly, with their sponsors behind them keeping a hand on their shoulders)

Part 2: The Presentation

(The presiding minister (PM) goes to stand in the center aisle or other place that is situated within the assembly and faces the baptismal candidates.)

PM: You have begun your final preparation for baptism.

It is time for us to entrust to you our Church's Profession of Faith.

By professing this faith everyone here has been brought to share in God's own life, through Christ and in the power of the Holy Spirit.

The words of our Profession are few; the mysteries they express are rich and broad and deep. Listen to them, reflect on them, and pray over them with a sincere and open heart. Soon you will share more fully in God's own life by professing them together with us when we renew our covenant and the vows of our common baptism at Easter.

[Inspired by the RCIA]²

PM: (inviting the assembly to stand and join in the Apostles Creed)

We believe in God,...

Part 3: The Ephphetha

AM: Sponsors, please stand next to your candidate so that you may face each other.

PM: Sponsors, I invite you now to mark these candidates once again with the sign of faith. And I invite this whole community to repeat these words after me.

(on the ears) Jesus opened the ears of the deaf.*

In his name we say to you*: Ephphetha! Be opened! (+)

May you hear his call to faith!

(on the mouth) Jesus opened the mouth of the mute* and gave them speech.*

In his name we say to you*: Ephphetha! Be opened!*

May you profess the faith the you have heard* to the glory and praise of God.*

[Inspired by the RCIA]³

Part 4: Prayer for the Baptismal Candidates

PM: Let us pray.

Merciful and most high God, creator and life-giver of all that is, you have called all people from darkness into light, from error into truth, from death into life.

We ask you: grant grace to [*Names*] and bless *them*.

Raise *them* by your Spirit. Revive *them* by your word.

Form *them* by your hand.

Bring our *hearers/catechumens* to the water of life and to the bread and cup of blessing, that with all your people *they* may bear witness to your grace not only with their words but with their lives and come to praise you forever through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

[Adapted from ELCA]⁴

Part #5 (4): DISMISSAL WITH BLESSING

{The act of dismissal after the sermon continues the ancient practice of catechumens and hearers being sent for further learning rather than staying to participate in the Eucharist. They receive a full Trinitarian blessing from both the pastor and the congregation, as they are part of the household of Christ on the way to becoming fully members incorporate of it}

PM: Hearers and sponsors,
go forth with the blessing of our Triune God,
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,

Congregation: **and with our blessing. Amen.**

(The hearers and sponsors may be dismissed to their formational group for reflection and prayer about what has happened today and the journey that now lies ahead. Otherwise they return to their seats.)

REFERENCES

1. *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA)*, US Conference of Catholic Bishops, Chicago: LTP, 1988, outline for homily #159.
2. *RCIA*, address to elect #160.
3. *RCIA*, Ephphetha #199.
4. *Evangelical Lutheran Worship: Leaders Desk Edition*, Copyright 2006, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Published by Augsburg Fortress Publishers. "Welcome to Baptism," pp. 594-5.

RITE OF HEALING & DELIVERANCE

LENT III Year A

[*italics*] = explanations of symbols at work.

(...) = directions

{...} = sources and explanations

1. Calling Forward

[The core symbol here is presence and action of the community and the participants' evolving role in it.]

(After homily/sermon, AM/catechist calls the hearers and their sponsors forward, possibly by name.)

AM/Catechist: Brothers and sisters,
as we lead these candidates towards Baptism,
we are called to continue to support them with our fellowship and prayers.

AM: Would the baptismal candidates please come forward with their sponsors.

2. Reflection

[The core symbol here is that candidates and the community are doing the same reflection. Baptism is a transformative experience in the Spirit, but the baptized are still sinners, and everyone is called anew to repentance in preparation for Easter. Their modelling of repentance and prayers are part of their role in the formation of the baptismal candidates.]

(After everyone is standing in the front or center, facing forward towards the PM.)

PM: As the woman of Samaria confessed her faith in Jesus Christ, the giver of the water of life, so the church confesses our need of Christ and our trust in God's mercy.

We invite you whom God has chosen for baptism to join all the people of God in confessing our common sinfulness and need for God's mercy. Let us all open ourselves to the Spirit's work.

[adapted from the ELCA]¹

[The people assume postures appropriate to prayer as they are able].

Reader/catechist:

a. In what ways do you find yourself in a desert? Alone, thirsty, dried out, wandering?

(90-second pause or whatever seems appropriate for this gathering)

Musicians & all: God of all goodness, fountain of life, give us to drink!

b. What are you afraid to tell other people about yourself, even Jesus?
(pause & music)

c. What would you tell Jesus about your thirst and your hesitation?

(pause & music)

d. How have you already received living water from Jesus?

How have you shared it with others?

(pause & music)

PM (**standing**) God of power, you sent your Son to be the Savior of the World. May our baptismal candidates, like the woman of Samaria, thirst for living water and find in Jesus the fountain which they seek. Free us all from the sins and weaknesses that weigh us down; and make us holy by a fresh gift of your Spirit. Teach us how to worship and serve you in spirit and truth. We ask this through Christ Jesus for he is Lord forever and ever.

All: Amen.

[inspired by the RCIA]²

(or)

God of mercy, through your Son you revealed your faithful care for the woman of Samaria and offered salvation to all who are lonely and estranged. In your great love, show your mercy to these baptismal candidates, N and N who desire to be reborn as your children. As they draw near to the fountain of living water, heal them from all bitterness and resentment, from all that holds them back from you. By the consolation of your gracious Spirit, awaken in us all a real thirst for a share in your eternal life. May our lives be a sign of your redeeming love for all among whom we live. We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All: Amen

[adapted from the ACC]³

3. Prayer for Deliverance and Healing

[This gesture of hand-laying is one of the oldest rituals of the catechumenate, done in imitation of Jesus who used it in his ministry of healing and deliverance and sent his disciples out to do the same.]

--PM lays hands on the head of each hearer in turn, with sponsor either standing behind with hands on shoulders kneeling beside with a hand on a shoulder.

--PM could say an appropriate formula to each.

PM: N., Christ our Savior strengthen you with his power, for he is Lord forever and ever.

Baptismal Candidate: Amen

[from the RCIA]⁴

All: **refrain**

(or)



PM: N., God who has begun this good work in you bring it to completion in Christ Jesus who is Lord forever and ever. *[from Philippians]*

Baptismal Candidate: Amen.

All: refrain

4. Dismissal

--AM dismisses everyone to their appropriate place.

REFERENCES

1. *Holy Baptism and Related Rites, Renewing Worship* volume 3. [RW3] Prepared for provisional use. Copyright 2002. Administered by Augsburg Fortress, pg. 12.
2. *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA)*, US Conference of Catholic Bishops, Chicago: LTP, 1988, Cf. collects in #155.
3. “Prayers for Deliverance for Baptismal Candidates” in *Making Disciples*, p. 29, <https://www.anglican.ca/makingdisciples/>
4. *RCIA* #301b

RITE OF HEALING AND DELIVERANCE

LENT IV Year A

[italics] = explanations of symbols at work.

(....) = directions

{...} = sources and explanations

1. Calling Forward

[The core symbol here is the community and the candidates' evolving role in it.]

(After homily/sermon, AM/catechist calls the hearers and their sponsors forward.)

AM/Catechist: Brothers and sisters,
as we lead these candidates towards Baptism,
we must continue to support them with our fellowship and prayers.

Would the baptismal candidates please come forward with their sponsors.

2. Reflection

[The core symbol here is that they and the community are doing the same reflection. Baptism is a transformative experience in the Spirit, but the baptized are still sinners. Their modelling of repentance and prayers are part of their role in the formation of the baptismal candidates.]

(After everyone is standing in front, facing forward towards the PM.)

