

Beyond Words – *Mystagogy* and Christian Initiation

– Ms. Sharon A. Bogusz

Jutting red and purple rocks that betray the earth's true age - a vividly blue sky alive with the sun's light – the clapping of tree branches in roaring wind - a rock cascading into the seemingly groundless canyon depths - vast desert space containing rich treasures invisible to the naked eye – explosions of colors, textures, shapes that overwhelm the senses taking one's breath away – Its Easter Sunday afternoon at the Grand Canyon!

That was ten years ago, yet the waves of awe and wonder that well up in me even now testify to a memory that continues to live in my heart. It is an experience that changed me in a deeply spiritual and religious way; I cannot but tell the story of that trip again and again.

The celebration of the sacraments of Christian initiation are often laden with the same beaming imagery and emotional response. The lavish symbols of water, oil, fire, bread and wine are a wordless language of a profound encounter with God amid his holy people the Church. The experience of these long-awaited sacraments is an exclamation point to a long process where attitudes, actions, thoughts, and habits have been *radically changed* in light of the good news of Jesus Christ.

The period of *Mystagogy* is a time where the newly-initiated *unpack* the rich memory of the Easter sacraments. This period coincides with Easter and is a time for the community of faith and the newly-initiated to grow deeper in their grasp of the mystery of Christ's death and resurrection and discovering its meaning in their lives.

***Mystagogy* is marked by the practice of:**

- Participation and reflection on the Sunday Scriptures and the weekly Eucharist.
- Reflection on the symbols, word and liturgy of the Easter Triduum and their meaning for Christian life.
- Immersion in the communal life at service and love of neighbor.



What do we do with the newly initiated during *Mystagogy*?

- Invite the newly initiated to the Sunday Eucharist, perhaps offer a brief testament to their experience.
- Invite the newly initiated to talk about their memory of the Easter Vigil, the symbols and experiences, and talk about how they understood its meaning;
- Help them connect their experience and language to the tradition of the Church.
- Invite them to speak to inquirers or catechumens about their experience;

- Connect the newly baptized to small Church communities, Why Catholic groups, Bible Study and Outreach Ministries.
- Make the new Catholic's presence known by introducing them at parish events.

Discovering the groundless depths of God's love and the wonder of discipleship is a lifelong journey for every believer. Our task as catechist, family, friend and fellow-disciple is to help the newly initiated find opportunities to reflect upon their experiences of faith so that the memory continues to live in their hearts and be proclaimed in the newness of Christian life.

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