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BAPTISM FOR CHILDREN
National Bulletin on Liturgy
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This Bulletin is primarily pastoral in scope. It is prepared for members of parish liturgy committees, readers, musicians, singers, catechists, teachers, religious, seminarians, clergy, and diocesan liturgical commissions, and for all who are involved in preparing, celebrating, and improving the community’s life of worship and prayer.

Editorial commentary in the Bulletin is the responsibility of the editor.

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Baptism
For
Children

This issue is a companion to the new Canadian edition of the rite of baptism for children. It considers the meaning of the rite itself, including the role of the parents and godparents and the community as a whole. Preparation of parents for baptism, and reminders of baptism in liturgical rites for persons of all ages, are also discussed.
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Introduction

As a result of directives given by the Second Vatican Council, a new rite of baptism for children was prepared and published in 1969 (the *Ordo Baptismi Parvulorum*); a few small changes were added in 1973. The English translation of the International Commission on English in the Liturgy (ICEL) was also published in 1969, and it is this version that the English-speaking church in Canada and around the world has been using since then.

**Canadian edition:** A new and specifically Canadian edition of the ICEL rite of baptism for children has recently been published.¹ This provides an opportunity to reflect on the celebration and meaning of this sacrament.

**Serious questions:** Today many fundamental and challenging questions are being addressed regarding the practice of infant baptism and its liturgical celebration. For example: Why baptize infants at all? What does it mean? How is it to be justified theologically? What is the relation of infant baptism to that of adults? How is the theology of the rite of baptism for children related to that of the rite of Christian initiation of adults? Do we have one, unified understanding of baptism with two expressions, or do we have two distinct theologies of baptism? How are we to understand children — from infancy to adulthood — from a theological perspective which at the same time respects the findings of psychology, anthropology and sociology?

**Further reading:** These important but difficult questions go beyond the scope of this issue. The following references are recommended to those who wish to read further in this area.


**For parish ministers:** This issue hopes to assist pastors and other parish ministers who are responsible for the preparation of parents for the celebration of baptism and for the liturgical celebration itself.

**For parents:** It also hopes to aid parents who are preparing for the baptism of their child, to help them celebrate this sacrament well.

**Preparation needed:** The church today wishes to avoid baptizing children indiscriminately — that is, without some assurance that they will be brought up as practising Christians. It believes that those celebrating baptism — and other sacraments as well — should be suitably prepared.

**Deferral of baptism:** The church today also never — or only extremely rarely — actually refuses baptism. Pastors can, however, postpone the celebration of baptism until they are satisfied that the child will be brought up a Christian.

¹ *Rite of Baptism for Children* (Ottawa: Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops 1989), 264 pages.
Careful discernment: These two principles can, in pastoral practice, be in tension. How does one discern if the faith of the parents is sufficient to allow the baptism of their child? What kind of preparation process is satisfactory? These are difficult questions, and require careful discernment, mutual charity and openness on the part of all concerned.

What the rite says: This issue of the Bulletin considers these questions from the point of view of the liturgy of baptism of children itself. What does the rite say about the responsibilities of the parish community and of the parents? How can the liturgy of baptism itself be the basis of a preparation process?

The new edition: First the new edition of the rite of baptism for children is described briefly. This will be of interest mainly to pastors and other liturgical ministers.

Preparing for baptism: Second, baptism is viewed as a stage in a large journey. The journey of preparing for baptism is considered, from marriage through pregnancy, childbirth, welcoming of the family by the parish ministers, and the more immediate preparation for the celebration of the liturgy of baptism.

Celebrating baptism: The rite of baptism for children is a journey in itself. Its rites and meaning are described next, at some length.

The baptismal life: The journey of baptism continues during the rest of the child’s life. The shape and characteristics of this baptismal life are foreseen in the liturgy of baptism itself.

Reminders of baptism: Finally, the way in which Roman Catholics are reminded of their baptism and given opportunities to renew their baptismal commitment in many of the Church’s liturgies are reviewed.

Selected Reading


○ This booklet contains a great deal of wisdom regarding the discernment of faith in parents who bring their children for baptism, and on the process of deciding whether or not to admit their children to the sacrament.


○ This is an excellent study of the rite of baptism for children from a historical and theological point of view.
A New Edition

Why do we have a new edition of the rite of baptism for children? How is it different from the edition previously in use? To what extent have its contents, appearance, and arrangement changed? How has it been made more useful?

Why a New Edition?

No previous Canadian edition: The church in Canada never prepared its own edition of the rite of baptism for children. Instead, the Publications Service of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops stocked an edition of the rite published in England. This and various editions published in the United States were in use in parishes.

The English edition is now out of stock. Moreover, a new edition of the closely related Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults has been published,¹ and this has provided useful experience in preparing ritual books for publication.

Pastoral experience: In addition, pastoral experience with the baptism of children since 1969 has shown what is needed to make the liturgical book easier to use. These considerations led to the decision to publish a new and distinctly Canadian edition of the rite of baptism for children.

More easily used: It should be made clear that no substantive changes in the rite of baptism for children have been made by the Vatican. Likewise, no updated or revised English language version has been produced by ICEL. Instead, the new Canadian edition attempts to present the original ICEL translation in a way that is more useful pastorally.

Improved Presentation


Size: It is 19 x 26.5 (7.5 x 10.5 in.) in size, and appears in an attractive and sturdy dark red binding with ribbons; good quality paper has been used. A distinctive graphic decorates the cover.

Typography: Size of type, use of two colors, layout of text on pages, titles at the bottom of pages, and other typographic features, all help to make the new book easy to use.²

¹ (Ottawa: Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops 1987)
² The following errata should be noted:
  • page 17, n. 41 and page 43, n. 83, last line. “you parents” should read “your parents.” This is printed correctly on pages 70, 94, 162, 174 and 230.
  • page 232, n. 356. “When this baptism” should read “When this rite” as this is a rite of welcoming an adopted child who is already baptized.
  • page 245, n. 19, third line. “capable” should read “not capable.”
Contents

The previous edition presented the rite of baptism for children in full only as it was used outside mass. A section of the introduction told what changes needed to be made when the rite was celebrated within the eucharist, but it was not always easy to remember or convenient to refer to these notes as the liturgy was being celebrated.

Within the eucharist: One of the most important features of the new Canadian edition is that the rite of baptism is given in full both as it is celebrated outside mass and as it is celebrated within the eucharist. Thus the rite of baptism for several children, the rite of baptism for one child, and the rite of bringing a baptized child to the church are all presented both “outside mass” and “within mass.” Though this entails considerable duplication of material, the result is enormously improved from a pastoral point of view.3

For lay presiders: The new edition is also better suited for use by lay ministers when pastoral circumstances make it appropriate for them to preside at baptisms for children. Thus the rite of baptism by a catechist4 when no priest or deacon is available is presented both “for several children” and “for one child.” In addition, notes and rubrics tell how the rite of baptism may be celebrated within Sunday lay-led liturgies, especially when these include holy communion.

Scripture readings, responsorial psalms and gospel acclamations from the lectionary for baptism are included in the new edition (though the lectionary will of course be used in the actual celebration).

Introductions: Two introductions are provided; both are worthy of careful study. One is that of the rite of baptism for children itself, and the other is the general introduction to all the rites of Christian initiation.

New Appendices

Four appendices contain material that was not in any previous edition of the rite of baptism for children.

Music: The first contains a musical setting for the litany of the saints, and one for the first prayer over the water.

The adoption of a child who is already baptized is a fact of life in the Canadian church, and a rite for welcoming such children is included in this ritual book. It may be celebrated within mass or outside mass, and provision is made for it to be included within a Sunday celebration at which a lay minister presides.

After introductory rites and a liturgy of the word, the minister “congratulates the parents for the love with which they have welcomed the children

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3 The former “rite of baptism for a large number of children” is not included in this edition. It is only rarely needed pastorally, and the need it was intended to meet can be accommodated by the “rite of baptism of several children.”

4 The term “catechist” refers to a suitably qualified and authorized lay liturgical presider.
into their home." The parents in turn "ask that the whole community will know that he(she) has become a member of our family and been received into the Church." An affirmation by the assembly, signing with the cross, intercessions, the Lord's Prayer, and a blessing follow.

The third appendix consists of the Instruction on Infant Baptism published in 1980 by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. It considers, among other points, the basis for infant baptism and the question of the faith of the parents.

Pastoral notes: Finally, the National Liturgical Office has provided very helpful pastoral notes. These deal first with the many aspects of preparing to celebrate baptism, including preparation by the community, preparation by parents and godparents, and preparation of the liturgy. The liturgy of baptism is then considered in a step-by-step fashion, with clarifications and suggestions.

Helpful Additions

Outlines: Following ICEL's recent practice, an outline of individual liturgies is printed on the page facing the beginning of each rite. This assists the presider and others to grasp the overall structure of each service, and helps them to see the relationship of individual parts of a liturgy to the rite as a whole.

Titles: The titles used in the outline are used within each rite when it is printed in full. Each part of the liturgy is clearly named, and presiders immediately know when each new part begins.

- The outlines and titles used for the rite of baptism for children are, as much as possible, identical to those used in the rite of Christian initiation of adults.

All texts in place: In the original ICEL edition of the rite of baptism for children, many alternative texts were placed in an appendix. In order to facilitate their use in the course of liturgical celebrations, these have now been placed in context, and this has been done for each version of the rite.

- Thus the two prayers of exorcism, the three blessings of water, two prayers over water already blessed, the final blessings, etc. are given in place in each version of the rite. Only the alternative intercessions (prayers of the faithful) remain in a separate section.

Boxes: Alternative elements are sometimes presented within the various liturgies. For example, one prayer is to be used if there is a prebaptismal anointing, and another if this anointing is omitted. For the sake of clarity, these alternatives are printed in boxes.

Cross references: A ‡ is occasionally printed in the margin to indicate that the pastoral notes contain a comment of special importance.

Rubrics: A few new rubrics are added for the sake of clarification. A few others have been rearranged to make them easier to follow.
Canadian Adaptations

The introduction to the rite of baptism for children leaves several matters to be decided by the bishops of each country. In connection with the preparation of the new Canadian edition of this rite, our episcopal conference has made the following decisions:

- "The anointing before baptism may be omitted when the minister of baptism judges the omission to be pastorally desirable."

- "According to custom," the Ephphetha rite "is retained in Canada."

Adapted Texts

Sense lines: Following present ICEL practice, all prayers are presented in "sense lines" to aid oral proclamation. Previously these were printed as if they were ordinary prose.

Rewritten: A few texts have been slightly revised to make them more effective pastorally; this has especially affected the final blessings. For example, the original translation read, "May he [God] bless the mother of this child. She now thanks God for the gift of your child." This has been changed to "May he bless you, the mother of this child. You now thank God for the gift of your child."

Inclusive: To implement principles enunciated by the Canadian bishops and by ICEL, a few small changes have been made to make the language of this rite more inclusive.

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5 See "Discriminating in our language," *National Bulletin on Liturgy* vol. 18, no. 100 (September-October 1985) 219-228; and "To speak as a Christian community," later in this issue.
Preparing for Baptism

A journey: The baptism of a child is not an isolated event in the life of the child or the parents; it is not something that begins and ends within the course of one hour — or even less. Instead, it is a stage in a much longer journey, the journey of human life and of the life of baptized persons. It is a stage in the journey of the child, the parents, the church, and ultimately of Jesus Christ in the Spirit. For each it is a journey of life, of faith, of community, of witness and of ministry.

Before Baptism

The journey of baptism begins before the liturgy of baptism is celebrated, and continues long afterward.

Marriage and Family Life

The beginning: We may think of marriage as the beginning of the journey toward baptism. The spouses are asked, “Will you accept children lovingly from God, and bring them up according to the law of Christ and his Church?” This law, of course, is fundamentally that of love, service and worship. The nuptial blessings add: “Bless them with children and help them be good parents. May they live to see their children’s children,” and “give them children to be formed by the gospel and to have a place in your [God’s] family.” May they “enrich your Church with their children.”

This journey continues as the marriage continues to be celebrated in the “domestic church” constituted by the new family in their home. It goes on as well in the participation of the couple in the worship, witness and ministry of the local parish community. It also moves forward in the daily social, educational and work life of the spouses.

With the church: In this phase of their life the church community needs to support and stay close to the couple. Sometimes this is difficult to accomplish, but it should at least be attempted.

Pregnancy: A special moment arrives when a child is conceived and then carried through the nine long months of pregnancy. The church community walks with the mother — and father and perhaps other children — during her pregnancy, childbirth, and bringing home of the new baby.
**Blessings and prayers:** Both the *Book of Blessings*¹ and *Catholic Household Blessings and Prayers*² contain fine prayers for the family during pregnancy, childbirth, and the welcoming of a new child. These deserve to be better known and more widely used.

**Practical help:** The pastoral notes add, "Some members of the parish may show their Christian love by assisting the parents with household tasks in the days and weeks immediately following the birth of the child."

It is appropriate for parish ministers to talk to couples about baptism even while they are expecting their children.

**Requesting Baptism**

A further stage of the journey comes when the parents come to the church to request that their child be baptized. This is a crucial moment for both the parents and the parish community.

**Welcoming the New Child**

The parish ministers to whom the parents first speak, as well as the local Christian community as a whole, need to present the face and spirit of Christ to the new parents. The first impulses of the minister and community will be those of joy and hospitality. The new family will be warmly and graciously welcomed, and delight will be expressed at the birth of the baby. The minister will pray with the couple and pray for the child; the parents and baby will be referred to in the general intercessions of the Sunday eucharist.

**Questions:** One writer raises the following questions for the parish ministers:

The manner in which the [parish minister], be it lay minister or ordained minister, expresses the attitude of Christ to the couple is critical: Is he/she welcoming, gentle, nonjudgmental, open to where they are in their lives? Does he/she adequately listen to their story? Is he/she willing to take time to share with this couple the church's concept of baptism as it is understood today? Does he/she respect this crucial moment as a possible occasion for conversion? In other words, is the reception that this couple is given truly representative of that which would be extended by Christ?³

**Always show Christ:** Even if the parents later decide to withdraw their request for the baptism of their child, the parents should be touched with the love of Christ, they should be invited to come home to their church — and

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¹ (Ottawa: Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops 1981) 51-64.
³ Joan Torres, "Uncommitted Catholic parents and children's baptism," *Church* (Winter 1989) 49-50. See also:


this home should be seen as loving and hospitable. The initial conversation between parish minister and parents is an occasion to plant or water seeds that may not flower immediately, but perhaps, in God's providence, at a later time in their lives.