PM: As the blind man turned away from the shadows and toward Christ, the light, so the church, empowered by the Spirit, renounces the power of evil in all its forms. Let us pray to God who fills the world and our hearts with light. Let us all open ourselves to the Spirit's work.

[adapted from the ELCA]¹

(The people kneel, bow heads, or assume other postures appropriate to prayer as they are able).

Reader/catechist:

a. In your life's journey what has kept you from seeing the truth?

(90-second pause or whatever seems appropriate for this gathering)

Musicians & all: Lord of all mercy, giver of light, restore our sight!

b. What truth have you failed to acknowledge about yourself? About others?
(pause & music)

c. How has Christ's light already scattered the shadows in your life?
(pause & music)

d. Where are the shadows in society or in the Church that obscure the light of Christ?
(pause & music)

PM (standing) Lord God, source of unfailing life, by the death and resurrection of Christ you have cast out the shadows of hatred and lies and poured the light of truth and love upon the human family. Hear our prayers for N&N&N: enable them to pass into the fullness of your light and deliver them from the power of evil. May we all live as children of the light, faithful witnesses to the faith that lives in us. We ask this through Christ Jesus, for he is Lord forever and ever.

All: Amen.

[inspired by the RCIA]²

(or)

Gracious God, you helped the man born blind to believe in Jesus as the Christ, and through that faith to receive the light of your kingdom. Free your chosen ones, N and N, from the falsehoods that surround and blind them. Strengthen their hearts with your loving Spirit that truth may be the foundation of their lives. May we all live in your light forever and fearlessly bear witness to what we have seen and heard. We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All: Amen

[adapted from the ACC]³

3. Prayer for Deliverance and Healing

[This gesture of hand-laying is one of the oldest rituals of the catechumenate, done in imitation of Jesus who used it in his ministry of healing and deliverance and sent his disciples out to do the same.]

*(PM lays hands on the head of each hearer in turn, with sponsor either standing behind with hands on shoulders, or kneeling beside with a hand on a shoulder.)
(PM could say an appropriate formula to each.)*

PM: Christ our Savior strengthen you with his power for he is Lord forever and ever.

Baptismal Candidate: Amen

[from the RCIA]⁴

All: refrain

(or)

PM: God who has begun this good work in you bring it to completion in Christ Jesus, who is Lord forever and ever.

Baptismal Candidate: Amen.

[from Philippians]

All: refrain

4. Dismissal

--AM dismisses everyone to their appropriate place.

REFERENCES

1. RW3, pg. 12.
2. *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA)*, US Conference of Catholic Bishops, Chicago: LTP, 1988, Cf. collects in #168.
3. "Prayers for Deliverance for Baptismal Candidates" in *Making Disciples*, p. 30, <https://www.anglican.ca/makingdisciples/>
4. RCIA #301b

RITE OF HEALING & DELIVERANCE

LENT V Year A

[italics] = explanations of symbols at work.

(...) = directions

[...] = sources and explanations

1. Calling Forward

[The core symbol here is the community and the participants' evolving role in it.]

(After homily/sermon, AM/catechist calls the hearers and their sponsors forward.)

AM/Catechist: Brothers and sisters, as we lead these baptismal candidates towards Baptism, we are called to continue to support them with our fellowship and prayers.

AM: Would the baptismal candidates please come forward with their sponsors.

2. Reflection

[The core symbol here is that candidates and the community are doing the same reflection. Baptism is a transformative experience in the Spirit, but the baptized are still sinners.]

(After everyone is standing in front, facing forward towards the PM.)

PM: As Mary and Martha prayed for their brother Lazarus, so the church prays for you, for ourselves, and for all the world, confident in the life-giving presence and mercy of Christ. Aware of our common sinfulness and of God's mercy, let us all open ourselves to the Spirit's work.

[The people kneel, bow heads, or assume other postures appropriate to prayer as they are able].

[adapted from the ELCA]¹

Reader/catechist:

a. What part of your life makes you feel as if you were living in a tomb?

What old habits or ways of looking at life make you feel trapped and lifeless?

(90-second pause or whatever seems appropriate for this gathering)

Musicians & all: God of the living, not of the dead, raise us to life!

b. What part of society or the Church makes you feel the same way?

(pause & music)

c. When do you experience a call to come forth from your tomb? To find liberation?

(pause & music)

d. How has Jesus been restoring you to life? When do you feel his new life in you?

(pause & music)

PM (standing) Father, source of all life, in giving life to the living you show the image of your glory; in raising the dead you reveal your unbounded power. Free from the grasp of death these chosen ones who await your life-giving sacraments, and deliver them from the corruption of evil. Through your Spirit who gives life, fill us all with faith, hope, and love, that we might live always with you in the glory of the resurrection. We ask this through Christ Jesus, who is Lord forever and ever.

All: Amen.

[inspired by the RCIA]²

(or)

Almighty God, fountain of life, you seek your glory in humanity fully alive; you make known your love in the resurrection of the dead. Rescue from the tyranny of death these chosen ones, N and N, who approach the waters of new birth and hunger for the banquet of life. Do not let the power of death hold them back for by their faith they will share with us in the resurrection triumph of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

All: Amen

[adapted from the ACC]³

3.Option A: Prayer for Deliverance and Healing

[This gesture of hand-laying is one of the oldest rituals of the catechumenate, done in imitation of Jesus who used it in his ministry of healing and deliverance and sent his disciples out to do the same.]

*(PM lays hands on the head of each hearer in turn with sponsor either standing behind with hands on shoulders or kneeling beside with a hand on a shoulder.)
(PM could say an appropriate formula to each.)*

PM: Christ our Savior strengthen you with his power, for he is Lord forever and ever.

Baptismal Candidate: Amen

[from the RCIA]⁴

All: refrain

(or)

PM: God who has begun this good work in you bring it to completion in Christ Jesus, who is Lord forever and ever. *[from Philippians]*

Baptismal Candidate: Amen.

All: refrain

3. Option B: Anointing of the Hands

[This gesture of anointing with a healing oil is also one of the oldest rituals of the catechumenate, done in imitation of Jesus who used it in his ministry of healing and deliverance and sent his disciples out to do the same. Any light, plain, unscented plant-based oil is appropriate]

(Facing the hearers, the PM anoints each with plain oil on both hands, while saying to each:)

N.N., *We anoint you with/Receive* this healing oil in the name of Christ our Savior. May he strengthen you with his power, for he lives and reigns forever and ever.

Baptismal Candidate: Amen.

All: refrain

*[Adapted from the RCIA]*⁵

4. Dismissal

(AM dismisses everyone to their appropriate place.)

REFERENCES

1. *RW3*, pg. 12.
2. *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA)*, US Conference of Catholic Bishops, Chicago: LTP, 1988, Cf. collects in #175.
3. “Prayers for Deliverance for Baptismal Candidates” in *Making Disciples*, p. 31, <https://www.anglican.ca/makingdisciples/>
4. *RCIA* #301b
5. *RCIA* #103 or *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, p. 277

RITE OF HEALING AND DELIVERANCE

LENT III B

[italics] = explanations of symbols at work.

(...) = directions

[...] = sources and explanations

1. Calling Forward

[The core symbol here is the community and the candidates' evolving role in it.]

(After homily/sermon, AM/catechist calls the hearers and their sponsors forward.)

AM/Catechist: Brothers and sisters, as we lead these candidates towards Baptism, we are called to support them with our fellowship and prayers. Would the baptismal candidates please come forward with their sponsors.

2. Reflection

[The core symbol here is that they and the community are doing the same reflection. Baptism is a transformative experience in the Spirit, but the baptized are still sinners.]

(After everyone is standing in front, facing forward towards the PM.)

