



Diocese of Buffalo

## Department of Lifelong Faith Formation

A member of the Division for Evangelization and Catechesis

In the Rite of Christian Initiation, the time following the reception of the sacraments of initiation is the period of what is called Mystagogy. It is a phase that is spent on assisting the deepening of the participants' appreciation for the sacramental life. Mystagogical catechesis is founded on the principle that as one lives out the sacraments, they come to experience a fuller, profounder, more personal and communal meaning of them. For adolescents receiving the sacrament of Confirmation, their completion of their full initiation into the Church takes place at the Confirmation liturgy.

Unfortunately, due to the prevalent and problematic idea of "graduating" from faith formation, the newly confirmed adolescent is rarely given adequate and deliberate formation in living with the new character received in the sacrament of Confirmation. Because of this, the role of Mystagogical catechesis is a vital and necessary component of catechesis (*NDC*, 115-117). Involving prayer and study, Mystagogical catechesis should form an integral part of the parish Confirmation program and should be presented to Confirmation candidates as an indispensable part of their sacramental formation when they sign up for their parish's sacramental program.

During the period of Mystagogy, the deepest meanings of discipleship must be examined, including the responsibilities to witness and to bring the light of the Gospel to every corner of the world. Because the Church has designated the Year A Lectionary readings for the Sunday Masses of the Easter Season and the Solemnity of the Ascension to form the basis for the teaching during this period (*RCIA*, 247), the Mystagogical period of adolescent Confirmation catechesis should be based on the themes taken from these readings; a summary of some of the Mystagogical themes present in the readings for Year A are as follows:

- **Second Sunday of Easter**—Sacrament of Penance, Apostolicity (Acts 2:42-47; Ps 118; 1 Pt 1:3-9; Jn 20:19-31)
- **Third Sunday of Easter**—Emmaus Event, Model for the Mass (Acts 2:14, 22-33; Ps 16; 1 Pt 1:17-21; Lk 24:13-35)
- **Fourth Sunday of Easter**—The Church as the Sheepfold, Relationship with Jesus (Acts 2:14a, 36-41; Ps 23; 1 Pt 2:20b-25; Jn 10:1-10)
- **Fifth Sunday of Easter**—Heaven, Relationship with the Father through Jesus (Acts 6:1-7; Ps 33; 1 Pt 2:4-9; Jn 14:1-12)
- **Sixth Sunday of Easter**—Relationship with the Spirit through Jesus (Acts 8:5-8, 14-17; Ps 66; 1 Pt 3:15-18; Jn 14:15-20)
- **Ascension**—The Great Commission, Evangelization/Witness, Baptism (Acts 1:1-11; Ps 47; Eph 1:17-23; Mt 28:16-20)
- **Seventh Sunday of Easter**—Prayer for Unity and Glorification of the Church, Apostolicity (Acts 1:12-14; Ps 27; 1 Pt 4:13-16; Jn 17:1-11a)

While some of these themes may have been already discussed earlier in the Confirmation catechesis process, the Mystagogical catechesis done here seeks to deepen what has been taught previously. Some of these

readings may also seem untimely with the liturgical season for parishes that have Confirmation liturgies scheduled in the fall given the close proximity they will have to Advent and Christmas. “Even when Christian initiation has been celebrated outside the usual times, the texts for these Sunday Masses of the Easter season may be used” (RCIA, 247).

The emphasis is to challenge the newly confirmed to become true disciples of Jesus. They must be challenged to know, to think, and to act like Christ, to be truly transformed by Christ working in and through us by the Holy Spirit.

Some ideas and elements for facilitating mystagogical catechesis may include the following:

- One or two mystagogical catechetical sessions
- Retreat (with neighboring parish, vicariate, or alone)
- Summer-weeklong intensive program (for spring Confirmation liturgies)
- Continued dialogue and gathering sessions with sponsors as companions to the newly confirmed
- Parent and family Mystagogical sessions
- Recognizing and welcoming newly confirmed at following Sunday liturgy (if Confirmation does not fall on a Sunday)
- Christian service projects
- Partnering and collaborating with the parish’s youth ministry program
- Having a library or collection of materials and resources to assist in growing in faith
- Small group process with various parishioners to encourage those newly confirmed in their faith journey
- Creating various prayer opportunities to teach persistence in prayer and life as disciple
- Meals with pastor and pastoral team
- Developing a group of parish mentors to accompany newly confirmed and assist with integration into the life of their parish community

For the newly confirmed young person, it is strongly encouraged that there is greater collaboration between faith formation and youth ministry. One of the best ways to provide opportunities for Mystagogy is through ongoing youth ministry. Faith formation and youth ministry leaders should work together in developing a plan to provide effective and dynamic Mystagogy.

**Above all, care must be taken to ensure that each of the newly confirmed is securely established in the life of the parish. This is of utmost importance as newly confirmed, young Catholics are often neglected or forgotten once formal catechetical instruction and the Confirmation liturgy is completed. They must be accompanied as they grow in their moral and liturgical life and have support and strengthening from the parish community.**