The parish minister will then spend some time getting to know the young couple and the circumstances of their life. In fact canon law directs that "where possible, each family [be] visited" in their home. The introduction to the rite says, "Before and after the celebration of the sacrament, the child has a right to the love and help of the community" and often this will be expressed through the presence of the parish minister.

The pastoral notes add, "The priest ought to welcome all parents who request the baptism of their children. The priest (or a member of the parish) ought to visit the parents to express the joy of the parish community at the birth of their child and assure them of the community's prayers and concern for them and their family. He may use this occasion to talk about their faith, to pray with them, and invite the parents (and godparents, if available) to participate in a parish program of preparation. The pastoral visit may conclude with a blessing of the parents and child . . . ."

In the course of welcoming the new baby and getting to know the parents, the parish minister will learn of their relationship with the church and with Jesus Christ, and how they live and view the Christian life.

Preparation

The celebration of baptism is preceded by a period of preparation. What principles guide this process, what methods are to be used, how are individual needs to be discerned?

Basic Principles

Several basic principles govern the practice of infant baptism in the Roman Catholic Church today. These need to be understood by parish ministers and parents alike. They also need always to be considered together, even though they may in pastoral practice be in tension with one another.

Dignity and honor: The parents, as baptized women and men, are sisters and brothers of Jesus Christ and members of Christ's body, the Church. The dignity they have as persons created by God and reborn in baptism is to be honored.

The church earnestly desires that their child be baptized. It never refuses to baptize a child brought by believing parents.

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4 Canon 852, 2
The church has a very high regard for baptism. Baptism is held high and reverenced; it is not something trivial. It is because baptism is so precious that it is not entered into lightly.

**Infant baptism makes no sense** unless there is a hope that children will be brought up to be practicing, believing Christians. To baptize a child otherwise would make a mockery of this sacrament of God's love.

**Baptism is only the beginning** of the process of Christian initiation. As the child grows, initiation will be completed by the celebration of confirmation and first eucharist, and by the development and practice of a Christian vision of life.

**The raising of the child** as a practising Christian, within the Catholic Church, though a great responsibility of the parents, will be supported and assisted by the parish community.

All liturgies of the church require preparation, and this involves an investment of time. As the couple prepared their wedding, so they must prepare the liturgy of baptism. The purpose of the process of preparing for baptism is exactly the same as that for every other liturgy of the church: the full, active, conscious and fruitful participation that the Second Vatican Council enunciated as the fundamental principle of the modern liturgical renewal.\(^5\)

**Parents are not alone:** The parents, godparents, the parish minister, and the local Christian community as a whole need to be involved in the preparation process; the parents are not alone in this. Hopefully, several couples will prepare together.

**The nature and duration of the preparation process** will vary from one couple to another, because their needs are different. For some this process may take a considerable period of time. This is considered a "deferral" of baptism for the sake of the full participation of the parents, not a refusal to baptize their child.

**It is the responsibility of the parish minister**, in dialogue with the parents, to discern the kind of preparation process that is best suited to each couple's needs. In doing this, he or she will continue to exhibit Christ's own love of children as well as Christ's expectation that those who are baptized will truly live as his disciples.

**No compulsion:** As the parents grow in their appreciation of the nature, meaning and consequences of baptism, and of their own responsibilities for the raising of their child, they are free at any time to withdraw their request to have him or her baptized. The church never forces baptism on anyone.

**Continued care:** This decision needs to be accepted in a caring manner and, if possible, the parish minister will pray with the couple and bless them. They are to be assured that the church continues to care for them and wishes to help them in their future life. These parents will be carried in prayer by the parish minister and through the general intercessions of the Sunday eucharist. If possible, the parish minister or other members of the community will keep in touch with them by personal contact.

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\(^5\) Constitution on the Church, nn. 14 and 11.
Baptism postponed: Some parents who do not wish to have their child baptized will have decided that they will wait until the child is older, and then enroll him or her as a catechumen as part of the rite of Christian initiation of children of catechetical age. Though not encouraged by the church, this option is permitted. The parish community will want to walk with these families, care for the children, and help them arrive at the point at which the catechumenate is appropriate.

Methods of Preparation

Alternative approaches: The process of preparing for baptism may be envisioned and carried out in more than one way. Two main approaches are in use today. These may be termed the “educational” model and the “liturgical” model, respectively.

The educational model of baptism preparation takes the view that there are certain things parents need to learn before they are allowed to actively prepare the liturgy of baptism. There is some kind of baptism preparation course which parents are expected to complete. Those whose connection with the church is considered to be marginal may also be required to take other courses of adult religious education or be enrolled in a process modelled on the catechumenate.

Deferral: In this model, “deferring” the baptism of their child means that the parents will spend some period of time increasing their understanding and improving the practice of their faith before they begin to prepare the liturgical celebration.

The liturgical approach takes the position that the rite of baptism for children, with its excellent introductions and pastoral notes, is the core and basis for the entire process of preparing for baptism; the liturgy itself is the best teacher and guide. Here, preparation “for” baptism is equated with preparation “of” the liturgy of baptism.

Study and prayer: As the parents, godparents and parish ministers study and meditate upon the liturgy of baptism, and enter into its prayers as the prayers of their own hearts, the necessary preparation will be accomplished.

Preparing the dialogues: As the parents ponder the dialogues in which they take part, they have to understand and accept as their own what they are asked to say in the course of the liturgy. In one dialogue they may compose their words themselves, with the help of the parish minister, and these words have to come from deep within themselves.

The ministry of the parents: The parents will also come to appreciate — and accept — that their role in the liturgy of baptism is that of ministers of the church and active participants. They are not acting as legal representatives of the child nor are they spectators who watch what the priest is doing to their child.

Faith and life: At times, what is expressed in the rite of baptism may lead to the examination of other questions of faith as well, and to changes in the way the parents express their faith in their lives.

Transformation: The liturgical model also believes that the actual celebration of the liturgy of baptism will be a transforming event for the parents. The
rite not only expresses faith, but also deepens it. There is a "grace of the sacrament" for the parents as well as for the child (though these are of different kinds).

Deferral: In this model, "deferring" the baptism of the child means only that the process of preparing the liturgy of baptism takes a longer time. The preparation of the liturgy still begins immediately; nothing else precedes it.

This issue of the Bulletin adopts the liturgical approach to the preparation of baptism, and attempts to show how it can be implemented.

Discerning the Needs of the Parents

The parish minister and the parents jointly need to discern their needs with respect to preparation. Four different types of needs come to mind.

- Some couples have celebrated the baptism of other children previously, are active in parish life, have participated in the baptism of other parents' children, and may even have studied some theology as adults.
- Other couples may have an active life of faith, but have little experience of baptism and have not given it much thought.
- Still others are "marginal" Catholics. They rarely worship and have little direct contact with the parish community. When asked, however, they still consider themselves to be members of the church.
- Finally, there are some who admit they have no active Christian faith, but have requested baptism to satisfy family pressures or for some other reason that has no basis in faith.

How are such different needs to be accommodated?

Four Approaches to Preparation

Based on the four kinds of parental needs outlined above, four related but distinct approaches to preparation of the rite of baptism can be envisioned. All follow the liturgical method. Rather than term these "preparation courses" or "preparation processes," it might be better to think of them as alternative "experiences" of preparation.

The four scenarios or kinds of experiences suggested below will need to be adapted and refined to fit the needs of individual couples or groups of couples (and, if possible, the godparents).

Step One: Provide Resources

All four kinds of experiences of preparation will begin by providing parents and godparents with certain key resources. In addition, the parish minister needs a further resource.
All will require a copy of the rite of baptism for children, including the texts of all alternative texts and scripture readings.

The parish minister will also have the new Canadian edition of this rite, with its introductions, pastoral notes, and the 1980 Instruction on Infant Baptism.

All will need a copy of this issue of the Bulletin. This chapter considers general principles, and the chapter entitled "Celebrating Baptism," considers the liturgy of baptism in some detail. The chapter entitled "Living a Baptismal Life" considers some of the consequences and expectations of baptism, and the chapter on "Reminders and Renewal of Baptism" provides a broader perspective; it is of secondary importance in preparation.

The parents will wish to look over the rite of baptism immediately.

**Step Two: Provide An Overview**

All four scenarios begin by providing an overview of the rite of baptism for children, as given at the beginning of the chapter, "Celebrating Baptism." In addition to reading this, couples and the parish minister will meet in the church and walk through the several processions. The minister will speak about the broad outline of the rite, its basic structure, its dynamic of dialogue, and the respective roles of the parents, godparents, priest, congregation and child.

They may then, in the church, rectory or meeting room, consider the preparation of the liturgy of baptism in more detail, as considered in the four scenarios given below.

**Step Three: Four Scenarios**

Following this kind of initial preparation, which will be common to all couples, the different needs of individual couples will be respected by dividing them into several groups. The four "scenarios" considered below show how different couples might progress in their preparation of and for the liturgy of baptism.

1. **First scenario:** This requires the least amount of time. Parents with some appreciation of baptism and its meaning and consequences will focus their attention on the specific details of the liturgy. This dimension of preparation includes the adaptation of the liturgy to the circumstances of a particular time, place and assembly; the choice of readings, prayers and other alternatives and options that are provided in the rite; the choice of suitable music; the assignment and if necessary, training of readers, greeters, musicians and other liturgical ministers. All of this will be done prayerfully.

   - Planning for baptism: The liturgy of baptism has its own set of planning requirements. These include deciding whether to celebrate it outside mass or within mass, planning the different locations and processions set out in the rite, and preparing the water, chrism, paschal candle, new garment and other items needed.

   - The dialogues: The parents will also need to review and plan the dialogues in which they have a role. In some cases alternative texts are provided, or they may compose the dialogue (together with the parish minister).
Difficulties and joys of parenthood: The parents may also wish to share with the parish minister and with other couples, the meaning the child's name has for them, their hopes and dreams for their baby, and their understanding of the baptismal life ahead for the child. If they have older children, they might wish to share their experiences of raising children as Christians — the difficulties and joys, the ups and down of being a Christian mother or father.

The rite of baptism for children and the chapters “Celebrating Baptism” and “Living a Baptismal Life” will be resources for these dimensions of preparation.

Second scenario: Those who are active in parish life but have little knowledge or experience of baptism might spend more time preparing the liturgy of baptism.

The opening dialogues: Using the rite and the commentary in this issue of the Bulletin, they might begin by considering the significance of the opening dialogues of the liturgy of baptism.

The word of God: Next, they will study the alternative scripture readings provided for the celebration of baptism. These are privileged teachers of the meaning of this sacrament. Silent prayer and shared reflection will be part of this.

Faith and the church: The renunciation of sin and profession of faith will be another focus of consideration. What are their values and their beliefs? What is their relationship with God? Because the parents act as representatives of the church, they need also to ask: “Who are we as members of the church?” “What does the church mean to us?”

The baptismal life: The consequences and expectations of the liturgy of baptism will then be considered. These are expressed throughout the liturgy, and all the liturgical and scriptural texts need to be examined from this perspective. The following chapters, “Celebrating Baptism” and “Living a Baptismal Life” will be of help.

Alternatives and options: Finally, texts, readings and music will be chosen, and the other matters considered in the first scenario will be planned.

Third scenario: Parents whose relationship to the church is weak will need to take longer to prepare for the celebration of baptism. Their experience will include everything that has already been considered in the previous scenarios.

Other parts of the rite: In addition to what has been outlined in the second scenario, the other rites and prayers should be given more detailed study: the intercessions, prayers of exorcism, prayers over the water, explanatory rites, introduction to the Lord’s Prayer, and final blessings.

Detours and Side Trips

For these parents the experience of preparing the celebration of baptism probably will be interspersed with side trips to deepen their relationship with the church, their life of prayer, and their view of the Christian life.
A closer relationship: The nature of the church and the parents' relationship with the church will arise in the course of considering the liturgical assembly that is celebrating the liturgy, the welcome and signing with the cross by the Christian community, and especially the representing of the church in the profession of faith. This hopefully will lead to the development of a closer relationship to the parish community on the part of the parents.

• This may be expressed through more frequent participation in the Sunday eucharist and in the ministries of the parish. It may be desirable to discontinue the preparation of the baptismal liturgy for a while in order to allow this to develop.

• Consideration of the question of faith and the parents' relationship to God may lead them to express the need for help in their prayer life. Providing this help may again constitute a sort of side track on the process of preparing the liturgy of baptism.

• Consideration of the expectations of raising the child to be a practising Christian may raise questions regarding Christian values, the formation of conscience, and religious education. Again, it may be desirable to spend time dealing with these issues.

These and other "detours" in the path of preparing the liturgy of baptism should arise out and lead back to the process of preparing the liturgy, and not be extraneous to it.

Fourth scenario: Those whose request for baptism is not based on Christian faith should start out as in scenario three.

The inconsistency of their request with the meaning and consequences of baptism should become clear to them as they enter into the process of preparing the liturgy of baptism. The parish minister — and perhaps other couples as well — will help them in this regard. Their own integrity should lead them to withdraw their request once they find out what the rite means and requires. They should be told about the possibility of their child enrolling in the catechumenate at an older age.

Step Four: Criteria of Progress

In all cases, it is the responsibility of the parish minister to discern when parents are ready for the celebration of the baptism of their child. How is this to be done? What criteria are to be used?

The parish minister will always show Christ's own care for children and their parents, as well as the church's concern for the integrity of baptism.

The basic criteria by which the progress of the parents are to be evaluated are liturgical. Are they ready to participate fully, actively, consciously and fruitfully? The same question may be applied, making the necessary adaptations, to the godparents and the community.

The second question is, "Will the liturgy of baptism be celebrated joyfully, prayerfully, and in a way that is transforming?"