PM: Jesus came to the temple in Jerusalem and drove out the human obstacles between the people and God. So the Church confesses our need for him to do this same delivering work in us. We invite you whom God has chosen for baptism to join the people of God as we all kneel down/bow our heads and open ourselves to the Spirit's call.

[adapted from the ELCA]¹

[The people kneel, bow heads, or assume other postures appropriate to prayer as they are able].

Reader/catechist:

a. Looking at our own lives, what should we ask Jesus to drive out from us?

(90-second pause)

Musicians & all: Christ crucified, true power of God, now set us free.

How have we betrayed our relationship with Jesus by putting other "gods" into our lives?

(pause & music)

c. What stumbling blocks within us keep God's power from working through us?

(pause & music)

d. What prevents us from hearing the voices of poor and vulnerable people?

(pause & music)

PM (**standing**): God of all power, from living stones, your chosen people, you are building an eternal temple to your glory. Hear our prayers *N&N* whom you have

called to Baptism. Cleanse them from sin; set them firm on Christ, the cornerstone; make them holy by a fresh gift of your Spirit. Give us all a deeper trust in the power and wisdom revealed in our crucified Lord. This we ask through Christ, who is Lord forever and ever.

All: Amen.

[adapted from the RC Sacramentary]²

(or)

Loving God, you sent your Son to restore to us the joy of your presence that we might worship you in spirit and in truth. Deliver N and N whom you have called from every spiritual obstacle and deceit. Reveal through us the splendor of your dwelling place, the glory of Christ's body created anew in the resurrection of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

[from the ACC]³

3. Prayer for Deliverance and Healing

[This gesture of hand-laying is one of the oldest rituals of the catechumenate, done in imitation of Jesus who used it in his ministry of healing and deliverance and sent his disciples out to do the same.]

--PM lays hands on the head of each hearer in turn, with sponsor either standing behind with hands on shoulders or kneeling beside with a hand on a shoulder.

--PM could say an appropriate formula to each

PM: May Christ our Savior strengthen you with his power for he is Lord forever and ever.

Baptismal Candidate: Amen

[from the RCIA]⁴

(or)

PM: May God who has begun this good work in you bring it to completion in Christ Jesus who is Lord forever and ever. *{from Philipians}*

Baptismal Candidate: Amen.

4. Dismissal

--AM dismisses everyone to their appropriate place.

REFERENCES

1. *Holy Baptism and Related Rites, Renewing Worship* volume 3. [RW3] Prepared for provisional use. Copyright 2002. Administered by Augsburg Fortress, pg. 15.

2. US Catholic 1973 *Sacramentary*, Cf. Opening Prayer for Common of the Dedication of a Church Outside the Dedicated Church.

3. "Prayers for Deliverance for Baptismal Candidates" in *Making Disciples*, p. 30, <https://www.anglican.ca/makingdisciples/>

4. RCIA #301b

RITE OF HEALING AND DELIVERANCE

LENT IV B

[italics] = explanations of symbols at work.

(...) = directions

[italics] = sources and explanations

1. Calling Forward

[The core symbol here is the community and the candidates' evolving role in it.]

(After homily/sermon, AM/catechist calls the hearers and their sponsors forward.)

AM/Catechist: Brothers and sisters, as we lead these candidates towards Baptism, we are called to support them with our fellowship and prayers. Would the baptismal candidates please come forward with their sponsors.

2. Reflection

[The core symbol here is that they and the community are doing the same reflection. Baptism is a transformative experience in the Spirit, but the baptized are still sinners.]

(After everyone is standing in front, facing forward towards the PM.)

PM: Jesus calls us to turn away from self-centeredness and to live in God's great love. Empowered by the Spirit, we renounce the power of evil. Let us pray that God will expose the world's empty promises, and reveal in us the immeasurable riches of God's redeeming grace. Let us all kneel down/bow our heads and open ourselves to the Spirit's call.

[adapted from the ELCA]¹

[The people kneel, bow heads, or assume other postures appropriate to prayer as they are able].

Reader/catechist:

a. How have you been surprised by God's grace at work within you?
(90-second pause)

Musicians & all: Love of the Father, life of the world, open our hearts!

b. How is Jesus freeing you from fleshly desires to be gracious toward others?
(pause & music)

c. What are you still afraid to admit about yourself? Where are you still trapped in a false image you are trying to create for myself?
(pause & music)

d. Jesus was lifted on the cross to reveal and heal the harm of our destructive words and ways. What is Jesus revealing and healing in us?
(pause & music)

PM (**standing**) Lord God, source of unfailing life, by the death and resurrection of Christ you have cast out the shadows of hatred and lies and poured the light of truth and love upon the human family. Hear our prayers for *N&N*: enable them to pass into the fullness of your light, and deliver them from the power of evil. May we all live as children of the light, faithful witnesses to the faith that lives in us. We ask this through Christ Jesus, for he is Lord forever and ever.

All: Amen.

[inspired by the RCIA]²

(or)

O God, rich in mercy, look upon your chosen ones (N and N) who wait in joyful hope for the day when they will pass through the waters of baptism and be lifted up to the New Life of Jesus Christ. Free us all from evil, and fill us with your grace as we look upon Jesus lifted up and see in him your power to save the world, for he is Lord, now and forever.

All. Amen.

[from the ACC]³

3. Prayer for Deliverance and Healing

This gesture of hand-laying is one of the oldest rituals of the catechumenate, done in imitation of Jesus who used it in his ministry of healing and deliverance and sent his disciples out to do the same.]

--PM lays hands on the head of each hearer in turn, with sponsor either standing behind with hands on shoulders or kneeling beside with a hand on a shoulder.

--PM could say an appropriate formula to each

PM: May Christ our Savior strengthen you with his power for he is Lord forever and ever.

Baptismal Candidate

: Amen

[from the RCIA]⁴

(or)

PM: May God who has begun this good work in you bring it to completion in Christ Jesus who is Lord forever and ever. *[from Philipians]*

Baptismal Candidate: Amen.

4. Dismissal

--AM dismisses everyone to their appropriate place.

REFERENCES

1. RW3, pg. 15.

2. *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA)*, US Conference of Catholic Bishops, Chicago: LTP, 1988, Cf. collects in #168.

3. "Prayers for Deliverance for Baptismal Candidates" in *Making Disciples*, p. 31, <https://www.anglican.ca/makingdisciples/>

4. RCIA #301b

RITE OF HEALING AND DELIVERANCE

LENT V B

[*italics*] = explanations of symbols at work.

(...) = directions

[*italics*] = sources and explanations

1. Calling Forward

[*The core symbol here is the community and the participants' evolving role in it.*]

(After homily/sermon, AM/catechist calls the hearers and their sponsors forward.)

AM/Catechist: Brothers and sisters, as we lead these candidates toward Baptism, we are called to continue to support them with our fellowship and prayers

AM: Would the baptismal candidates please come forward with their sponsors.

2. Reflection

[*The core symbol here is that they and the community are doing the same reflection. Baptism is a transformative experience in the Spirit, but the baptized are still sinners.*]

(After everyone is standing in front, facing forward towards the PM.)

PM: Jesus draws all people to him from the cross. The church, confident in the life-giving presence and mercy of Christ, now prays for you as Jesus draws you to the day of your Baptism. Aware of our common sinfulness and of God's mercy, let us all kneel down/bow our heads and open ourselves to the Spirit's call.

[*adapted from the ELCA*]¹

[*The people assume postures appropriate to prayer as they are able.*]

Reader/catechist:

a. When do I find it difficult to follow Jesus?

(90-second pause or whatever seems appropriate for this gathering)

Musicians & all: Lord lifted high, obedient Son raise us to life!

b. What is it that keeps me from seeing Jesus?

(pause & music)

c. What do I need to die to in my life so that I can receive new life in Jesus?

