

Mystagogy for Eucharist

Mystagogical Catechesis

Mystagogical catechesis is the name given to the process of gradually uncovering the meaning of the mysteries of sacraments that have already been celebrated. This type of catechesis was first done by the early Church Fathers in sermons preached to the neophytes after their initiation at the Easter Vigil. We still possess some of those sermons. They are instructions rich in images and symbols that help the newly initiated come to a fuller understanding of the sacraments they have celebrated and are now living out. Mystagogical catechesis is based on the principle that as we live out the commitments of sacraments, we experience a fuller, deeper, more personal and communal meaning of them.

The Rite of Christian Initiation

The Rite of Christian Initiation, which was promulgated after the Second Vatican Council, restored the catechumenate and the full initiation process. It designates the Easter Season as the Period of Mystagogy and sets it aside as a period for both the neophytes and the assembly to grow together “in deepening their grasp of the paschal mystery and in making it part of their lives through meditation on the Gospel, sharing in the eucharist, and doing the works of charity.” (RCIA, 244)

Here are some practical suggestions to involve children and their families in mystagogical catechesis:

- Shortly after the celebration of First Communion, gather children and/or family members to reflect on their experience of the celebration. Use the process outlined in the *Catechist Edition* for reflecting on the celebration.
- Periodically hold gatherings of those who have recently celebrated First Communion to reflect on the Scripture readings that are in the child’s Eucharist book or other meal stories from the Gospels. Focus the gatherings on how the children are experiencing themselves as the Body of Christ.
- Over a period of 18 months, select three short-term (2–3 hours) service projects and invite the children and their family members to participate in them. Situate the service project in an initial “Sending Forth” ritual and a reflection process at the end of the project.
- Plan a family gathering during the Easter season with the families of children who have celebrated First Communion and the families of neophytes to share their experiences of coming to the table and entering more fully into the life of the parish.
- Encourage members of the assembly to seek out and welcome the children who have celebrated First Communion.
- Encourage catechists in all levels of your catechetical program to create prayer spaces that include the primary symbols of water, oil, cross, Bible or lectionary, bread and wine. Encourage them to help children reflect on the symbols often.