The liturgical approach to baptism preparation is simple, respectful of persons, and faithful to the meaning of this sacrament.
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CHURCH MUSIC AND LITURGICAL STUDIES AT RENSSELAER

SAINT JOSEPH’S COLLEGE announces MINI SESSIONS (June 18-29): New Rite of Christian Funerals (2 credits). Lecturer: Marguerite Streifel, OSB, Director, Crookston (Minn.) Office of Worship. SUMMER SESSION (June 19-August 2) offerings: Historical/Theological Perspectives of Christian Worship, New Funeral Rite, Hymnody, Music as Pastoral Prayer, Organ, Conducting, Theory, etc. Graduate/undergraduate Music/Liturgy. Three-summer Diploma in Pastoral Liturgy. Faculty: Fr. James Challancin, Dr. John Egan, Dr. Joyce Schemanske, Dr. Joan Whittemore, SCJ, others. Contact: Lawrence Heiman, CPPS, Saint Joseph's College, Box 815, Rensselaer, IN 47978.
Celebrating Baptism

The best teacher of the meaning of infant baptism is the rite of baptism for children itself; this is the church's primary textbook on baptism. It will be helpful first to gain an overview of this liturgy as a whole, and then its constituent elements will be examined one by one.

Overview

**The basic meaning of the rite of baptism** for children may be grasped by considering the several different locations and movements that the rite describes. The liturgy may be thought of as a kind of drama, with movement, action, dialogue and a number of actors. There are five scenes.

**Scene one:** In the first scene the parents, godparents and children appear at the entrance to the parish church and knock on the door. The church community inside hear them knock and go to the door. They recognize the parents, but have not been formally introduced to the children, and so they ask, Who are these children? What do you seek for them? Will you accept your responsibilities for raising these children as Christians?

On hearing what the parents say, the parish community rejoices and welcomes the families. The children are marked with the sign of the cross, a gesture that they will make throughout their lives as they enter the church building for worship, and when they begin and conclude the eucharist.

**Scene two:** The families and entire community move to the front of the church, singing as they go; they are processing to the place where the liturgy of the word is celebrated. Parents, godparents and community together listen and respond to the word of God. The scripture lessons name and describe the meaning of baptism, and affirm and challenge everyone to live baptismal lives. Certain prayers follow, and the children may be anointed with oil or have hands laid upon them.

**Scene three:** Having been moved in their hearts by God's living word, everyone now moves physically to the baptismal font, singing as they process. The water is prayed over and the Holy Spirit is invoked. The parents and godparents profess their own faith which is at the same time the faith of the Church. The children are washed three times in water as the Trinity is named. Both after the profession of faith and following the immersion of each child, the congregation responds affirmatively with "Amen," on acclamation or a song.

Still gathered around the font, four additional symbolic rites express some of the nuances of baptism. The children are anointed with oil, clothed in new white garments, given (through their parents and godparents) a candle lit from the paschal candle, and then touched on their ears and mouths.
Scene four: Now the entire community — including parents, godparents and children — process with song from the font to the altar. The church announces that the Christian initiation of these children is not yet complete: there is still confirmation and the eucharist to look forward to. The Lord’s Prayer, which identifies all Christians as children of a loving God, follows.

Scene five: The community, parents, godparents and children go forth to live out their baptism in their daily lives. Special blessings are directed to the parents and the community, and a concluding song expresses “thanksgiving and Easter joy.” The parents and their children return to their homes, which are “domestic churches” and where the children will grow to be mature Christians.

Priorities: A complex rite such as baptism for children has an integrity as a whole: each element has a meaning, contributes to the whole, and hence is important. At the same time there are “peaks” and “valleys”: some parts of the rite are more important than others. In the rite of baptism the two high points are the scripture readings plus homily, and the actual threefold washing in water with the trinitarian formula.

Other elements of the liturgy of baptism either prepare for the word or for baptism, show its consequences in Christian life, or both.

Dialogue

Priest and parents: Throughout the liturgy of baptism a dialogue is carried on among the various participants: the parents, godparents, priest, child and congregation. Part of the dialogue is couched in terms of questions asked by the priest and responses given by the parents. This is not to be viewed as an interrogation, but rather as a friendly — though formal — conversation. Sometimes the priest is trying to help the parents express thoughts that lie deep in their hearts and which are difficult to put into words.

Within the church: At one level the dialogue appears to be between the church and persons outside the church. But the parents and godparents are part of the church as well; their homes and families constitute domestic churches. This dialogue, therefore, is more of a conversation of the church with itself.

The congregation’s part in this conversation is to a large extent one of affirmation and support. At times the priest speaks for them, at times the parents and godparents do so. The congregation usually responds in ways that indicate approval of what has been said in their name, and affirmation of those who have spoken. At other times the congregation bursts out in song in marvel and joy at what is taking place.

Approval and affirmation: The congregation’s approval and affirmation may also be seen as an acceptance of responsibility to support and assist the parents and the children in living out the meaning and consequences of baptism. They are not mere spectators, but rather participants, both of the liturgy of baptism and the growing up of the children. Each time the members of the parish participate in the celebration of baptism they pledge themselves anew to live both as baptized individuals and as a baptismal community.
Baptism as Liturgy

Communal, participatory, musical: As a contemporary liturgy of the Roman Catholic Church, the rite of baptism for children is communal, participatory, and musical. It is the liturgy of the local church community and that of the universal church as well. This is signified in the first place by the use of the church building. It is not merely a building containing the furniture needed for baptism, but rather a sign and icon of the local church community whose house it is.

Members of the local parish will always be present, as well as the families, godparents and specially invited relatives and friends. Even when baptism is celebrated outside mass, parishioners should understand that they — or at least a goodly representation — have a serious responsibility to participate and help form the liturgical assembly.

Gracious hospitality will be exercised by the priest, parish ministers of hospitality, and by all the members of the parish who are present. Parents, godparents, relatives and visitors should all be welcomed warmly and made to feel at home. Hymnals and other participation aids will be made available; a special program or bulletin may be prepared. (Catholic Book of Worship II is a good resource; see numbers 3-16.)

Everyone must hear: The priest, parents and godparents of course have prominent spoken roles. Everything that they say should be audible to all present. When the priest addresses the families, he speaks in the name of the entire local church, and the congregation should be able to hear what he says. When the parents respond, they are speaking not only to the presider who stands nearby, but to the entire parish community. If it is necessary to use microphones, one should be provided for the parents and godparents as well as for the presider.

Not spectators: The congregation also has important spoken parts. They are not spectators. The full, active, conscious and fruitful participation of which Vatican Council II spoke of is expected just as much at baptism as for the Sunday eucharist. Local parishioners will provide leadership in this regard, and will also facilitate and encourage the participation of guests and visitors.

Music plays an important part in the rite of baptism, as it does in most liturgies of the church. The rite calls for or encourages singing at the following points:

- at the very beginning of the celebration
- during the procession from the entrance of the church to the place where the liturgy of the word is celebrated
- the responsorial psalm
- the gospel acclamation
- the litany of the saints with which the intercessions conclude
- during the procession from the place of the liturgy of the word to the baptismal font

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the first prayer over the water may be sung by the priest, and the people may sing the concluding Amen

the second and third prayers over the water include congregational acclamations that should, if possible, be sung

the congregation's assent to the profession of faith may take the form of a song (see, for example, CBW II number 10)

following the baptism of each child (for example, CBW II numbers 11-13)

during the procession from the baptismal font to the altar

at the conclusion of the liturgy.

Clearly, parish musicians have an important role in providing leadership and in seeing that the musical nature of the liturgy of baptism is expressed.

Relation to the eucharist: The liturgy of baptism may be celebrated outside mass or within mass. Following the example of the liturgical book, its celebration outside mass will be described first. Unless otherwise noted, quotations are from the rite of baptism for children. It will be assumed that there are several children to be baptized.

Reception of the Children

In the first part of the liturgy the parents, accompanied by the godparents, present the children to the church for baptism; the church “receives” the children.

Time and place: The time is Sunday, “the day on which the church celebrates the paschal mystery.” The place is the parish church, “in the presence of the faithful,” all of whom are expected “to take an active part in the rite.” An opening song gathers and focuses the attention of the assembly.

Moves to the entrance: The presider, on behalf of all, moves “to the entrance of the church or to that part of the church where the parents and godparents are waiting with those who are to be baptized.” If space permits, the congregation gathers around. The presider greets all present. No liturgical text is specified, though the usual apostolic greetings used at the eucharist are also appropriate here.

Joy of parents and parish: In his own words the priest then reminds everyone “of the joy with which the parents welcomed their children as gifts of God, the source of life, who now wishes to bestow his own life on these little ones.” This is not the time for a mini-homily, yet some serious theology may be imparted. Whatever is said must be a fitting beginning to the celebration.

Needs to be heard: Even if the presider and baptismal party are physically separated from the remainder of the assembly, this greeting, which is addressed to all present, needs to be heard by all.
Opening Dialogue

The opening dialogue between the presider and the parents is deceptively simple:

- What name have you given your child? N.

At one level this simply identifies each child, clarifies and states publicly the intention of the parents, and names what it is that all have gathered for.

*What does the name mean?* There is a deeper level of meaning here as well. Parents generally spend considerable time and energy deciding what name to give to their child. It may be that of a parent or grandparent or another relative, or of a favorite saint or biblical figure. The name may be one that is popular in contemporary culture, or the parents may make up a new name or choose one that is new to their families. The name usually means a great deal to the parents; it has a special significance for them.

*A child’s name* also indicates his or her own individuality. In naming their child, the parents recognize that he or she is someone different from themselves, a separate person, a distinct personality. The child has his or her own dignity as a human person, even while remaining within the family and for some years being dependent on the mother and father.

*The deeper level:* When the parents respond, "Martha," or "Joel," they imply this deeper level of meaning as well as helping the priest remember who the individual children are who have been brought for baptism.

*A model:* The second part of the dialogue, “What do you ask of God’s Church for N? Baptism.” is not a prescribed liturgical text, but rather a model of what might be said. The rubrics indicate that “the celebrant may choose other words for the dialogue” and that “the parents may use other words, e.g., ‘faith,’ ‘the grace of Christ,’ ‘entrance into the Church,’ ‘eternal life.’” What is the significance of this?

*Hopes and dreams:* These questions and responses concern the deepest hopes of the parents for their child. Parents want the best possible life for their child. They have dreams, expectations and aspirations for their little girl or boy — they want her or his happiness. They know that while the child is an individual person distinct from themselves, he or she is also the continuation of themselves into the future.

*The social dimension:* The hopes parents have for their children have many dimensions. In other circumstances parents might express their dreams in terms of intelligence, beauty, a good education, a loving spouse, a fulfilling career, a moral life, a long life, etc.

*Christian faith:* In the context of the liturgy of baptism, however, the hopes of the parents are expressed in the language of Christian faith. The best possible future for their child is for him or her to become a sister or brother of Jesus Christ, to become his friend and disciple. This intimate relationship with Christ — and through him to the Father and the Holy Spirit — is found in the church, which is the body of Christ and communion of his followers. This relationship with Jesus Christ also leads to life after the normal span of human life has been completed.
All of one’s life: To respond, “baptism,” then, is to say much more than what parents want for their child in the next hour. What really is at stake is a baptismal life that extends through the child’s entire existence.

Careful thought needs to be given to this part of the opening dialogue. Because each set of parents is questioned individually (unless there is a very large group), the dialogue might be different for individual families. This will require careful planning.

The dialogue continues. After the parents respond by saying “baptism” or something equivalent, the presider now asks, “Do you clearly understand what you are undertaking?” He is not doubting their integrity or their intelligence. Baptism, however, is not something trivial or something to be entered into lightly.

Affirmation and challenge: The presider both affirms the parents and challenges them by stating some of the expectations and consequences of baptism. Clearly, baptism is not something that is over and done with in this liturgy. It is a lifelong process and one that requires parental care and example for many years.

Responsibility: Thus the priest says, “You are accepting the responsibility of training [your children] in the practice of the faith. It will be your duty to bring them up to keep God’s commandments as Christ taught us, by loving God and our neighbor.” The introduction to the rite of baptism for children adds, “After baptism it is the responsibility of the parents, in their gratitude to God and in fidelity to the duty they have undertaken, to assist the child to know God, whose adopted child it has become, to prepare the child to receive confirmation and participate in the eucharist.”

This is a considerable challenge for the parents. To train their child in the practice of the faith is to set an example which the child emulates; the practice of the faith is first of all expected of the parents. To bring up their child to love God and neighbor is to live such a love so that the child can grow into it.

“Loving God and our neighbor” is to be seen as a summary of the whole gospel, as indeed it was intended by Jesus. Keeping God’s commandments and practising the faith grows out of and depends on entering into this loving relationship with God. If this fundamental relationship is absent, then individual practices are empty.

Affirmation: To state these expectations and implications is also to affirm the parents. It is to say, all of this can be done — with God’s help. Many parents have gone before you in this path and have set a good example for you. Other parents in this parish are doing all of this right now.

Parish responsibility: Finally, this affirmation and challenge implies that the parish community has a responsibility as well. The introduction to the rite says, after naming the various responsibilities of the parents, “In this duty they are . . . to be helped by the parish priest by suitable means.” The very fact that baptism is a liturgy of the parish community, whose members are present and participating fully, again proclaims that the parents do not stand alone.

Parish challenge: What is said to the parents about practising the faith, keeping God’s commandments, loving God and neighbor is really said as
well to the entire parish community. The parish has to set a good example both for the parents and the young children.

**Some Churches** state the responsibility of the congregation explicitly by addressing a question to them. For example:

Will you who witness these vows do all in your power to support these persons in their life in Christ? We will. *(Anglican Church of Canada)*

As a baptized and baptizing church, do you commit yourselves to support and nurture these persons within a community which worships God, resists evil and seeks justice? *(United Church of Canada)*

**Godparents:** The dialogue now turns from the parents to the godparents. “Are you ready to help these parents in their duty as Christian mothers and father?” Of course they are. But the question does not simply say “parents,” but “Christian parents.”

**There is a faith dimension** here as well. And that is why both godparents are baptized persons, and at least one a Roman Catholic. Are the godparents prepared to be faith-examples for the parents and the children? Are they prepared to help by showing love for God and neighbor? Are they prepared to give good example through a life of faith from which the children can learn?