(pause & music)

d. The crucified Jesus is our King. What part can I play in changing people's ideas

and attitudes toward the poor and vulnerable members of our society?
(pause & music)

PM (**standing**) Father, source of all life, in giving life to the living you show the image of your glory; in raising the dead you reveal your unbounded power. Free from the grasp of death these chosen ones, N&N, who await your life-giving sacraments, and deliver them from the corruption of evil. Through your Spirit who gives life fill us all with faith, hope, and love, that we might live always with you in the glory of the resurrection. We ask this through Christ Jesus, who is Lord forever and ever.

All: Amen.

[inspired by the RCIA]²

(or)

Merciful God, as we come to the Passover of the Lord, the day of judgement of this world when the prince of this world is driven out, grant that N and N, as they see Jesus lifted up on the cross, may be drawn into his eternal embrace. Give them freedom to turn from the life of this passing age and welcome the life of the age to come; for by their faith they will share in the resurrection triumph of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

All: Amen

[adapted from the ACC]³

3. – Option A: Prayer for Deliverance and Healing

This gesture of hand-laying is one of the oldest rituals of the catechumenate, done in imitation of Jesus who used it in his ministry of healing and deliverance and sent his disciples out to do the same.]

--PM lays hands on the head of each hearer in turn, with sponsor either standing behind with hands on shoulders or kneeling beside with a hand on a shoulder.

--PM could say an appropriate formula to each

PM: Christ our Savior strengthen you with his power for he is Lord forever and ever.
Baptismal Candidate: Amen

[from the RCIA]⁴

All: refrain

(or)

PM: God who has begun this good work in you bring it to completion in Christ Jesus who is Lord forever and ever. *[from Philippians]*

Baptismal Candidate: Amen.

All: refrain

3. Option B: Anointing of the Hands

[This gesture of anointing with a healing oil is also one of the oldest rituals of the catechumenate, done in imitation of Jesus who used it in his ministry of healing and deliverance and sent his disciples out to do the same. Any light, plain, unscented plant-based oil is appropriate]

(Facing the hearers, the PM anoints each with plain oil on both hands, while saying to each.)

N.N., *We anoint you with/Receive* this healing oil in the name of Christ our Savior
May he strengthen you with his power, for he lives and reigns forever and ever.
Baptismal Candidate: Amen.

[from the RCIA or ELW]⁵

All: refrain

4. Dismissal

--AM dismisses everyone to their appropriate place.

REFERENCES

1. *RW3*, pg. 15.
2. *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA)*, US Conference of Catholic Bishops, Chicago: LTP, 1988, Cf. collects in #175.
3. "Prayers for Deliverance for Baptismal Candidates" in *Making Disciples*, p. 31, <https://www.anglican.ca/makingdisciples/>
4. *RCIA* #301b
5. *RCIA* #103 or *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, p. 277

RITE OF HEALING AND DELIVERANCE

LENT III Year C

[italics] = explanations of symbols at work.

(....) = directions

[italics] = sources and explanations

1. Calling Forward

[The core symbol here is the community and the participants' evolving role in it.]
(After homily/sermon, AM/catechist calls the hearers and their sponsors forward.)

AM/Catechist: Brothers and sisters, as we lead these candidates towards Baptism, we are called to support them with our fellowship and prayers. Would the baptismal candidates please come forward with their sponsors.

2. Reflection

[The core symbol here is that they and the community are doing the same reflection. Baptism is a transformative experience in the Spirit, but the baptized are still sinners.]

(After everyone is standing in front, facing forward towards the PM.)

PM: The barren fig tree requires the gardener's care in order to thrive and bear fruit, and so the church confesses our need of Christ and our trust in God's mercy. We invite you whom God has chosen for baptism to join the people of God in opening ourselves to the Spirit's work.

[adapted from the ELCA]¹

[The people kneel, bow heads, or assume other postures appropriate to prayer as they are able].

Reader/catechist:

a. How has God already guided and nurtured you toward a fruitful life?

(90-second pause)

Musicians & all: God of all mercy, source of new life, help us bear fruit!

b. What needs to be "pruned" from your life so you may bear fruit?

(pause & music)

c. What nourishment helps you bear fruit?

(pause & music)

d. What nourishment does our world need from you to bear good fruit??

(pause & music)

PM (**standing**): God of love, you are the true vinedresser; vinedresser; you prune away our sinfulness that we might bear good and abundant fruit. Hear our

prayers for N & N/these chosen ones. Cleanse them from the sins that burden them; make them holy by the constant working of your Spirit. Help us all to hear your voice, calling us to repentance and a change of heart. This we ask through Christ, who is Lord forever and ever.

All: Amen.

[Inspired by the RCIA]²

(or)

God of all the ages, in the fullness of time you sent your Anointed One to bring to fulfilment the promised day of salvation. Cultivate what you have planted in your chosen ones/ N and N; and, in this time of your grace, turn their hearts to you. May their lives, and the lives of all of us, bear fruit in this life and in the life to come, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

[from the ACC]³

3. Prayer for Deliverance and Healing

[This gesture of hand-laying is one of the oldest rituals of the catechumenate, done in imitation of Jesus who used it in his ministry of healing and deliverance and sent his disciples out to do the same.]

--PM lays hands on the head of each hearer in turn, with sponsor either standing behind with hands on shoulders or kneeling beside with a hand on a shoulder
--PM could say an appropriate formula to each

PM: May Christ our Savior strengthen you with his power for he is Lord forever and ever.

[from the RCIA]⁴

Baptismal Candidate: Amen

(or)

PM: May God who has begun this good work in you bring it to completion in Christ Jesus who is Lord forever and ever. *[from Philipians]*

Baptismal Candidate: Amen.

4. Dismissal --AM dismisses everyone to their appropriate place.

REFERENCES

1. *Holy Baptism and Related Rites, Renewing Worship* volume 3. [RW3] Prepared for provisional use. Copyright 2002. Administered by Augsburg Fortress, pg. 19.
2. *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA)*, US Conference of Catholic Bishops, Chicago: LTP, 1988, Cf. collects in #155.
3. "Prayers for Deliverance for Baptismal Candidates" in *Making Disciples*, p. 32, <https://www.anglican.ca/makingdisciples/>
4. RCIA #301b

RITE OF HEALING AND DELIVERANCE

LENT IV Year C

[italics] = explanations of symbols at work.

(....) = directions

[italics] = sources and explanations

1. Calling Forward

[The core symbol here is the community and the candidates' evolving role in it.]

(After homily/sermon, AM/catechist calls the hearers and their sponsors forward.)

AM/Catechist: Brothers and sisters, as we lead these candidates towards Baptism, we are called to support them with our fellowship and prayers.

AM: Would the baptismal candidates please come forward with their sponsors.

2. Reflection

[The core symbol here is that they and the community are doing the same reflection. Baptism is a transformative experience in the Spirit, but the baptized are still sinners.]

(After everyone is standing in front, facing forward towards the PM.)

PM: The younger son abandoned his life of sin and returned to the joy of the father; the older son learned the need for compassion and mercy. And so, the church, empowered by the Spirit, is called to renounce any attachment to evil in ourselves and in the world. To receive the embrace of God's forgiveness and love, and enter into the joy of our Father in heaven, let us together open ourselves to the Spirit's work.

[The people kneel, bow heads, or assume other postures appropriate to prayer as they are able].

[adapted from the ELCA]¹

Reader/catechist:

a. Whose story in this gospel passage resonates most with your own story?

(90-second pause)

Musicians & all: God of compassion, mercy, and grace, welcome us home!

b. Where in your story do you need to hear and receive God's compassion?

(pause & music)

c. What will you do to become more like the father who is merciful to both his sons? *(pause & music)*

d. What will you do to bring God's mercy, reconciliation, and joy to our world?