**Welcome**

**The child is addressed:** For the first time the presider speaks to the child. Having heard and stated the promises, hopes and expectations of the parents and the Church, he now declares, “My dear children, the Christian community welcomes you with great joy.” He is saying, I and all present welcome you. But this welcome also goes beyond us, beyond St Agatha’s parish, beyond the diocese of Halifax, even beyond the Roman Catholic Church; it is the entire Christian community that welcomes you.

**Welcomed joyfully:** The children are not simply welcomed, but welcomed “with great joy.” In these children the hopes, aspirations and deepest values of the parents and the church coincide. Both are co-creators of these children with the God of life, both see the children as God’s gifts, both have the privilege and responsibility of giving life to the children, both see their future in these children.

**Claimed for Christ:** From a warm and joyfilled welcome the presider now changes tone and makes a solemn declaration: “In the name of” the Christian community, “I claim you for Christ our Savior.” He acknowledges and asserts that these children belong to Christ. Though not yet baptized, they still are Christ’s. An early Christian writer explained that though they are not yet reborn in baptism, they now are carried in the womb of the church.

**Nature of the church:** Elsewhere in the liturgy of baptism the church is described by a wealth of images in addition to “the Christian community.” It is called the church, God’s church, God’s holy church, the holy catholic church, Christ’s body, the people, God’s holy people, the faithful, all the baptized, brothers and sisters, God’s faithful children. Members of the church include relatives, friends, neighbors, Christian mothers and fathers, godparents, young children, priests, deacons and ministers.
The cross: The claiming is made concrete by the sign of the cross of Christ which the priest and then the parents and godparents trace on the foreheads of the children. The cross is the unique symbol of Christ and of the Christian, the instrument of death through which Christ showed how much God loves us and through which life is given to us. Priests, parents and godparents can authentically trace the sign of the cross on the children only if they themselves live the life of Christ in their everyday lives.

What does it mean to address this welcome, claiming and signing with the cross to the infants who are being received? No matter how small, they are distinct persons, individuals, gifts of God, persons known and loved by God. They have the dignity of human personhood,1 they will soon be our sisters and brothers through baptism; they are our own precious children.

Invitation to the word: Having welcomed the infants, the focus of attention returns to the adults. They are invited to take part in the liturgy of the word. The presider and ministers, with the parents and godparents and any others who had gathered at the entrance of the church, now process to the place where the liturgy of the word will be celebrated. As this is happening, all may sing a suitable song.

Liturgy of the Word

For adults: The liturgy of the word is directed to those who are able to hear and respond to the scripture readings, preaching and prayers. It has the very important purpose of "stirring up the faith of the parents, godparents, and congregation and [of] praying in common for the fruits of baptism before the sacrament itself."

Without distraction: Because it is important that the parents, godparents and congregation be able to give their full attention to the scripture readings, homily and prayers, the introduction to the rite states that "it is desirable that children should be taken to some other place" and that "the children should . . . be entrusted to the care of . . . women" other than the mothers or godmothers. This is restated in the rubrics and in the pastoral notes. The children are not taken elsewhere just because they cannot understand the word. Instead, it is in order to facilitate the hearing of the word of God by the parents and godparents. If the child is present, it almost always requires some attention, and this will distract the parents and/or godparents from listening to the readings and homily.

1 The dignity of human persons is a major theme of the 1988 "Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation Christifideles Laici of John Paul II on the Vocation and the Mission of the Lay Faithful in the Church and in the World." Three sections refer to human dignity in their title: "The human person: a dignity violated and exalted," "The dignity of the lay faithful in the Church as mystery," and "Promoting the dignity of the person." The dignity of every human person is considered in sections 5 and 37; the dignity of baptized persons in sections 8-16.
Scripture Readings

The selection of readings presented in the lectionary is extremely rich. They proclaim Jesus Christ, the meaning of baptism, and the baptismal life.

Death and resurrection: The reading from the passion according to John (19: 31-35) tells of the blood and water that came from the side of Christ on the cross when his side was pierced with a lance — a symbol of his supreme love for us. This is the evidence of one who saw it . . . and he gives it so that you may believe as well.

One excerpt from the letter to the Romans (6: 3-6; also proclaimed at the Easter Vigil) explicitly links baptism with joining Christ in death so we may also join him in glory.

Baptism of Christ: The baptism of Jesus (Mark 1: 5-11) has been particularly important in Eastern Christian tradition as the great model of our own baptism. The Holy Spirit is especially important in this inauguration of Jesus into his mission.

The Holy Spirit is referred to as well in the following readings from the letters of Paul: I Corinthians 12: 12-13 (In the one Spirit we were all baptized), and Ephesians 4: 1-6 (Do all you can to preserve the unity of the Spirit).

Jesus as living water: Several readings from John’s gospel image Jesus Christ as water. There is the story of the Samaritan women (4: 5-14; anyone who drinks the water that I shall give will never be thirsty again); Jesus’ preaching at the feast of Tabernacles (7: 37-39; If anyone is thirsty, let them come to me); and the story of the man born blind (9: 1-7; Go and wash in the Pool of Siloam). This theme is echoed in the passage from Ezekiel (47: 1-2, 8-9, 12) that tells of the river of life that flows out of the Temple.

The church and Christ’s presence: The institution of baptism in Matthew’s gospel (28: 18-20) is proclaimed: Go and make disciples of all nations, and know that I am with you always. A related image is that of the vine and the branches (John 15: 1-11): Make your home in me, as I make mine in you.

The unity of Christ with the baptized, and among baptized persons, is also proclaimed in other readings. Paul (I Corinthians 12: 12-13) speaks of the human body as an image of the church: in the one Spirit we were all baptized, Jews as well as Greeks, slaves as well as citizens. Another letter proclaims, there is one Body, one Spirit; there is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God who is Father of all (Ephesians 4: 1-6). The first letter of Peter (2: 4-5, 9-10) offers a variety of images: you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a consecrated nation, a people set apart. Finally, the book of Exodus (13: 3-7) tells a story that concludes: Is the Lord with us, or not?

Rebirth: Using a different image, a reading from John (3: 1-6) proclaims, unless we are born from above — through water and the Spirit — we cannot see the reign of God.

Faith and eternal life: John 6: 44-47 concludes that everyone who believes has eternal life. Romans 8: 28-32 proclaims that these are the ones God chose especially long ago and intended to become true images of his Son.

The Christian life: A number of the readings describe the Christian life, especially in terms of mutual love. The story of the greatest commandment
is provided in two versions: Matthew 22: 35-40 and Mark 12: 28-34. You must love the Lord your God, and your neighbor as yourself. As a concrete example of this love, Mark 10: 12-16 speaks of Jesus’ care for children: Let the little children come to me.

Galatians 3: 26-28 tells us that there are no more distinctions between Jew and Greek, slave and free, male and female. From the prophet Ezekiel (36: 24-28) we hear, you shall be my people and I will be your God.

Homily

The interpretation and application of the word of God to the persons present and the circumstances of the particular celebration are very important. The rite says, "after the reading, the celebrant gives a short homily, explaining to those present the significance of what has been read. His purpose will be to lead them to a deeper understanding of the mystery of baptism and to encourage the parents and godparents to a ready acceptance of the responsibilities which arise from the sacrament."

"After the homily . . . it is desirable to have a period of silence while all pray at the invitation of the celebrant."

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Preparatory Rites

Exorcism and anointing: This section of the rite of baptism contains two elements, a prayer of exorcism and the anointing before baptism. They are closely related to the liturgy of the word, as the prayer of exorcism is considered to be the collect with which the intercessions plus litany of the saints conclude. The anointing or laying on of hands arises out of the prayer. Thus the intercessions lead to the litany of the saints, and conclude with the prayer of exorcism; it is one liturgical unit (but this is not clear from the way the individual prayers are presented.)

Anointing may be omitted: In Canada the anointing of "each child on the breast with the oil of catechumens" "may be omitted when the minister of baptism judges the omission to be pastorally desirable. In that case the celebrant says, 'May you have strength in the power of Christ our Savior, who lives and reigns for ever and ever.' And immediately he lays his hands on each child in silence."

Meaning today: These rites — prayers of exorcism and anointing or laying on of hands — have a long and complex history. What is their meaning for us today?

The word "exorcism" as used here has nothing to do with possession by the devil. The prayers of exorcism are really prayers of conversion, of turning to God and turning away from all that is not of God.

Alternatives and choices: They speak of the Christian life in our world, using language that is at the same time both traditional and realistic. They speak of
alternatives — life without Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit on the one side, and life in God: Father, Word and Spirit on the other. To make the point forcefully, only two choices are given: God and what is not of God. Being baptized is to be of God; not having received baptism is to be part of the darkness. In our lives we know that these distinctions and choices sometimes are difficult or ambiguous.

What is not of God is spoken of as the power of Satan, spirit of evil, the kingdom of darkness, original sin, the slavery of sin, the world with its temptations, the devil in all his cunning, and the stain of original sin.

Images of the unbaptized state: Mark Searle writes, “Looking at the texts of the two prayers [of exorcism] more closely, we see that the state of the unbaptized is expressed by three kinds of images. At one level, this state is a state that they simply find themselves in: the kingdom of darkness, the slavery of sin, the world. At another level, this state can be said to bring influence to bear upon them: it enslaves them, they face a world with its temptations. At a third level, this state is one which is experienced as having an autonomous power, even a personality of its own; they are in the power of evil, under the dominion of Satan ... and they will have to fight the devil in all his cunning.”

The Christian vision: But God in Christ has created an alternative life and world. This Christian vision is described in terms of God’s kingdom of light, being temples of God's glory in whom the Holy Spirit dwells, possessing the freedom only God’s sons and daughters enjoy, being strengthened with the grace of Christ, having God watch over us at every moment — we are saved.

Jesus Christ: And it is Jesus Christ who makes the difference. The prayers say clearly that God sent his only Son into the world, and that Christ died and rose again to save us. They speak of his victory over sin and death. Christ has cast out the power of Satan, delivered us from the kingdom of darkness, rescued us from the slavery of sin.

The human condition: Christian faith discerns that all who are born into the human condition, even before they have sinned personally, are part of the world without Christ that has been described so negatively. Baptism into Christ liberates them from this world and allows them to live differently.

This tension endures even after the children are cleansed from original sin. The prayers speak of life's journey, being temples of God's glory, the dwelling of the Holy Spirit within them, being strengthened for life in the world.

Strength of Christ: The prayers that precede anointing or laying on of hands also speak of strengthening in the power of Christ. Both gestures may be seen as signs of God’s loving caress.

Procession to the font: At the conclusion of the preparation rites, all move to the baptistry, singing as they process. Note that the rubrics say “all;” it is important that the entire church community gathered for worship be present at the central moment of the rites of baptism.

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An alternative: Because this is not always possible or practical — the architecture of parish churches varies so much — two alternatives are provided. The first allows only the celebrant, parents, godparents and children to actually move to the font, while the congregation remain in their places. This is allowed only if the congregation can see what is happening at the font.

The second alternative is that the font be located, at least temporarily, within the church — usually at the front — so that everyone can see it from their places.

Celebrating Baptism

The core of the rite of baptism consists of several different elements, of which the actual baptism in water in the name of the Trinity is central. Two elements precede and prepare for baptism: the prayer over the water and the profession of faith. Four shorter elements follow baptism and “complete,” “explain” or “express” it: the anointing with chrism, clothing with a white garment, receiving the lighted candle, and touching the mouth and lips.

Care is needed: Because the elements that precede and follow the baptism itself are numerous, dramatic, or involve lengthy prayers, care needs to be taken that they not detract from the washing in water. However, they should not be omitted or abbreviated but celebrated with care and joy.

Prayer over the Water

Three prayers of blessing of the water are provided. In addition, two prayers over water are provided for use if the water has already been blessed. Only the former are considered here.

The first prayer is the longest, and is somewhat didactic in tone; an appendix in the liturgical book provides music so that it can be sung by the presider.

Water in salvation history: Each prayer speaks of the association of water with God’s saving love through history, and especially in relation to Jesus Christ. Thus the first prayer speaks of the water of creation, the flood, the Red Sea, the Jordan, and the water and blood that flowed from the side of Christ on the cross.

Images of water: The second also refers to the fact that God has created water “to cleanse and to give life,” and then speaks of the blood and water that flowed from Christ’s side and the baptism of Christ in the waters of the Jordan.

The third prayer refers only to the waters of baptism.

Petition follows blessing: Each prayer over the water concludes with petition; this is lengthy in the first two prayers, and brief in the third. In the first prayer we ask God to look with love on the church, unseal for it the fountain of baptism, give to this water the grace of Christ, and send the Holy Spirit upon the waters of this font.
The consequences of baptism are described as well: we pray that all those whom God has created in God's likeness may be cleansed from sin and rise to a new birth of innocence by water and the Holy Spirit. In addition, may all who are buried with Christ in the death and baptism rise also with him to newness of life.

Meaning of baptism: The second prayer repeats the petition "make this water holy" (or "make holy this water") three times. A different consequence of baptism follows each repetition: (a) so that all who are baptized in it may be washed clean of sin and be born again to live as God's children; (b) so that all who are baptized into Christ's death and resurrection by this water may become more perfectly like him; (c) so that all those whom you [God] have chosen may be born again by the power of the Holy Spirit and may take their places among your holy people.

The third prayer over the water merely says, "Bless this water in which [your children] will be baptized." Because this prayer is composed using the perfect tense — you have filled us with new life, you have formed one people, you have set us free, you have called your children to this cleansing water — all that is said prior to the petition may also be understood as a consequence of the blessing that God is asked to give.

Sanctify and save: In summary, in baptism God continues to use water to sanctify and to save, as God has done before. The Holy Spirit acts upon and through the water to work in those who are baptized the many and marvelous consequences of baptism, which may be summarized as new life in Christ. Baptism is always in water and the Holy Spirit.