(pause & music)

PM (**standing**): God of mercy, like the younger son, some of us cry: “I have sinned against you; I am not worthy to be called your child.” Like the older son, hurt and angry, some of us stand outside the door. Open wide your arms in mercy to all who trust in your love, especially N&N&N, and deliver us all from any attachment to evil. May we have the courage to proclaim to the whole world the mercy and joy that we have found in Christ Jesus, who is Lord forever and ever.

All: Amen.

[Inspired by the Rite of Penance]²

(or)

Father of mercy, when we come to ourselves and acknowledge the poverty of our alienation from one another and from you, your loving arms embrace us. Reveal your healing love to N and N whom you have called by name. When they come to the waters of new creation, may they know themselves welcomed into the household of faith where we all find reconciliation and joy through the mercy of your Son, our Savior Jesus Christ.

[from the ACC]³

3. Prayer for Deliverance and Healing

[This gesture of hand-laying is one of the oldest rituals of the catechumenate, done in imitation of Jesus who used it in his ministry of healing and deliverance and sent his disciples out to do the same.]

--PM lays hands on the head of each hearer in turn, with sponsor either standing behind with hands on shoulders or kneeling beside with a hand on a shoulder
--PM could say an appropriate formula to each.

PM: May Christ our Savior strengthen you with his power for he is Lord forever and ever.

Baptismal Candidate: Amen

[from the RCIA]⁴

(or)

PM: May God who has begun this good work in you bring it to completion in Christ Jesus who is Lord forever and ever. *[from Philippians]*

Baptismal Candidate: Amen.

4. Dismissal --AM dismisses everyone to their appropriate place.

REFERENCES

1. RW3, pg. 19.
2. *Rite of Penance*, New York: Pueblo, 1976, #88.
3. “Prayers for Deliverance for Baptismal Candidates” in *Making Disciples*, p. 32, <https://www.anglican.ca/makingdisciples/>
4. RCIA #301b

RITE OF HEALING AND DELIVERANCE

LENT V Year C

[italics] = explanations of symbols at work.

(...) = directions

[italics] = sources and explanations

1. Calling Forward

[The core symbol here is the community and the participants' evolving role in it.]

(After homily/sermon, AM/catechist calls the hearers and their sponsors forward.)

AM/Catechist: Brothers and sisters, as we lead these candidates towards Baptism, we are called to continue to support them with our fellowship and prayers

AM: Would the baptismal candidates please come forward with their sponsors.

2. Reflection

[The core symbol here is that they and the community are doing the same reflection. Baptism is a transformative experience in the Spirit, but the baptized are still sinners.]

(After everyone is standing in front, facing forward towards the PM.)

PM: Mary of Bethany in faith anointed Jesus in preparation for the crux of his ministry as the Messiah, God's Anointed Son. The church entrusts you to the life-giving presence and mercy of God as you draw nearer to the day of your baptism. Aware of our common sinfulness and of God's mercy, let us all kneel down/bow our heads and open ourselves to the Spirit's work.

[adapted from the ELCA]¹

[The people kneel, bow heads, or assume other postures appropriate to prayer as they are able].

Reader/catechist:

a. Judas was one of Jesus's closest companions, but he betrayed Jesus. What betrayals in your life, by you or others, remain as obstacles to following Jesus now?

(90-second pause or whatever seems appropriate for this gathering)

Musicians & all: God of all mercy, giver of grace, work new wonders!

b. Judas claimed concern for people in need, but he was a hypocrite. What masks of your own selfishness are you afraid to take off?

(pause & music)

c. People in need are always with us. Where have our hearts grown tired and cold towards others?

(pause & music)

d. Jesus restored Lazarus to life. How do you already find Jesus restoring life in you?

(pause & music)

PM (standing) God of boundless compassion, you are slow to anger and rich in mercy. Grant us pardon and trust in you. Free these chosen ones from the grasp of death; deliver them from the corruption of evil and lead them to your life-giving sacraments. Through your Spirit who gives life, anoint us with faith, hope, and love, that we may always walk with you in the way of the cross and the glory of the resurrection. We ask this through Christ Jesus, who is Lord forever and ever.

All: Amen.

[Inspired by the RCIA]²

(or)

Gracious God, in Jesus our Savior, you have made us your friends and shared in our very lives. May N. and N., your chosen ones, and all your people Find freedom and courage, like Mary of Bethany, to pour out our very lives, a fragrant offering to the one who gave his very life for us all, your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

[adapted from the ACC]³

3. Option A: Prayer for Deliverance and Healing

[This gesture of hand-laying is one of the oldest rituals of the catechumenate, done in imitation of Jesus who used it in his ministry of healing and deliverance and sent his disciples out to do the same.]

--PM lays hands on the head of each hearer in turn with sponsor either standing behind with hands on shoulders or kneeling beside with a hand on a shoulder.

--PM could say an appropriate formula to each

PM: Christ our Savior strengthen you with his power for he is Lord forever and ever.

Baptismal Candidate: Amen

[from the RCIA]⁴

All: refrain

(or)

PM: God who has begun this good work in you bring it to completion in Christ Jesus who is Lord forever and ever. *[from Philipians]*

Baptismal Candidate: Amen.

All: refrain

3. Option B: Anointing of the Hands

[This gesture of anointing with a healing oil is also one of the oldest rituals of the catechumenate, done in imitation of Jesus who used it in his ministry of healing and deliverance and sent his disciples out to do the same. Any light, plain, unscented plant-based oil is appropriate]

(Facing the hearers, the PM anoints each with plain oil on both hands, while saying to each:)

N.N., we anoint you with / N.N., receive this healing oil in the name of Christ our

Savior. May he strengthen you with his power, for he lives and reigns forever and ever.

Baptismal Candidate: Amen.

*[from the RCIA and the ELCA]*⁵

All: refrain

4. Dismissal

AM dismisses everyone to their appropriate place.

REFERENCES

1. *RW3*, pg.19.
2. *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA)*, US Conference of Catholic Bishops, Chicago: LTP, 1988, Cf. collects in #175.
3. “Prayers for Deliverance for Baptismal Candidates” in *Making Disciples*, p. 32, <https://www.anglican.ca/makingdisciples/>
4. *RCIA* #301b
5. *RCIA* #103/*Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, p. 277



Mystagogy: The Fourth Phase of the Catechumenal Process

FOREWORD

The Spirit is not finished with the newly baptized. At Baptism they have not graduated but have just begun a new life of Christian discipleship within the community. How could a community best accompany these “newborns” on the first steps of this lifelong journey?

After several years of collaboration on JBL’s composite rites for the first three phases of the catechumenal process, our working group decided to embark upon the development of both catechetical and liturgical resources for the fourth phase, mystagogy. That was our challenge.

In the first project we could draw upon the richness of the material available across several North American Christian traditions: Roman Catholic, Episcopal, United Methodist, Anglican Church of Canada, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada in our attempt to produce a single resource recognizable by our various traditions as well as useful for training session. (Cf. <https://journeytobaptism.org/resources/worship-resources/>)

When we looked this time at the different denominational resources, we found some suggestions about homilies or sermons addressed to the newly baptized, a possibility of their continued inclusion in the Prayers of the People as well as a call to sacramental reflection or a gifts assessment. Yet there was no integrated liturgical and catechetical process similar to the process of intense preparation. This time we would have to be creative.

In our efforts we found ourselves guided by the following insights.

1. We would continue to be guided by the Scriptures. Since this phase typically occurs during the season of Easter, we would attend the structure of the readings from Easter Day to Pentecost, especially the readings from the Gospel and the Acts of the Apostles.
2. We would suggest that the newly baptized regularly be the focus of some portion of corporate worship so that they could experience the ongoing love, support, and prayers of the congregation as they had during intense preparation.
3. The sessions for the first few weeks would be reflective, focusing upon the work of the Spirit during the prior phases of the process and upon the newly baptized’s experience of the rich rites of Baptism.
4. The sessions during subsequent weeks would be more active, helping the newly baptized move forward in the integration into the Christian community and its mission of service. During our conversations about this component, we came to realize that the attempt to discern what particular gifts the Spirit had given the newly baptized had to happen within the context of a prior discernment about

baptized, along with all the baptized, are called to a life of shared discipleship within the Church and for the world.

As we said in the introduction to the composite rites, we engaged our work with a deep sense of reverence for each other, for the gifts our traditions had already brought forth, and for the differing ways our traditions or individual congregations may use or perhaps further adapt our work to suit their contexts.

With shared love in our one Lord, Jesus Christ, and shared passion for the work of preparing and supporting those who seek to live his way with us, we offer our work.

Michael Marchal RC

Taylor W. Burton Edwards ELCA

David Gambrell PCUSA

John W. H. Hill ACC Hill

Lisa Kimball TEC

Thomas Schattauer ELCA

With thanks to Susan Forshey (TEC) and Todd Townshend (ACC) who began this work with us but who had to leave because of professional responsibilities.



Introduction to Mystagogy

The 4th Period of the Catechumenal Process

Baptism is an event. Yet, as a sign of God's mercy and belonging, Baptism stands over the whole course of one's life. *It is an event with a trajectory, not just a moment in time. The core metaphors used in the New Testament to describe the meaning of baptism tend to be images of radical, inward transformation: death to resurrection, rebirth in the Spirit, darkness to light. Other images portray a radical outward transformation within a community: from alien to member of God's own People, from slave to heir, from being cut off to becoming a full member of the Body of Christ.*

A metaphor which does *not* work with Baptism is graduate. The graduation of a graduate marks the definitive end of a process and a separation from an institution or a community. Instead, the most common term used for the newly-baptized in the early centuries of the Christian Church was "neophytes," a Greek term meaning "those newly sprouting." (See I Corinthians 3:6 and I Timothy 3:6). Neophytes have become part of God's family and been welcomed with joy, but they still need the support of the community for continued growth as they take their first steps into baptismal living, into an ongoing, fruitful life of mutually accountable Christian discipleship.

And so, the catechumenal process does not end with Baptism but with a period of reflection both about what has just happened around the font *and* about what gifts the Spirit has given them for living out the diverse vocations to which God has called them as Christians. The classic term for this fourth and final period of the catechumenal process is "mystagogy," a Greek term which means to be "led through the mysteries." Various other names have been given to this phase: Integration, Baptismal Living, Post-baptismal Catechesis, but they all point to the need for both reflection on the past and discernment about their future in the Christian community.

This double focus on the experience of the sacraments and the empowerment and calling into ministry reflects the Gospels of the Sundays of Easter, the first four of which proclaim our relationship with the risen Lord, and the last four of which challenge us to recognize the personal and corporate consequences of the resurrection and sending of the Spirit.

The catechetical and liturgical resources given here are an integrated approach for a congregation to lead the newly-baptized through this fourth period. As in the third period of intense preparation, there are rituals enacted with the gathered community to mark the neophytes' ongoing growth. The initial phase of reflection on what the Risen Christ has been doing within the participants climaxes on Easter 3 with an Order for Bearing Witness. The phase of discernment of vocation and gifts is blessed on Easter 5 and leads up to the Reaffirmation of the Vocation to Christian Discipleship on Pentecost.

In other words, through continued modelling on how to listen to the Spirit speaking through shared worship, catechetical reflection, and service, the newly

along with all the baptized, are called to a life of shared discipleship within the Church and for the world.

When Baptism is celebrated at Easter, mystagogy unfolds during Easter Season; if on the Baptism of the Lord, then during the Season after Epiphany.

A Suggested Timeline of Mystagogy for the Newly Baptized

Introduction

The catechumenal process is marked throughout by reflective learning with the congregation, in which all baptismal identities are awakened. The traditional term for this is *mystagogical learning*.

The period of intense reflective learning after Baptism is also called *mystagogy*.

The following timeline attempts to chart the interconnection between the catechetical and liturgical components of that period.

Overall liturgical suggestions

1. white robes (albs) for all the newly baptized
2. focus of part of the sermon
3. mentioned in the Prayers of the People
4. lead and/or craft the Prayers of the People

Overall catechetical suggestions

1. The total number of participants in any group should not exceed fifteen.
2. Sponsors should be included if at all possible.

TIMELINE

1st week: 1st catechetical session – reflection on the celebration of Baptism

2nd week: 2nd catechetical session – reflection on the Meal from the perspective of a member of the congregation


3^d Sunday: The Meal & the Order for Bearing Witness to the Work of the Risen Christ

-Newly-baptized wearing white robes both to make them visible and to declericalize the alb

--Newly-baptized involved in planning for this Sunday's worship—especially effective if the pastor could engage them in sermon-preparation

--Competent readers could fulfill that ministry this Sunday.

--Nonverbal forms of ministry are bread-baking and enacting the procession with the gifts. With practice, they could also assist at the distribution of communion.



3^d week: 3^d catechetical session – Vocations discernment begins.

4th week: 4th catechetical session – Vocations discernment continues.

5th Sunday: The Order Blessing for Spirit's guidance in discernment by the newly-baptized

5th week: 5th catechetical session – Vocations discernment continues.

6th week: 6th catechetical session – Vocations discernment continues.

7th week – 7th catechetical session – Vocations discernment concludes—unless it is necessary to continue it after Pentecost.

Pentecost: Affirmation of Vocation to Christian Discipleship

Guidance for Group Meetings during Mystagogy

Introduction

The catechumenate is both a process and an event. For the participants it is the slow journey of encountering Christ at work within them through their repeated encounters with the community of believers and the Scriptures.

As a process, it moves the participants through several stages of a more personal knowledge of Christ and a deeper commitment to him—until at last they encounter the waters of the font and are reborn in the Spirit. That event definitively made them new members of his Body.

In the weeks between Easter and Pentecost, it is the task of the community now to lead them to a deeper appreciation of what has just happened to them, among them, and within them and to help them discern what gifts they have been given for the service not only of the Christian community but also of the world.

Mystagogical learning is reflective learning: it begins with reliving the memories of the events that have shaped us. And those memories are most powerfully triggered by concrete, physical encounter. The following outline is meant to help the participants get in touch with and process those memories.

Group Meeting 1: Reflecting on What Happened

Though this session is focused upon the experience of the newly-baptized, their sponsors should also be invited and should share appropriately in the group's reflections as well. Some concern for the group becoming too large is needed. If the group is quite small, those who were baptized the previous year could also be invited. Otherwise they could be invited to the second session.

Step 1: Gathering

1. The usual meeting room might be the place to begin, especially if weather means that people have to deal with winter coats or umbrellas, etc. Make them comfortable!
2. Introduce the session in the usual way, congratulate them on their recent sacramental celebration, and explain the purpose of this gathering.

Step 2: Walking Through It

1. Move into the worship space where the events of their Baptism occurred. (Beware of obstacles for people with challenges! A few chairs may be needed at certain points.)
2. If their Baptism was celebrated at Easter, relight the Easter Candle, and ask how they felt as the light of Christ spread through the room. What did that mean to them personally?

3. Move to the font if the group is not already there. When they were asked to renounce evil and to profess their faith in the Trinity and their commitment to Christ, what did they experience? Did any memories from the past surface at that moment? Any hopes for the future? What was happening within them as they made their profession?

4a. *If they were immersed, how did they experience being in the water? What happened within them while they were in the water?*

4b. *If water was poured over their head, how did they experience that moment? What happened within them?*

[If the next rituals occurred at the font, stay there. If they happened elsewhere, move to that location. Also, if any of the additional rites was enacted, then prepare in advance the oil, a robe, and/or a candle at the location where they were used.]