Profession of Faith

Sacrament of faith: This is an extremely important part of the liturgy of baptism. The general introduction on Christian initiation states: "Baptism is therefore, above all, the sacrament of that faith by which, enlightened by the grace of the Holy Spirit, we respond to the gospel of Christ. That is why the Church believes that it is its most basic and necessary duty to inspire all... to that true and living faith by which they hold fast to Christ and enter into or confirm their commitment to the New Covenant. In order to enliven such faith, the Church prescribes the pastoral instruction of catechumens, the preparation of the children's parents, the celebration of God's word, and the profession of faith at the celebration of baptism."

For children too: The introduction to the rite of baptism for children states: "The Church has always understood" the words of Christ regarding the necessity of baptism "to mean that children should not be deprived of baptism, because they are baptized in the faith of the Church, a faith proclaimed for them by their parents and godparents, who represent both the local Church and the whole society of saints and believers... To fulfill the true meaning of the sacrament, children must later be formed in the faith in which they have been baptized."

The dynamics of this part of the rite of baptism are as follows: first there is an address and invitation by the priest, then the parents and godparents profess their faith, and finally an acclamation of assent is given by the priest and congregation. The profession itself has two movements: a rejection of all that is not of God, and then a commitment to the one true God.
Recent changes: Because there has been a major change in this part of the rite following Vatican Council II — one that is not always understood — it is important to clarify the respective roles of the children, parent and godparents, priest and congregation. From the third century or before until 1969, the questions of the profession of faith were addressed directly to the child, and we pretended that the child answered with the renunciations and the Apostles' Creed. In fact, of course, it was the parents and godparents who answered; they acted as proxies or legal representatives for the child.

In the faith of the church: Our theology however, also said that the child was being baptized in the faith of the church, as it could not answer on its own but only through the proxies. The parents' and godparents' role was really on behalf of the church, not on their own behalf.

Children are children: The modern rite of baptism for children has made some major changes. First, the child is treated as a child; questions are not addressed to it and it is not expected to answer. We admit liturgically what we have known theologically all along: the child is incapable of personal faith and therefore cannot profess it. At this point, then, the child is the recipient of the church's actions but not an actor, either personally or through its proxies.

Ecumenical dimensions: Because we sometimes go to celebrations of baptism in other Churches, it may be noted that the idea that parents and godparents act as proxies has been retained in the Anglican and Lutheran Churches.

For parents and godparents: The questions now are addressed to, and the profession of faith is made by, the parents and godparents; this is very clear in the liturgy. However, these persons play a dual role. First, they speak for themselves; they profess their own personal faith. In addition, however — and this is extremely significant — they speak for the Church. They do not speak for the children.

Not proxies: They are not actually proxies for the Church, but rather public representatives of the Church who are called upon to speak for the entire Church.

Great responsibility: The new role of the parents and godparents puts a much greater responsibility on them than did the older liturgical role of being proxies. At the same time it gives them an enormous dignity and worth. It is also a wonderful statement about the true nature of the Church. These very real but ordinary people are the Church! They are quite capable of representing the church publicly and visibly in a most profound moment of one of the church's principal liturgies. They do not require advanced degrees in theology to profess the faith of church. How wonderful!

What is the role of the congregation? This sometimes is misunderstood. In some parishes the congregation is invited to renew their baptismal vows — their profession of faith — by joining the parents and godparents in responding to the questions of the renunciations and Apostles' Creed. Sometimes this is presented as supporting the parents and godparents in their profession of faith. At other times the renewal of baptismal promises by the congregation becomes more important than the profession of faith by the parents.
Serious misunderstanding: Though well intentioned, and based on the precedent of the renewal of baptismal promises at the Easter Vigil and on Easter Day, these practices are at best misunderstandings, and at worse serious abuses of the Roman Catholic liturgy of baptism.

A new way: The congregation and priest do indeed renew their baptismal promises; but they do so in a way that is entirely different from the way it is done at Easter.

Parents represent everyone: The congregation and priest first charge the parents and godparents to represent them in making the profession of faith; for the parents and godparents it is also a renewal of their baptismal vows. As they are called upon to represent the church, they thereby represent the individual members of the assembly.

Assent: In addition, however, the priest and congregation “assent” to the parents' and godparents' profession of faith by afterwards saying, “This is our faith. This is the faith of the Church. We are proud to profess it, in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.”

Value the parents: We do not have to say the same words as the parents and godparents in order to renew our baptismal vows. We merely have to say, what you have said is what we believe. It is not only your faith, but ours as well, and that of the entire church. “We are proud to profess it” with you.

Could be stronger: It might be better if the entire congregation said the assent together in unison, to make the point more strongly. The fact that the congregation says only the “Amen” weakens the force of the assent experientially, though not theologically.

Or a song: It is important also to note that the formula of assent given in the liturgical book is only a model text. A rubric states, “If desired, some other formula may be used instead, or a suitable song by which the community expresses its faith with a single voice.” Such a song is provided in CBW II, n. 10.

This understanding is also the basis of what the priest says just before the water baptism itself, “Is it your will that N. should be baptized in the faith of the Church, which we have all professed with you?”

Baptism

Washing in water: After all the prayers and rites that have preceded it, the actual baptism is relatively simple. Again there are three movements. First, one final question is put to the parents and godparents, and they respond; then the children are washed in water three times with the trinitarian formula of baptism; and finally, the people sing an acclamation.

The introductory question gives the parents one last opportunity to state their intention and their understanding of baptism. It assumes that the celebration of the word of God, the preparatory rites, prayer over the water, and profession of faith all enable the parents and godparents to appreciate baptism more deeply than they did at the very beginning of the liturgy. It also respects their freedom to say “no” right up to the last minute.
The baptism itself is very simple. The words, “Martha, I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit,” accompany a threefold washing in water, either by immersion or by pouring.

The high point: These words and actions need to be spoken and carried out so that it is apparent that this is the center and high point of the entire liturgy. The importance of this rite is communicated especially by the generous use of water and by the care and solemnity with which immersion or pouring is carried out. The words of the trinitarian formula need to be spoken solemnly, and should be heard by all present.

Immersion: Note that immersion is preferred over pouring. Immersion better respects the key biblical images — dying and rising with Christ, the baptism of Christ — and is the more authentic liturgical symbol. It also links us more closely with the many other Churches who have always baptized by immersion.

Images of baptism: As is to be expected, the prayers of the liturgy of baptism provide a wealth of images of this washing into new life: New life, bathed in light, being welcomed in God’s holy church, becoming faithful followers and witnesses of Christ’s gospel, freed from original sin, becoming temples of God’s glory, dwelling places of the Holy Spirit, cleansed from the stain of original sin, strengthened with the grace of Christ. Additionally: new life in abundance, receiving God’s divine life, being God’s holy people, set free from sin, cleansed from sin, raised up to a new birth of innocence, being buried with Christ, rising also with him to newness of life, washed clean of sin, born again to live as God’s children, becoming more perfectly like Christ, being born again by the power of the Holy Spirit.

The images continue to flow: taking their place among God’s holy people, filled with new life as God’s very own children, being one people, united in Jesus Christ, set free, with hearts filled with the Spirit of God’s love, living in God’s peace, announcing the Good News of Jesus Christ to people everywhere, sharing in the faith of God’s church, having eternal life, and on and on.

The congregation responds to the baptism of each child by singing a short acclamation. They are saying, You are our new sister or brother. We welcome you into the body of Christ, the people of God.
Explanatory Rites

Four further rites follow baptism in water and the Holy Spirit. Each expresses some aspect or dimension of the new life into which the children have just been baptized. Each uses a different symbolic action, each presents a different image of Jesus Christ, and each refers to a different aspect of the Christian life. All four prayers are worded somewhat differently than the corresponding texts of the rite of Christian initiation of adults; here they are clearly adapted for children and their parents.

Symbolic Actions
The four symbolic actions are:

- anointing with chrism on the crown of the head, in silence
- putting white garments on the children
- giving and receiving a lighted candle
- touching the ears and mouth of each child with the thumb

Chrism will be used generously. In the early church, a large amount was poured over the head of the newly baptized person — and not wiped off. All were intended to smell baptism.

No extra garment: If baptism has been by pouring and the child is already dressed, the appointed prayer is said but no additional garment is added; the child is already wearing his or her baptismal clothes. The pastoral notes point out that putting something over the clothes the child is already wearing is inauthentic.

Candle: The rite of the lighted candle is directed to the parents and godparents rather than to the children. A candle lighted from the paschal candle is "entrusted" to the family, "to be kept burning brightly."

The touching of ears and mouth is called the Ephphetha, after the words of Jesus in the gospel (Mark 7: 34). It means, "Be opened."

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3 The term "explanatory rites," derived from the Latin ritus explanativi, is an infelicitous expression in English. It suggests that baptism is subject to rational explanation and that it will be fully explained by these rites. But baptism is a mystery, and no other rites are capable of explaining it fully. The term has a very didactic connotation, and suggests that baptism is a classroom exercise rather than a liturgical celebration. This title is not found in the Latin or ICEL versions of the rite of baptism for children. It comes instead from the rite of Christian initiation of adults, where it is explained as "rites that give expression to the effects of the sacrament just received" (n. 214). A better term, therefore, might be "expressive rites" but this would not work in English. "Interpretation," however, is an alternative translation of explanatio, and hence "interpretative" would be better than "explanatory."

4 Note that this signing is on the crown of the head. The signing at confirmation is on the forehead.
Images of Christ
The four images of Christ, in the words of the prayers, are:

- As Christ was anointed Priest, Prophet, King
- You have become a new creation, and have clothed yourselves in Christ
- These children ... have been enlightened by Christ
- The Lord Jesus made the deaf hear and the mute speak.

Visions of the Christian Life
The four images of the life of Christians, in the words of the prayers, are:

- we welcome you into God's holy people; may you live always as members of his body, sharing everlasting life
- this white garment [is] the outward sign of your Christian dignity; bring that dignity unstained into the everlasting life of heaven
- they are to walk always as children of the light; may they keep the flame of faith alive in their hearts; when the Lord comes, may they go out to meet him with all the saints in the heavenly kingdom.
- may Christ soon touch your ears to receive his word, and your mouth to proclaim his faith, to the praise and glory of God the Father.

The first view of the Christian life is that of the church, the second as a moral life, the third as one of faith, and the fourth as worship and witness. From another point of view they all speak of the life of the church as much as they do of the individual.

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Conclusion

The liturgy of baptism concludes with two more processions (each accompanied with song), and two more prayers. Each of these expresses some aspect of the life after baptism of the children, the parents, and the church community.

Processions

The first procession is from the baptismal font to the altar. In due course Christian initiation will be completed by the celebration of confirmation and first eucharist. The baptismal life is also a eucharistic life.

The second procession is from the church to the homes of the children and their parents, and to the homes of the other members of the parish who participated into the celebration. The baptismal life is to be lived in the home and in the world.
Prayers

The first prayer is the Lord's Prayer, the family prayer of all Christians and one of the first a child will be taught. When all say it together in the Sunday eucharist, even small children can participate.

The second prayer is one of blessing. The blessing of God — God's abiding presence — is invoked on the parents, the child, and the church community. These prayers say profound things about baptism and about baptized persons and their lives.

Baptism Within Mass

Baptism may also be celebrated within the eucharistic liturgy. The first point to grasp is how the various elements of the liturgy of baptism are to be integrated into the eucharistic liturgy. The following outline shows how this is to be done.

Reception of the Children
  Greeting
  Opening Dialogue
  Signing of the Child with the Cross
  Opening Prayer of the Mass
  Invocation to the Celebration of the Word of God

Liturgy of the Word
  Readings
  Homily
  Intercessions

Preparatory Rites
  Prayer of Exorcism
  Anointing before Baptism

Celebration of Baptism
  Invocation to Prayer
  Prayer over the Water
  Profession of Faith
  Renunciation of Sin
  Profession of Faith

Baptism
  Acclamation

Explanatory Rites
  Anointing after Baptism
  Clothing with White Garment
  Lighted Candle
  Ephphatha

Liturgy of the Eucharist
  Preparation of the Altar and the Gifts
  Eucharistic Prayer
  Lord's Prayer
  Prayer after Communion

Conclusion of the Rite
  Blessing
  Dismissal
The following points are to be noted:

- The greeting called for at the beginning of the liturgy of baptism is the only one that is given.

- There is no penitential rite or Glory to God.

- The opening prayer of the mass follows the signing of the children with the cross; it is following by the invitation to celebrate the word of God.

- There is no creed following the homily.

- At the conclusion of the intercessions presented in the liturgy of baptism, other petitions are added for the universal church and the needs of the world. Suggestions are made at the end of the liturgical book. The litany of the saints follows these additional petitions.

- After the *Ephphetha* rite, the parents and godparents go with their child to take their places in the assembly. The child's candle may then be extinguished. If appropriate, a baptismal song may be sung at this time.

- There are special interpolations in the eucharistic prayers. These are found in the sacramentary.

- The special introduction to the Lord's Prayer from the liturgy of baptism may be used.

- The special blessings provided in the liturgy of baptism are used at the end of mass.

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NEW NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR LITURGY CHAIRPERSON

At the November 1989 meeting of the National Council for Liturgy, Dr. Mary Schaefer completed her term as chairperson. On behalf of the members of the Council and the Episcopal Commission for Liturgy, Bishop Raymond Lahey expressed thanks to Dr. Schaefer for the excellent way she guided the many projects of the Council during the past four years.

The Episcopal Commission for Liturgy has appointed Mr. Paul Tratnyek chairperson of the Council. Mr. Tratnyek lives in Shakespeare, ON with his wife Theresa and their two children. He is currently the chaplain at St. Mary's High School in Kitchener, ON. Mr. Tratnyek, who holds an M.A. in liturgical studies from the University of Notre Dame, IN, has been a member of the National Council for Liturgy for the past three years.
Living a Baptismal Life

Baptism is not over and done with when the liturgy of baptism is completed. Nor does it merely remain in the background as children grow, mature and live out the rest of their lives. Instead, baptism is a way of living the whole of one's life.

As a child grows it learns to live its daily life following the example of its baptized parents. Every Sunday the child and its parents together profess their faith through the creed, the liturgy of the word and the eucharistic prayer and holy communion. Each Easter they together renew their baptismal promises. With time, both parents and children — each in their own way — grow in their relationship with God and in their appreciation of the baptismal character of their lives.