5. When a hand was laid upon them and the Spirit was invoked and a cross signed on them (possibly with oil), what part of that moment most touched them? What seemed to them to be happening within them?

6. *If they were presented with a robe to wear in some fashion, how did being dressed differently make them feel? What did that change mean to them?*

7. *If they were given a candle, possibly lighted from the Easter Candle, what memories or insights did that gesture evoke within them? Did it bring forth any hopes for the future?*

8. When they were presented to the congregation, what did they experience, other than the common dislike of being in front of a group of people?

9. *Frequently those baptized are also the ones who present the bread and wine for the Table; if so, move to the Table and ask how did they experience that gesture? Especially in terms of a connection to the congregation and to Christ himself?*

10 To wrap up this reflection, you might describe three great images of Baptism, among others, that occur in the New Testament: rebirth by water and the Spirit, dying and rising in Christ, and cleansing. Which of these comes closest to what they experienced?

Step 3: Gospel Reflection

1. In some manner, share with them the Doubting Thomas episode from John that is the gospel reading for the Second Sunday of Easter. Unlike Thomas they have not seen or touched the Savior, but they have come to know and believe in him through the sacraments entrusted to the church. What is their image of Jesus now? How do they feel connected to him?

2. Conclude with prayer in some way, but at this moment joining hands is a way of bonding for those who have been through a common experience and those who accompanied them. The Lord's Prayer is the classic prayer of the baptized.

Group meeting 2: Reflecting on the Eucharist (prior to Easter 3)

Sharing in the Eucharist is the ongoing support of our Christian journey. The newly-baptized are now sharing in it as full members of Christ's Body. The gospels for this Sunday in all three cycles describe a meal shared by the disciples with the risen Lord. Small group work this day might include a shared meal as the frame for reflection on encounters with Christ in the breaking of the bread.

Though this session is focused upon the experience of the newly-baptized, their sponsors should also be invited and should share appropriately in the group's reflections as well. If the group is quite small, those who were baptized the previous year could also be invited.

Step 1: Gathering

If there is to be no meal, then the usual pattern that the group is used to from intense preparation would be appropriate.

If there is to be a shared meal, trying to make it as intimate and welcoming as possible. Some people might volunteer to prepare the meal, or it might be potluck.

Step 2: Informal *lectio divina*

1. Begin by providing a framework for next Sunday's Gospel about Jesus eating with his disciples.
2. Have someone read the text aloud.
3. Share in silence.
4. Ask them to share what word or phrase spoke to them.
5. Ask them to share the reaction this raised up for them and why.
6. Reread the text.
7. Ask how this text challenges or comforts them.

Step 3: Instruction and Reflection upon the Eucharist

1. Explain how the Eucharist has two moments: the Prayer of Thanksgiving and the sharing of the elements in communion.
2. The Prayer of Thanksgiving has three components, and we are called through active listening to engage each one personally.

a. *Remembrance*: In Jewish tradition to recall God's deeds of love for us is to relive them, to be present again at each saving moment.

How do I claim those moments for myself?

b. *Invocation of the Spirit*: Worship is not about magic words but about opening ourselves up to the transforming power of the Spirit. The Spirit is invoked upon the gifts and upon those who share them.

How do I open myself up to the Spirit's power?

c. *Intercession*: How do I lift up not only myself but the world's needs and concerns for transformation?

3. What has sharing in communion come to mean to you?
 - a. How has it been an encounter with the risen Christ?
 - b. How has it connected you with others who share this Meal?
 - c. What implications has it had for living out your Baptism?

Step 4: Preparation for Witness

1. If possible, arrange for the newly-baptized to have roles in the Sunday service as readers, presenters of the bread and wine, servers or assistants. Mention them as well in the prayers of the people.
2. If the accompanying Order for Mystagogy on Easter 3 is to be used, then explain to them how it will happen, and invite them to prepare for that moment. Fuller directions are given in the text of that Order.
3. It would be appropriate to end this meeting with the Lord's Prayer and its request for the gift of daily bread.

Group meetings for Discernment of Vocation: Easter Week 3 through 7

Easter 4 marks an inflexion point in the readings for Easter Season and the work of mystagogy. We move from a reflection on the experience of the sacraments to a focus through the rest of the season on the presence and work of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

Group meetings during this time use a process of discernment of spiritual gifts and vocations that the newly-baptized will affirm on Pentecost.

We commend these resources as possible guides for these sessions.

1. *Go, Make Disciples: An Invitation to Baptismal Living*, pp. 134-6 .

This resource contains two simple exercises to reflect upon how the participants minister in their daily lives, plus suggestions for how to prepare for the Rite of Affirmation.

2. Collegeville Institute

This resource contains a program named "Called to Life" which would fit with mystagogy.

For deepening Christian life in a congregation, there is another one named "Called to Work" that is focused on a profession.

<https://collegevilleinstitute.org/vocation-projects/resources-for-congregations/>

3. United Methodist Church: Discernment of spiritual gifts and ministry

<https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/resources/diy-tools-for-spiritual-gifts-discernment-and-ministry-deployment> (Spiritual gifts and personality inventories may be discussed in a single session)

4. ELCA: Life of Faith Initiative:

The purpose of the Life of Faith initiative is to stir up a culture change that frees us to make *the service by the baptized in the arenas of daily life the central focus of the church's mission.*

<https://lifeoffaith.info>

And we commend this or a similar pattern for these meetings to maintain continuity in the practice of *lectio divina* throughout the second period of mystagogy.

Pattern for Typical Catechetical Sessions, Weeks 3-7 of Mystagogy

- A. Welcome everyone.
- B. Remind everyone of confidentiality.
- C. Check-in about how life is going.
- D. Informal Lectio Divina of the Gospel reading.
- E. Discernment of vocation and gifts assessment.
- F. Informal Lectio Divina of the Acts reading.
 - Begin by pointing out that this is a story of how a Spirit-filled community attempted to live out their encounter with the risen Christ.
- G. Share in a time of prayer together.
- H. Announcements and reminders



An Order for Mystagogy on Easter III

Giving Witness to the Work of the Risen Christ

Introduction: In all three cycles this Sunday's Gospel passage focuses on a meal shared between the risen Lord and his disciples. It would therefore be appropriate for the new members of the community to experience exercising the various ministries during Sunday Eucharist: readers, presenters of bread and wine, distributors of communion, servers or assistants, as well as being mentioned in the Prayers of the People.

The primary symbol is the community itself in the midst of whom now stand the newly baptized without their sponsors for they have become full members of Christ and the church.

There are two possible placements of this order: after the sermon, just prior to the confession of faith, and at the beginning of the Sending rite. After the sermon, it functions as a witness to the word proclaimed and the living Word. At the beginning of the Sending rite, it functions as a witness also to the service and leadership roles of the newly baptized at the Eucharist and to remind the whole community that we are all sent from font and Table to make such a witness to our encounter with Christ. In either case, persons are invited to participate in this rite as they choose. At the previous session for the newly-baptized, they should learn that they will have this opportunity to speak and be encouraged to do so.

Witness and Confession of Faith or Sending

After the Sermon or after the Prayer after Communion, the AM addresses the newly baptized, who may be called forward by name.

AM: May our newly-baptized (N.&N.) come to the pulpit/lectern and face the congregation.

When the newly-baptized have arranged themselves by the lectern/pulpit, The PM stands before them and addresses them.

PM: You have been baptized with water and the Holy Spirit, and today you have assisted/will assist at our celebration of the breaking of the bread. In the name of the Church, I invite you to bear witness to the One you have come to know as you have shared in this sacrament with us.

The newly-baptized each may share a word or sentence or brief statement capturing their encounters with the Risen Christ in the Eucharist, in the Church, or in their daily living.

Then the PM addresses the newly-baptized:

PM: Thank you for the witness to the work of Jesus among us that you have given.

Now look around at these people, *(pause)*
and remember that you are now part of God's family.

Look around at this place, *(pause)*
and remember you are at home.

Look at this table, *(pause)*
and be glad that all it holds is yours forever.

We look forward to sharing this life in Christ with you now and in the age to come.

The PM then invites the congregation to express gratitude for what they have shared, such as applause or another appropriate sign. A simple sung Alleluia may then be offered or an appropriate refrain such as:

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Blessed be God, the source of all life, the word of salvation, the spirit of mercy.

Conclusion

Option 1: If this order is before the Creed, the Creed is then confessed. At the prayers of the people, a petition for the newly-baptized is included among the petitions for the day, such as the following:

In these newly-baptized we see signs of your new creation
through Jesus your Son.

Grant that all whom you have made holy
and brought into this communion
may be daily renewed in the power of your Spirit.

Lord, in your mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

Option 2: before the sending

After applause or some other appropriate sign and the refrain, prayer is offered.

PM: Creator of all,
in these newly-baptized we see signs of your new creation
through Jesus your Son.

Grant that all whom you have made holy
and brought into this communion
may be daily renewed in the power of your Spirit;
through Christ our Lord.

All: **Amen.**

Before the rite of sending, the AM reminds the congregation the newly baptized will help to lead the processional into the world. They enter the processional immediately following the torches and gospel book.

An Order for Mystagogy on Easter V

Invitation to Discernment of Vocation

Introduction: The first three Sundays of Easter reflect upon the experience of the sacramental moments of Christian initiation. Starting in the fourth week the emphasis shifts to attempting to discern the Spirit's calling (vocation) on their lives in the Church and in the world.

The word "vocation" comes from the Latin for "calling." It suggests something one does in response to God's purpose in our lives. We discover our callings in life as we discern the promptings of the Holy Spirit within us and in our relationships with others. Much like faith, awareness of our callings shifts and transforms over time.

Every person has many vocations. These callings arise from the contexts of our lives, where our gifts interact with others. A person has a calling as member of a family, as friend and neighbor, and as citizen, as well as in one's work and other activities (volunteer, artistic, physical, religious).

Today's rite takes place at the beginning of the sending rite to reflect the focus on the Spirit's gifts for mission that the newly baptized are now exploring. It is meant to invoke the Spirit's blessing upon this process of discernment.

The primary symbol is the community itself with whom the newly baptized now stand, no longer accompanied by sponsors. The newly baptized have become full members of Christ and the church.

Prayers of the People

It is appropriate on this day also to include an intercession for the newly baptized in the Prayers of the People, such as the following:

Grant that all who are baptized into Christ,
especially these newly baptized,
may faithfully reflect in the world
the love and joy and peace of your kingdom.
Lord in your mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

Invitation and Blessing

The AM addresses the newly baptized. The PM moves to a position among the people, facing the newly baptized.

AM: May our newly baptized (N.&N.) now come to face the congregation.

The newly baptized move into position.

PM to the newly baptized:

In baptism and communion,
you have experienced
the presence of Jesus.

In our midst you have borne witness
to the Risen Christ.

Now in your discernment we invite you to continue
to claim your calling among us and in the world,
in the name of Jesus
and the power of the Spirit.

All are invited to stand and extend hands in a gesture of blessing.

PM: Holy Spirit, come to us.

All: **Holy Spirit, come to us.**

PM: Generous God, by your Spirit you call your people
and fill them with diverse gifts.

Guide now these new members of your people
as they discern your call in their lives.

Open their eyes to what you have given,
and move their hearts to follow your lead
that they may grow as members of Christ's body,
and as his witnesses with us in service to all.

We ask this in Jesus' name,
trusting in the Spirit's power
now and forever.

All: **Amen.**

(Refrain: *ELW #217: May the God of all grace who has called you to glory support you and make you strong.*)

Dismissal

A processional hymn or other acts of sending may follow. The newly baptized remain in place until the processional, leading the congregation (following the cross and torches) into the world.





About the Affirmation of Vocation

This rite of affirmation provides an occasion to acknowledge the gifts of the newly baptized by naming and affirming their particular vocations as part of the Christian community.

The word “vocation” comes from the Latin for “calling.” It suggests something one does in response to God’s purpose in our lives. We discover our callings in life as we discern the promptings of the Holy Spirit within us and in our relationships with others. Much like faith, awareness of our callings shifts and transforms over time.

Every person has many vocations. These callings arise from the contexts of our lives, where our gifts interact with others. A person has a calling as member of a family, as friend and neighbor, and as citizen, as well as in one’s work and other activities (volunteer, artistic, physical, religious).

In the journey of baptismal living, Christians engage these arenas of life as disciples of Christ. We are sustained in our callings by the promise of God’s love and mercy within a community of faith. Through our callings, the Holy Spirit directs our lives in loving service to others and toward God’s purpose of abundant life for all.

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Affirmation of Vocation to Discipleship at Pentecost

This rite marks the conclusion of the first phase of mystagogical reflection and personal assessment of the Spirit's gifts. Reflection, assessment, and ministry empowered by the gifts of the Spirit continues through lives of discipleship.

In the journey of baptismal living, the newly baptized and all Christians engage all arenas of life as disciples of Christ. We are sustained in our callings by the promise of God's love and mercy within a community of faith. Through our callings, the Holy Spirit directs our lives in loving service to others and toward God's purpose of abundant life for all.

Because in baptism the Spirit empowers us to go forth as disciples, this rite fittingly occurs as part of the sending rite, though it may be located elsewhere within the service.

Those affirming vocation to discipleship gather with the ministers at the baptismal font in full view of the congregation. To reinforce the baptismal roots of this rite, the affirmers carry their baptismal candles which they light from the paschal candle with the assistance of an assisting minister if necessary.

AM: We invite the newly-baptized to come to the font with your baptismal candles and face the congregation.

The PM faces and addresses the newly-baptized.

PM: At Easter, by water and the Spirit, you were joined with Christ in his death and resurrection and given new birth as God's own children. You committed yourself then to living the covenant of baptism in your daily life and service.

For these last weeks you have been reflecting on your new life in Christ and the gifts the Spirit has given you to live out your calling.

Now, on the Day of Pentecost, I ask you: How will you endeavor to follow Jesus Christ in active discipleship? [1]

One by one the newly-baptized speak about the call to discipleship that each has discerned and also about what gifts of the Spirit have been received to live out that calling.

After each speaks, the congregation sings a refrain.

ELW #217: *May the God of all grace, who has called you to glory support you and make you strong.*

If other members of the congregation have also been engaged in mystagogical reflection the AM may invite them forward at this time to give witness.

The PM addresses the newly-baptized.

PM: N.&N., both your work and your rest are in God. With the Spirit's help, endeavor to pattern your life on the Lord Jesus Christ: in gratitude to God and in service to others, at morning and evening, at work and at play, all the days of your life. [2]

AM: Let us pray for these newly-baptized and for ourselves in our vocations.

PM: Father of love, by the power of the Holy Spirit, you have knit these your servants into the one Body of your Son, Jesus Christ and called them to live daily as witnesses to your life-giving grace.

Give them courage, patience and vision, and strengthen us all in our baptismal vocation of witness in the world and of service to others. Through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All: Amen [3]

The sending rite continues.

REFERENCES

1. *Come to the Waters*, 143.
2. From "Recognition of Ministries in the Congregation," *Sundays and Seasons* (online subscription resource), Augsburg Fortress, 2007.
3. From "ELW Prayer 335b," *Sundays and Seasons* (online subscription resource), Augsburg Fortress, 2007.