Liturgy a Model for Life

Past, present, future: The actual celebration of the sacrament of baptism, like all liturgies of the church, speaks of the past, the present, and the future. We speak of the foundations of baptism in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. We show how God acts and we respond in the celebration of the liturgy itself. We proclaim and pray for the fulfillment of God's reign in the future.

Liturgy and life: Though less often recognized — and less clearly expressed in the liturgy — we also describe the way of life baptized persons are to lead in the days and years following the liturgy. When we celebrate the liturgy of baptism we speak about, practice and act out — and thereby commit ourselves to — a baptismal way of living. This applies not only to the child being baptized but to ourselves as well — parents, godparents, priests, members of the parish community, friends and neighbors.

What does the liturgy of baptism show and tell us about the shape and characteristics of a baptismal way of living?

The Rite as a Whole

Children are valued: The rite as a whole calls us to value children: small, dependent, inarticulate, helpless in many ways, yet still human persons. They and others who are dependent — persons with serious mental and physical disabilities, for example — are gifts of God, who is the source of all life. We are to care about children; indeed, about all persons.
Movement — activity — characterizes the liturgy of baptism. Our lives are not static, but a journey of change, development, progress from one place or state or another. We have somewhere to go, and we walk with others on the way: Christ, members of church, the entire human community.

Dialogue is a way of living that is modeled in the rite. We learn that our relationship to God, church, society and other individuals takes the form of dialogue in which we are participants, not spectators.

Opening Dialogue

The question regarding the child's name reminds us of the individuality, freedom, and dignity of each human person, both here in our own community and around the world.

The opening dialogue as a whole tells us that we are people who prayerfully discern the movements of our lives. Who am I? What do I seek in life and in the church? These are questions upon which we are called to reflect, both individually and collectively. Our responses are based not only on the assumptions and values of human society but also — even primarily — on Christian faith.

The question about parental responsibility challenges us to take responsibility in all aspects of our lives. The practice of the faith, keeping God's commandments, loving God and neighbor, and giving good example, are our lifelong commitments. All need to be translated into concrete actions in our daily living. We accept responsibility in our homes, in society, in the church.

The question to the godparents recognizes that our lives will be ones of helping others, both in society and in the church. We will help in the raising of all children by the example of our lives and by what we do to make the world a better place for them to live. We will help parents and other adults as well.

Welcome

The joyful welcoming of the children shows us that we are to be hospitable throughout our lives. This means caring for other persons and allowing them to be themselves; they do not have to be just like us. In our Sunday assemblies we are to welcome children whether they are six weeks, six years, or 16 years of age. We are called to welcome children in society and around the world. We should extend hospitality to parents as well. Hospitality will be shown to all with whom we worship, but especially to visitors and guests. We are called to exercise hospitality in our neighborhood, our city and our country as well — we are to welcome immigrants and refugees.

In the name of the church: It is the Christian community in whose name the children are welcomed. We join with other Christian believers in coming to the church; we participate with other disciples of Christ in the worship of the church. We are called to build up the local parish community so that it indeed is a community. We are called to build up our neighborhoods and towns so they are communities as well.
The sign of the cross claims us for Christ our Savior. We are Christ's disciples, friends, sisters and brothers for all our lives. The cross teaches us about love, fidelity to God, self-giving, living for others.

Liturgy of the Word

The word of God is central in the liturgy of baptism, and we recognize that it is to be at the centre of our whole lives. We are nourished at the table of God's word; Christ is present in the word. We not only study scripture and read the bible prayerfully by ourselves; we also celebrate the living word with other persons.

Response: We are moved to respond to the word of God, not merely to listen to the readings. We are called to silent prayer, to the psalms, to song. We are called to interpret the biblical word and apply it to our own lives, individually, in the parish community, and in society.

The intercessions call us to name the needs of our parish community, diocese, and universal church. They call us as well to name the needs of our town, country, and the whole world. We pray for God's loving action, we lament, we stand in solidarity with those who suffer, we commit ourselves to do what we can to alleviate suffering.

Preparatory Rites

The prayers of exorcism of the liturgy of baptism remind us that the world — and we ourselves — have a dark side. They also tell us that in God's love and mercy there is an alternative; they challenge us to make the right choice — and to do so consistently. We are called to name the darkness of human society, to reject it, and to work toward an alternative vision of humanity and the world.

The journey of our lives that is referred to in the second prayer of exorcism is one that we walk with other persons, as well as with Christ. It is not always easy, and we need to seek the strength of Christ in the Sunday eucharist, in personal prayer, in ministering to one another, in living the community life of Christ's body. We need to encourage and affirm each other in this journey.

Prayer over the Water

Honor creation: The prayers over the water call us to honor all of God's creation. It is God's gift and we have a responsibility to care for the earth, sky and sea. We are reminded of the shortage of water in some places, the floods in others, and the pollution that is increasingly threatening the rivers, lakes and oceans of our world.

Praise and blessing characterize the second and third prayers over the water, and our lives as well; we are not simply people of petition. All three prayers call us constantly to invoke the sanctifying, transforming and life-giving power of the Holy Spirit. This is the only kind of power that Christians ought to seek or cling to — the power to give life to others; the power to transform society so that it better reflects God's dream for humanity and creation.
The prayers of blessing call us to proclaim God's great deeds in the past and in the present, to tell the whole world of the love of God in Jesus Christ. Telling of the baptism of Jesus in the Spirit for his life of mission challenges and affirms us in our own lives of ministry.

Profession of Faith

The renunciation of sin names the dark side of life, and calls us again and again to say no and to work against whatever promotes darkness in society. To renounce and reject sin and the glamour of evil, to refuse to be mastered by sin, has a social and communal dimension as well as an individual one.

The profession of faith challenges us always to deepen our relationship with God and to be more faithful in living out the consequences of being an adopted adult child of God. We are challenged to profess our allegiance to God and live truly Christian values.

Baptism

The creed and the trinitarian formula of baptism remind us that our whole lives are to be modeled on that of the Trinity: a communal relationship in which the dignity of each person is affirmed and which is characterized by mutual love and self-giving.

Washing in the water of baptism recognizes that we are whole persons, not embodied spirits. We live, love, work, play, worship and care for one another with our whole persons, using all our senses and all our strength.

The “Amen” that we say to prayers spoken by others, the assent we sing or shout out following the profession of faith by parents and godparents, the acclamation we sing after each child is baptized, all have significance in our lives as well. They remind us that we need to respond to others, affirm others who speak what we would like to say, and rejoice with and congratulate others; they are a way of standing in solidarity with others.

Explanatory Rites

The richness of Christ: The four explanatory rites call us to relate to Jesus Christ in all his richness; no one image really captures the full truth of his person. We need a full and diverse christology.

The church: The diverse dimensions of individual and ecclesial life are also expressed in the rites that follow baptism. We are members of the church, we are active participants in the ministry of Christ in the world today, we are new creations, we are clothed in Christ — with all the dignity this entails. We are enlightened so that we can live with true wisdom and with a vision of what God’s dream is for us and our world. We are helped by Christ so that we can hear his word from scriptures, from the church community, from other persons, from the signs of the times.
Concluding Rites

Eucharist and the Holy Spirit are part of our entire lives, as is the prayer that Jesus taught us.

The final blessings call us to be people of blessing in all our lives. We bless God, we ask God's blessing on other persons and on the world.

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Our Next Issue

One of the greatest liturgical challenges today is to facilitate the full participation of children in the liturgies of the Church, without diminishing the participation of anyone else.

The next issue of the Bulletin will consider the participation of children in both Sunday and school liturgies, children as liturgical ministers, new resources for liturgies of the word for children, liturgical music for children, and the importance for them of story and symbol.

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THIRD WORLD SOLIDARITY DAY

Liturgical resources for Share Lent and for Third World Solidarity Day, the Fifth Sunday of Lent, are now available from:

Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace
3028 Danforth Avenue
TORONTO, Ontario
M4C 1N2

The booklet includes planning suggestions and texts for the Sunday eucharist, a way of the cross, prayers and reflections, meal prayers, music suggestions and other aids.
SUMMER SCHOOL FOR LITURGICAL MUSICIANS
July 29 — August 2, 1990
St. Joseph’s College
University of Toronto
Sponsored by:
The Ontario Liturgical Conference
For further information call or write:
Ontario Liturgical Conference
Summer School for Liturgical Musicians
c/o Sandra Josch
2661 Kingston Road
Scarborough, Ontario, M1M 1M3
(416) 261-7207, ext. 44.

COURSES IN PASTORAL LITURGY

Good courses in liturgy are being offered in North America. Some of these are given during the summer, some during the school year, and some in shorter institutes. Further information may be obtained by writing to the following:

Summer Institute in Pastoral Liturgy
Faculty of Theology
Saint Paul University
Ottawa, ON K1S 1C4
CANADA

School of Theology
St. John’s University
Collegeville, MN 56321
223 Main Street

Program of Liturgical Studies
Department of Theology
University of Notre Dame
Notre Dame, IN 46556
U.S.A.

The Center for Pastoral Liturgy
The Catholic University of America
Washington, DC 20064
U.S.A.

The Aquinas Institute
3642 Lindell Boulevard
St. Louis, MO 63108
U.S.A.

Program of Church Music and Liturgy
St. Joseph’s College
Rensselaer, IN 47978
U.S.A.
Baptism and Social Justice

The liturgy of baptism for children says much about the lives of all who are baptized. Clearly there is a strong message regarding the relationship between baptism and social justice.1

Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry: The social-justice implications of baptism is also stressed by the World Council of Churches in its 1982 document, *Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry*:

As they grow in the Christian life of faith, baptized believers demonstrate that humanity can be regenerated and liberated. They have a common responsibility, here and now, to bear witness to the Gospel of Christ, the Liberator of all human beings. The context of this common witness is the church and the world. Within a fellowship of witness and service, Christians describe the full significance of the one baptism as the gift of God to all God's people. Likewise, they acknowledge that baptism, as a baptism into Christ's death, has ethical implications which not only call for personal sanctification, but also motivate Christians to strive for the realization of the will of God in all realms of life. (Baptism, n. 10)

In addition, this document speaks of baptism as "an exodus from bondage . . . and a liberation into a new humanity in which barriers whether of sex or race or social status are transcended" (n. 2).

Finally, "the New Testament underlines the ethical implications of baptism . . . ." "Thus those baptized are pardoned, cleansed and sanctified by Christ, and are given as part of their baptismal experience a new ethical orientation under the guidance of the Spirit."2 (n. 4)

Pope John Paul II

Pope John Paul II also speaks of the consequences of baptism for the life of lay women and men. Building on Vatican Council II's statement that all "the faithful who by baptism are incorporated into Christ . . . in their own way share the priestly, prophetic and kingly office of Christ" (*Lumen Gentium*, n. 10), the pope has said, "Dear brothers and sisters, you have been sanctified, consecrated by baptism. You have become members of Christ; through him, with him and in him, you have been offered to God the Father, you have received the Holy Spirit, who puts the sentiments of the only Son in you and lets you proclaim him to the world. Christian laity, live this baptism."2

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Similarly, "you have a share in the Church's mission of salvation. You are called to the apostolate through your baptism and confirmation."³

**Homily and intercessions:** It remains true that these broader implications of the liturgy of baptism are not clearly expressed in the rite itself. However, the homily could easily refer to the social-justice dimension of baptism. In addition, relevant petitions could be added to the intercessions.

**Possible Future Improvements**

In future revisions of the liturgy of baptism, several things might be improved. Conferences of bishops at present have the authority to make the formula of renunciation of sin "more pointed and detailed" (n. 24, 3). The present practice of other Churches provides some examples of positive questions that they ask of adult candidates or of parents. For example:

Do you accept the freedom and power God gives you to resist evil, injustice, and oppression in whatever forms they present themselves? *(United Methodist Church)*

Do you promise, by the grace of God, to be Christ's disciple, to follow in the way of our Savior, to resist oppression and evil, to show love and justice, and to witness to the work and word of Jesus Christ as best you are able? *(United Church of Christ)*

The prayers over the water could easily be improved to speak of justice. For example, the following invocation is included in the ecumenical liturgy of baptism proposed by the Consultation on Common Texts:

Pour out your Holy Spirit, that as N. and N. are made a new creation through these baptismal waters, they may preach good news to the poor, proclaim release to the captives and set at liberty those who are oppressed.

**Footwashing:** Finally, a new rite might be included in the liturgy of baptism for children (and adults), or it might be made a separate celebration. This is the postbaptismal washing of feet, as found in the medieval Gallican and Irish rites represented by the Missale Gothicum, the Stowe Missal and the Bobbio Missal.⁴ It proclaims the ministerial dimension of the baptismal life.

The minister washed the feet of the newly baptized following the anointing with chrism and the giving of the white garment. Appropriate antiphons were sung, and a prayer was said; the following is from the Bobbio Missal:

I wash thy feet, as our Lord Jesus Christ washed his disciples' feet. Do thou even so to pilgrims and strangers. Our Lord Jesus Christ dried his disciples' feet with the towel wherewith he was girded: I do the same to thee: do thou even so to strangers, to pilgrims, and to the poor.


Reminders and Renewal of Baptism

The lives of individual Christians and the Christian community as a whole is full of reminders of baptism and opportunities to renew our baptismal covenant. These are expressed concretely in many elements of the church’s worship, and in the building which is the house of the local parish community and the place where its communal worship takes place.

These extensions of baptism surround, embrace and challenge believers, and accompany them in our life journey. We are never very far from baptism. Here we review the baptismal elements of our life of worship.

The Church Building

The church building is baptismal. This is shown in the rite of dedication of a church and in the rite for blessing a baptismal font.

Dedication of a Church

In the rite of dedication of a church (found in part 2 of the Roman Pontifical), the bishop reminds us of the baptismal character of the church building in his opening address:

Brothers and sisters in Christ, this is a day of rejoicing: May we open our hearts and minds to receive his word with faith; may our fellowship born in the one font of baptism and sustained at the one table of the Lord, become the one temple of his Spirit, as we gather round his altar in love. (n. 30)

Blessing and sprinkling of water: Later in the rite of dedication, “the bishop blesses water with which to sprinkle the people as a sign of repentance and as a reminder of their baptism, and to purify the walls and the altar of the new church. The bishop invites all to pray, in these or similar words:”

Brothers and sisters in Christ, in this solemn rite of dedication, let us ask the Lord our God to bless this water created by his hand.

It is a sign of our repentance, a reminder of our baptism, and a symbol of the cleansing of these walls and this altar.

May the grace of God help us to remain faithful members of his Church, open to the Spirit we have received. (silent prayer)
God of mercy,
you call every creature to the light of life,
and surround us with such great love
that when we stray
you continually lead us back to Christ our head.

For you have established an inheritance of such mercy,
that those sinners, who pass through water made sacred,
died with Christ and rise restored
as members of his body
and heirs of his eternal covenant.

Bless this water;
sanctify it.

As it is sprinkled upon us and throughout this church
make it a sign of the saving waters of baptism,
by which we become one in Christ,
the temple of your Spirit.

May all here today,
and all those in days to come,
who will celebrate your mysteries in this church,
be united at last in the holy city of your peace.
We ask this in the name of Jesus the Lord. Amen. (n. 48)

The bishop . . . passes through the . . . church, sprinkling the people and
the walls with the holy water; then . . . he sprinkles the altar. (n. 49)

In the prayer of dedication itself, we are reminded that this church building
is the place where baptism is celebrated:

Father in heaven . . .
Here may the waters of baptism
overwhelm the shame of sin;
here may your people die to sin
and live again through grace as your children. (n. 62)

Water is also used in the rite of laying of a foundation stone, the rite of
dedication of a church in use, the rite of dedication of an altar, the rite of
blessing of a church, and the rite of blessing an altar.

Baptismal Font

For some reason the blessing of the baptismal font is not a constituent part
of the rite of dedication of a church. The appropriate rite, however, is found
in the Book of Blessings. The introduction states:

"The baptistery or site of the baptismal font is rightly considered to be one of
the most important parts of a church. For it is the place for celebrating
baptism, the first sacrament of the New Law, through which those who firmly
accept Christ in faith and receive the Spirit of adoption become in name and
fact God's adopted children . . . ." (n. 832)
"Because baptism is the beginning of the entire Christian life, every cathedral and parish church ought to have its own baptistery or a special place where the baptismal font flows or is situated." (n. 833)

"The baptismal font, particularly one in a baptistery, should be stationary, gracefully constructed out of a suitable material, of splendid beauty and spotless cleanliness; it should permit baptism by immersion, wherever this is the usage." (n. 837)

**Blessing of the new font:** The central prayer of blessing of the new font is the following:

Lord God,
Creator of the world
and Father of all who are born into it,
it is right that we should give you praise
for allowing us to open this saving font
through the liturgy of your Church.

Here the door is reopened to the life of the Spirit
and the gateway to the Church is swung wide
to those against whom the gates of paradise were shut.
This pool is opened and in it the newness of its pure waters
will again make clean and spotless
those who were stained by the old ways of sin.
A new torrent is released whose gushing waters sweep away sin
and bring new virtue to life.
A stream of living water, coming from Christ's side, now flow
and those who drink this water will be brought to eternal life.
Over this font the lamp of faith spread this holy light
that banishes darkness from the mind
and fills those who are reborn here with heavenly gifts.
Those who profess their faith at this font
are plunged beneath the waters and joined to Christ's death,
so that they may rise with him to newness of life.

Lord,
we ask you to send the life-giving presence of your Spirit
upon this font,
placed here as the source of new life for your people.
The power of the Spirit made the Virgin Mary the mother of your Son;
send forth the power of the same Spirit,
so that your Church may present you
with countless new sons and daughters,
and bring forth new citizens of heaven.

Grant, O Lord, that the people who are reborn from this font
may fulfill in their actions
what they pledge by their faith
and show by their lives
what they begin by the power of your grace.
Let the people of different nations and conditions
who come forth as one from these waters of rebirth
show by their love that they are brothers and sisters
and by their concord that they are citizens of the one kingdom.
Make them into true sons and daughters,
who reflect their Father's goodness,
disciples who are faithful to the teaching of their one Master,
temples in whom the voice of the Spirit resounds.
Grant that they may be witnesses to the Gospel,
doers of the works of holiness.
Enable them to fill with the Spirit of Christ
the earthly city where they live,
until they are welcomed home in the heavenly Jerusalem.
We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen. (n. 869)

The Liturgical Year

The liturgical year too is baptismal in character, especially in the celebration of Sunday and of Easter.

Sunday

Outside of Lent, we may begin our Sunday eucharistic celebrations by reminding ourselves of our baptism through the rite of blessing and sprinkling holy water; this is especially appropriate during the Easter season. The following is one of the three alternative prayers of blessing.

Dear friends,
this water will be used
to remind us of our baptism.
Let us ask God to bless it
and to keep us faithful
to the Spirit he has given us.

God our Father,
your gift of water
brings life and freshness to the earth;
it washed away our sins
and brings us eternal life.

We ask you now
to bless this water,
and to give us your protection on this day
which you have made your own.
Renew the living spring of your life within us
and protect us in spirit and body,
that we may be free from sin
and come into your presence
to receive your gift of salvation.
We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.
Easter

The liturgies of Easter are baptismal throughout, as the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ is the basis and foundation of baptism. It is into his paschal mystery that we enter through baptism.

The paschal candle: One of the baptismal symbols is the paschal or easter candle, which we surround with prayer in the wonderful song, the Exultet. Here are a few verses:

This is the night when first you saved our [ancestors]:
you freed the people of Israel from their slavery
and led them dry-shod through the sea.

This is the night when the pillar of fire
destroyed the darkness of sin.

This is the night when Christians everywhere,
washed clean of sin
and freed from all defilement,
are restored to grace and grow together in holiness.

The paschal candle is used regularly until Pentecost.

Baptism: The Easter Vigil is also the privileged time for the celebration of initiation, especially of adults.

Blessing of water: Water is always blessed at the Easter Vigil, and prayers are provided for three situations: (a) if there are candidates to be baptized, and hence when the font is to be blessed, (b) if the font is to be blessed, but there is no one to be baptized, and (c) if no one is to be baptized and the font is not to be blessed. The following prayer is said in the last case:

My brothers and sisters,
let us ask the Lord our God
to bless this water he has created,
which we shall use to recall our baptism.
May he renew us
and keep us faithful to the Spirit
we have all received.
(period of silent prayer)

Lord our God,
this night your people keep prayerful vigil.
Be with us as we recall the wonder of our creation
and the greater wonder of our redemption.
Bless this water: it makes the seed to grow;
it refreshes us and makes us clean.
You have made of it a servant of your loving kindness:
through water you set your people free,
and quenched their thirst in the desert.
With water the prophets announced a new covenant
that you would make with [humankind].

By water, made holy by Christ in the Jordan
you made our sinful nature new
in the bath that gives rebirth.
Let this water remind us of our baptism;  
let us share the joys of our brothers [and sisters]  
who are baptized this Easter.  
We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Renewal of baptismal promises: Whether or not there are any baptisms, the members of the local Christian community renew their baptismal promises at the Easter vigil and on Easter Sunday.

Other Sacraments and Rites

We are reminded of baptism in most of the sacraments and rites of the church, in one way or another.

Confirmation

When those baptized as infants are later confirmed, it is made clear that the rite of confirmation builds on and is closely related to baptism. This is done especially through the renewal of baptismal promises. At the end of his homily, the bishop says:

You have already been baptized into Christ and now you will receive the power of his Spirit and the sign of the cross on your forehead.

So now, before you receive the Spirit, I ask you to renew the profession of faith you made in baptism or your parents and godparents made in union with the whole Church.

The baptismal promises first made at baptism are then renewed.

In addition, the ancient prayer which immediately precedes the anointing with chrism explicitly refers to baptism:

All-powerful God, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
by water and the Holy Spirit  
you freed your sons and daughters from sin  
and gave them new life . . . .

Penance

Though the rite of reconciliation of individual penitents (the first form of the sacrament of penance) unfortunately does not contain any reference to baptism, a model general confession of sins in the rite of reconciliation of several penitents with individual confession and absolution (second form) does say:

Renew the glory of baptism in those who have lost it by sin. (n. 54)
A few other prayers suggested for penitential services also refer to baptism:

My brothers and sisters, we have neglected the gifts of our baptism and fallen into sin. (Appendix II, n. 8a)

Lord Jesus,
you redeemed us by your passion
and raised us to new life in baptism. (Appendix II, n. 9)

Marriage

The brief address with which the priest begins the rite of marriage roots this sacrament in baptism:

My dear friends . . . Christ abundantly blesses [your] love. He has already consecrated you in baptism and now he enriches and strengthens you by a special sacrament so that you may assume the duties of marriage in mutual and lasting fidelity. (n. 23)

Religious Profession

The dialogue (called the “examination”) that follows the homily in the rite of religious profession begins:

My dear (sons/brothers/daughters/sisters):
by water and the Holy Spirit
you have already been consecrated to God’s service:
are you resolved to unite yourselves more closely to him
by the new bond of religious profession? (n. 30 et al.)

Pastoral Care. Rites of Anointing and Viaticum

The liturgies for the sick and the dying include many reminders of baptism.

Visits to a sick child: At the end of this rite, “the minister makes a sign of the cross on the child’s forehead,” and one of the alternative texts provided says:

N., when you were baptized,
you were marked with the cross of Jesus.
I (we) make this cross on your forehead
and ask the Lord to bless you,
and restore you to health. Amen. (n. 70)

Communion of the sick: After a greeting, the rite of communion in ordinary circumstances may continue with the sprinkling with holy water:

If it seems desirable, the priest or deacon may sprinkle the sick person and those present with holy water. One of the following may be used:

Let this water call to mind our baptism into Christ, who by his death and resurrection has redeemed us.
Like a stream in parched land,  
may the grace of the Lord  
refresh our lives. (n. 82)

Anointing of the sick: The rite of anointing outside mass also may begin with  
the sprinkling with holy water, in a manner similar to that just described. (n. 116)

Viaticum: The liturgy of viaticum — holy communion for the dying — includes as an important element the renewal of one’s baptismal profession of faith. For the sake of brevity, presumably, the renunciation of sin is omitted, and only the Apostles’ Creed is said. (nn. 190, 200)

Viaticum outside mass: Like other rites mentioned above, this may include  
the sprinkling with holy water. (n. 198)

Funerals
The order of Christian funerals is explicitly baptismal throughout. This is especially apparent in the rite of reception of the body at the church, which precedes the funeral liturgy in the church (or the vigil, if this is celebrated in the church). The introduction and pastoral notes describe this rite as follows:

"Since the church is the place where the community of faith assembles for worship, the rite of reception of the body at the church has great significance. The church is the place where the Christian life is begotten in baptism, nourished in the eucharist, and where the community gathers to commend one of its deceased members to the Father. The church is at once a symbol of the community and of the heavenly liturgy that the celebration of the liturgy anticipates. In the act of receiving the body, the members of the community acknowledge the deceased as one of their own, as one who was welcomed in baptism, and who held a place in the assembly. Through the use of various baptismal symbols the community shows the reverence due to the body, the temple of the Spirit, and in this way prepares for the funeral liturgy in which it asks for a share in the heavenly banquet promised to the deceased and to all who have been washed in the waters of rebirth and marked with the sign of faith." (n. 131)

"If it is the custom in the local community, a funeral pall, a reminder of the garment given in baptism and therefore signifying life in Christ, may then be placed on the coffin by family members, friends, or the minister. The entrance procession follows . . . . If the Easter candle is used on this occasion, it may be placed beforehand near the position the coffin will occupy at the conclusion of the procession." (n. 133)

Intercessions: Several litanies that may be used in the rite of Christian burial include verses that refer to baptism:

In baptism N. received the light of Christ. Scatter the darkness now and lead him/her over the waters of death. (n. 176A, ICEL edition)
For N. who in baptism was given the pledge of eternal life, that he/she may now be admitted to the company of the saints: (n. 167B)

Our brother/sister was washed in baptism and anointed with the Holy Spirit; give him/her fellowship with all your saints. (n. 220 A)

Blessings

The church both blesses water and uses water in rites of blessing to remind us of our baptism.

Blessed Water

Blessed water is used in many blessings. The general introduction of the Book of Blessings explains,

"The purpose of the outward signs frequently accompanying prayer is above all to bring to mind God's saving acts, to express a relationship between the present celebration and the Church's sacraments, and in this way to nurture the faith of those present and move them to take part in the rite attentively." (n. 25)

"Some of the orders of blessing provide for sprinkling with holy water, and in these cases ministers should urge the faithful to recall the paschal mystery and renew their baptismal faith." (n. 26d)

Blessing of Holy Water outside Mass

Because of the wide use of water in the rites of the church and in blessings, the Book of Blessings provides a rite for the blessing of holy water outside mass (chapter 33).

In an introductory address the priest may say:

The blessing of this water reminds us of Christ, the living water, and of the sacrament of baptism, in which we were born of water and the Holy Spirit. Whenever, therefore, we are sprinkled with this holy water or use it in blessing ourselves on entering the church or at home, we thank God for his priceless gift to us and we ask for his help to keep us faithful to the sacrament we have received in faith.

After a liturgy of the word, three alternative prayers of blessing are provided.

Blessed are you, Lord, all-powerful God, who in Christ, the living water of salvation, blessed and transformed us. Grant that, when we are sprinkled with this water or make use of it, we will be refreshed inwardly by the power of the Holy Spirit and continue to walk in the new life we received at baptism. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen. (n. 1093)
Lord, holy Father,  
look with kindness on your children,  
redeemed by your Son  
and born to a new life by water and the Holy Spirit.  
Grant that those who are sprinkled with this water  
may be renewed in body and spirit  
and may make a pure offering of their service to you.  
We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen. (n. 1094)

O God, the Creator of all things,  
by water and the Holy Spirit  
you have given the universe its beauty  
and fashioned us in your own image.  
R. Bless and purify your Church.

O Christ the Lord, from your pierced side  
you gave us your sacraments  
as fountains of salvation.  
R. Bless and purify your Church.

O Holy Spirit, giver of life,  
from the baptismal font of the Church  
you have formed us into a new creation  
in the waters of rebirth.  
R. Bless and purify your Church. (n. 1095)
Introduction

As Christians, we are called to witness to the fundamental equality and dignity of all people. This involves diverse actions for social justice which protect and promote human life and dignity. One relatively simple but effective action is the use of inclusive language.

Inclusive Language Defined

Inclusive language, in the broadest sense, means using words which affirm the quality and dignity of each person regardless of race, gender, creed, age or ability. Most people associate it, however, with language which includes women and men in contexts where the message is directed to, refers to and affects both and which avoids stereotypes when speaking about either sex. This understanding of inclusive language is the subject of these reflections.

Signs of the Times

Inclusive language was introduced into society by the contemporary women's movement. As a result, some people feel it may be only a cultural question. Vatican II, however, reminded us that the Church exists in the world and that Christians have a responsibility to read the "signs of the times" and interpret them in light of the gospel. One of the signs of the times identified by Vatican II and recent popes is the changing role of women in society. There is, therefore, a special duty to listen to what women are saying about the need for inclusive language. Through listening and reflecting, it becomes apparent that there are significant theological reasons for using and promoting inclusive language.

Language Expresses our Beliefs

Language is an important matter for the whole Church because it is through language that we express our belief in God and proclaim the Good News of salvation to the world. Throughout our history, great care has been taken in choosing words to reflect our beliefs. For example, at the Council of Nicea in 325 new language was introduced to better express our understanding of Jesus. Today, the use of inclusive language indicates care is being taken to ensure that words reflect our belief in the equality of men and women, our understanding of the gospel and our affirmation of the Church as a communion.
Fundamental Quality of Men and Women

For Christians, language which is inclusive recalls the original harmony of creation as seen in the Book of Genesis. It also gives visible expression to the Good News that through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus we are reconciled with God and a new creation is initiated where we are all one in Christ. At its most profound level, inclusive language is a sign of our respect for the fundamental equality of men and women, and a means of proclaiming the gospel message of inclusiveness.

The Church as a Communion

Concern about inclusive language is also rooted in a theological understanding of the Church as a communion. This understanding of the Church was a central insight of the Second Vatican Council and was reaffirmed by the Extraordinary Synod of 1985. When the Church is described as a communion, it means that Christians are in union with God and with one another, through Jesus Christ, in the power of the Holy Spirit. In this sense, the Church is a sacrament or sign of the unity to which the whole of humanity is called. "Hence, there is in Christ and in the Church no inequality on the basis of race or nationality, social condition or sex." (Vatican II, Lumen Gentium, no. 32) This passage from Vatican II also recalls the fundamental equality and partnership of all the baptized who are united in Christ.

Implementation — Long Term

The theological reasons for using inclusive language are powerful. Yet, implementation of inclusive language in the daily life of the Church will take time. More work is required on the part of specialists and there are different levels of awareness among members of the Church community.

Biblical and Liturgical Texts

All translations of the Bible and all texts contained in the Sacramentary and other liturgical texts are protected by copyright. Biblical translations and liturgical texts are revised periodically and efforts are being made to be attentive to inclusive language. It is a long process, however, because the biblical translator must communicate the message in a way that is both faithful to its original meaning and understandable to today's reader. The translator must also work with other specialists such as theologians, historians and archaeologists in order to produce good translations of ancient texts. The revision of liturgical texts involves a lengthy approval process culminating in confirmation by the Vatican. Other specialists such as composers of hymns and linguists also have a role to play in the smooth transition from exclusive to inclusive language.
Evolution of Language

The rules of grammar also affect the use of inclusive language. There is sometimes tension between the desire to respect the rules which protect the beauty and clarity of a language and the reality of a living language which is evolving to effectively recognize the equality of men and women.

Levels of Awareness

Another reason for slow implementation of inclusive language is the different levels of awareness among members of the Church. Some believe that a word such as "man" is already inclusive of women and therefore reflects the theological principles which have been outlined. Others believe that over the years the meaning of "man" has narrowed to the point that it no longer includes women and therefore no longer expresses these theological principles. And still others may not appreciate the linkage between language and theology or the important role that language plays in reflecting our beliefs. The diversity of views sometimes makes for lively debate but if discussion continues in a spirit of openness and respect, it will contribute to increased awareness and understanding.

Implementation — Short Term

Action can be taken while awaiting the completion of the work of specialists. Initiatives can be taken to introduce inclusive language at home, at social gatherings and on the job. Parishes can commit themselves to using inclusive language in the prayers of the faithful, in their choice of hymns, in written materials such as parish bulletins, in announcements from the pulpit, at parish gatherings, etc. They might consider forming discussion groups or inviting experts (e.g., theologians, linguists, historians, liturgists) to assist them in deepening their awareness of the need for inclusive language. All those who preach should also be attentive to inclusive language. And everyone can read more on the subject, listen more sensitively, and be more responsive to women who do not see themselves included in our language. As the Presidents of six national Episcopal Commissions, we undertake to pay special attention to inclusive language in all of our communications.

Conclusion

Using inclusive language is one way of emphasizing the Church's responsibility to take a stand against one of the widespread forms of discrimination found in our society. As sensitivity to the inclusion of women grows, there should be a corresponding increase in awareness of the need to include all regardless of race, gender, creed, age or ability. By seeking to overcome discrimination wherever it is encountered, we live more fully as a communion, respond more fully to the gospel, and speak as a Christian community.
The Bishop members of the CCCB Pastoral Team:

Most Rev. Bertrand Blanchet, President of the Theology Commission
Most Rev. Leonard Crowley, President of the Ecumenism Commission
Most Rev. Charles A. Halpin, President of the Ministries and Apostolate Commission
Most Rev. Louis Langevin, President of the Canon Law — Inter-Rite Commission
Most Rev. John A. O'Mara, President of the Missions Commission
Most Rev. Gilles Ouellet, President of the Social Affairs Commission

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NEW EPISCOPAL COMMISSION FOR LITURGY

Bishop James L. Doyle of Peterborough and Bishop James P. Mahoney of Saskatoon completed their respective terms as members of the Episcopal Commission for Liturgy in October 1989.

Bishop Hubert P. O'Connor, OMI of Prince George and Bishop Matthew F. Ustrzycki, auxiliary bishop of Hamilton have been appointed to the Commission. They join Archbishop Francis J. Spence of Kingston and Bishop Raymond J. Lahey of St. George's.

Following the formation of the new Commission, Bishop Lahey was elected chairperson.

Thanks was expressed to Bishop Doyle and Bishop Mahoney for their many years of service as members of the Commission and the important contributions they have made to the promotion of good liturgical celebrations in Canada.

WESTERN CATECHUMENATE CONFERENCE

On January 12, 1990, 30 people from 10 dioceses in Western Canada gathered to reflect on their experience of the RCIA and to discern the needs of the Western region regarding its implementation.

As a result of the meeting, the Western Catechumenate Conference was established under the sponsorship of the Western Liturgical Conference. A steering committee was set up to oversee the activities of the conference. The chairperson is Michael Koch of Saskatoon. Other members of the steering committee are: Ray Beaudry, Jo-Ann Engyel, Graham Gusway and Natalie Schrader.
Reverence at the Eucharist

It is sometimes said, "People are not as reverent at Mass now as they used to be," or "The liturgy today is not as reverent as it formerly was." Reverence is a serious matter, and these remarks deserve careful consideration. In order to address this issue properly, it seems helpful to ask the following more specific questions.

• What is "reverence"?
• How is reverence expressed?
• Have understandings of reverence changed with the renewal of our liturgy?
• What expressions of reverence are called for today?
• What needs to be improved with regard to reverence?

One dictionary defines "reverence" in the following way:

• Honor or respect felt or manifested; deference;
• Profound respect mingled with love and awe;
• A gesture of respect, as a bow or curtsy;
• The state of being revered; dignity; exalted position.

It adds that "reverence further implies an intrinsic and inviolate claim to respect."

Reverence has two dimensions: one interior, in mind and heart; and the other external, in behavior. The latter should reflect the former, of course, and this will be assumed here.

Traditionally, reverence in the eucharistic liturgy was focused especially on the real presence of Christ in the eucharistic bread and wine, and on "doing" or celebrating the liturgy correctly — as the Church wants it to be celebrated. These are still good starting places. How are they to be understood today?

Celebrating Correctly

To celebrate the liturgy correctly — as the Church intends — today means something different than it used to. More is required than before; expectations are much higher. The following are only a few points that should be considered.

From rubrics to understanding: Formerly great stress was laid on punctilious execution of the rubrics (directions) of the Mass. Though rubrics still are important today, their correct performance is not enough. Greater emphasis is placed on understanding the principles that are involved in liturgical celebration. This is the intent of the General Instruction of the Roman Missal; its second chapter should be read and reread. Reverence today means celebrating with understanding.
From priest to assembly: The eucharist is no longer considered to be celebrated by the priest alone, but by the entire worshiping assembly. Reverence today means the full, conscious, and active participation of all the baptized which is, according to Vatican Council II, the basic principle of the liturgical renewal. Reverence today also means fostering this full participation by every possible means and on the part of every minister, but especially by the presider. This includes allowing the people to pray in silence when the rubrics direct this, and the use of language that includes everyone.

From mass to eucharist: Today we are conscious of celebrating not only the death of Christ, but also his resurrection: the full paschal mystery. Thanksgiving and praise, and the joy that goes with them, are central to our celebration. The role of the Holy Spirit in sanctifying both the gifts and the participants is valued. Reverence is celebrating thankfully, with joy, and being conscious of the presence of the Risen Christ and the Holy Spirit.

From Latin to English: Reverence today means that all liturgical texts need to be spoken clearly, with meaning, with attention to punctuation, and in a way that respects the type of text being used. For example, reverence means not ignoring the comma after “Lord” in “Blessed are you, Lord, God of all creation” and “Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might.”

Rooted in baptism: Reverence today means remembering that we who worship do so because of our baptism. It means having a beautiful and prominent font, and regularly using the rite of blessing and sprinkling holy water at the beginning of Mass instead of the penitential rite.

A musical liturgy: Reverence today means celebrating the eucharist musically. It means singing the acclamations of the eucharistic prayer as well as other songs. It means teaching the music effectively to the congregation, regularly learning new songs, and using a variety of musical styles to encourage participation.

Posture and movement: Reverence today continues to mean bowing or genuflecting toward the reserved eucharist, and/or to the altar. It means that the presider stands, moves and gestures with care and dignity (though not with stiffness). It means that all stand throughout the eucharistic prayer. (And what about bowing to the symbols of the word of God? Should members of the assembly make some gesture of reverence to one another?)

Many ministries: Reverence today means that everyone is aware that the primary minister is the assembly as a whole. It also means that ministry is shared among the ordained and the laity to the greatest extent possible. It means that there will be men and women readers, ushers and ministers of hospitality, communion ministers, and all the rest.

The planning process: Reverence today means that the Sunday eucharist will be planned; there will be full use of the options, alternatives, and composition of new texts permitted by the rubrics. Reverence means that laity will be involved in making the planning decisions, and that planning will be directed at the greater participation and spiritual good of the assembly.

Source and summit: Reverence today means celebration that is fruitful in the daily lives of all. It also means acknowledging the daily lives of all in the liturgy. Reverence means life-giving celebrations and eucharistic lives.
The Presence of Christ

Vatican Council II and subsequent Church teachings have expanded our consciousness of the manifold ways in which Christ is present in the eucharistic liturgy. Of course his presence in the eucharistic bread and wine still is highly honored. Also of great importance, however, is Christ's presence in the entire worshiping assembly, in the word of God proclaimed and preached, and in the ordained minister. Reverence today means appreciating these four chief modes of Christ's presence and making sure that they are understood by all the members of the worshiping assembly.

**The assembly:** Reverence to the presence of Christ in the worshiping assembly today means:

- building or remodeling churches so that people can see the faces of at least some other members of the congregation;
- building or remodeling churches so that the altar, ambo, chair and priest are in close relationship to the people;
- building or remodeling churches so that visibility is good and so that everyone can hear well;
- exercising warm hospitality to strangers and guests, as well as to one another;
- the full participation of all, including children, persons with disabilities, the elderly, women;
- people smiling and greeting each other when they gather and as they leave;
- taking time to celebrate well; rushing is not reverent.

**The ordained minister:** Reverence to the presence of Christ in the ordained minister — bishop, priest, deacon — means:

- treating him as a member of the worshiping assembly (though with a distinctive ministry);
- treating him like a real human being;
- the presider's chair should not be any kind of throne;
- avoiding actions of false reverence: putting him on a pedestal.

**The word of God:** Reverence to the presence of Christ in the word of God proclaimed and preached means:

- an adequate number of trained readers, women and men;
- the use of a large lectionary; to read from a missalette is not reverent;
- a dignified and handsome ambo from which the scriptures are proclaimed and the homily is preached;
- the singing of the responsorial psalm and gospel acclamation;
- lifegiving preaching;
- the preparation and presentation of meaningful general intercessions by lay persons;
- promoting bible study during the week;
- promoting scriptural prayer at home.
The eucharistic bread and wine: Reverence to the presence of Christ in the eucharistic bread and wine means:

- the use of altar breads that truly have the appearance of food (though wheaten and unleavened);
- the use of bread that can be broken in a real fraction rite; the use of small hosts, except when very large numbers of people are present, is not reverent; breaking the bread during the eucharistic prayer is not reverent either;
- communion from the cup for all present all of the time;
- communion from bread consecrated at the same celebration; the regular use of hosts from the tabernacle is not reverent;
- a real communion procession with congregational singing;
- an adequate number of lay communion ministers, men and women;
- showing the bread and cup to the communicants in a deliberate and reverent manner, saying “The Body/Blood of Christ” clearly, and receiving an audible “Amen” in response;
- an active ministry of communion to the sick, involving lay men and women as well as the priest;
- promoting festive meals with story telling and sharing in homes;

This list of ways in which reverence is expressed in the celebration of the eucharist is by no means exhaustive. Still, it may serve as a helpful — and perhaps challenging — examination of conscience regarding our contemporary liturgical practices.