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Pope John Paul II, in his Apostolic Letter, *Tertio millennio adveniente*, dedicated the second year in the preparatory phase leading to the great jubilee at the end of this millennium to the Holy Spirit. The Church cannot prepare in any other way than in the Holy Spirit, he said, because it was by the power of the Holy Spirit that the incarnation was accomplished (no. 44).

The pope asked that this preparation include a “renewed appreciation of the presence and activity of the Spirit, who acts within the Church both in the Sacraments, especially in Confirmation, and in the variety of charisms, roles and ministries which he inspires for the good of the Church …” (no. 45).

It is therefore quite appropriate that the topic of this first issue of the bulletin for 1998 is the sacrament of confirmation. The first few articles raise issues around this sacrament and ask some questions that are not new: the nature of the sacrament and its theology, its relationship to baptism and the eucharist, and hence the appropriate order of these three sacraments.

The centrality of the eucharist to the life of the Church is the subject for several articles, and to give some practical assistance to parishes celebrating the sacraments of initiation, there are two articles that do so: suggestions for appropriate music from *Catholic Book of Worship III* and how one group of parishes has tried to keep a connection with the parents who have brought their infants to their parish to celebrate baptism.

Also in this issue are several articles reflecting what has happened at the last two national conferences of English-speaking diocesan directors of liturgy and chairs of diocesan commissions. These two conferences (in 1994 and 1997) focused on the state of liturgical renewal in the country. The first conference reviewed the events that marked the progress of the renewal (and some that hindered it) and the second heard from some of the pioneers of the renewal.

Taking a pulse of liturgical renewal in the country is also a part of the preparation for the great jubilee. Pope John Paul II, in reflecting on the significance of the Second Vatican Council, said that the best preparation for the new millennium “can only be expressed in a renewed commitment to apply, as faithfully as possible, the teachings of Vatican II to the life of every individual and of the whole Church” (no. 20). There is no doubt that the renewal of the liturgy is crucial in the teachings of Vatican II. ☩
The Sacrament of Confirmation: Initiation or Commitment

Gerald Wiesner, OMI

Introduction

This paper examines the problem of the sacrament of confirmation as it exists in the Church today. There are some pastoral questions: At what age should the sacrament be celebrated? What type and duration of catechesis should precede the celebration? What should be emphasized in the actual celebration? This type of question appears to be increasing, and the solutions given are varied and multiple. It is becoming more apparent that we will be faced with these unanswerable questions until clarification is reached on a deeper issue: the theology of confirmation.

This paper will attempt to state the question by outlining the two basic approaches to confirmation, give a summary of historical research, and explore the more recent teaching of the Church. The accumulated information will be applied to the various pastoral options suggested in hope of providing some guidelines for a more pastoral and liturgical solution.

Stating the Question

Most current authors agree that we do have a problem with regard to confirmation. Karl Rahner sums up the issue well:

The difficulty is, ... it is not easy to distinguish between baptism and confirmation. Baptism is not merely a sacrament for the forgiveness of sins and for the acceptance of the individual into the Church. It is also the sacrament of rebirth, of the grace-filled inner justification of man, the sacrament of the communication of the Spirit, without which the forgiveness of guilt, rebirth, and sanctification cannot even be conceived. And even if one stresses that in confirmation the Spirit is communicated to the recipient for particular tasks and special challenges, for a spiritual strengthening of the person to help him confess his faith before the world, it must be admitted that the Spirit received in baptism also confers on the individual the disposition and strength for undertaking special tasks.1

While acknowledging the issue to be very complex, one can say that there are basically two theological schools regarding the nature of confirmation:


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the theological-maturity school and the liturgical institutional school.

Speaking in rather general terms regarding the theological-maturity school, its supporters state that confirmation is a rite of passage, implying full commitment to a gospel lifestyle. This commitment, made as an adult, involves the re-commitment of one's baptism as well as the completion of the gift of the Holy Spirit begun in baptism. Different authors describe this maturity in different ways. Robert Ludwig speaks of confirmation as involving participation in the Christian mission and ministry, a time when one becomes active about one's faith especially in terms of decision, choice, commitment. George McCauley describes it as the sacrament of Christian adulthood. It narrows the focus of the Christian's affirmation of life to a more specific situation and deals with issues that move a person beyond the initial membership stage of baptism to that of a new or second Piet Fransen discusses confirmation as a new Pentecost, giving the gift of the Spirit. As a sacrament of initiation, it perfects baptism and is a normal preparation for full ecclesial communion in the eucharist. As baptism applies to us the death and resurrection of the Lord, confirmation communicates the grace of Pentecost. Rahner, although stating it to be difficult to distinguish between the gift of the Spirit given in baptism and that given in confirmation, nevertheless affirms that in confirmation the gift of the Spirit is increased, strengthened, and given a specificity for the carrying out of one's mission of bearing witness before the world.

John Roberto sums up the teaching of the adherents of this school by highlighting the following points: It is a rite of passage into Christian adulthood; the celebration of Christian maturity, a sacrament of Christian adulthood, a time for decision, choice and commitment; strengthening of the Spirit for mission; a sacrament of Christian witness and mission; the communication of the grace of Pentecost, and the conferral of full rights of membership in the faith community. This opinion, to a great extent, is based on and extends the development of the theology of confirmation as found in the teaching of Aquinas and the scholastic theologians.

Perhaps the most characteristic aspect of the liturgical initiation school is treating confirmation as an integral element of the entire initiation process within an ecclesial community. The other school speaks of the meaning and effects of confirmation in isolation from the rest of the sacraments of initiation. Aidan Kavanagh says that when talking about confirmation we are talking about baptism, and when discussing baptism we are discussing

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6 Rahner, pp. 9, 16-20.
7 Roberto, p. 266.
Christian initiation. Viewing confirmation as a sacrament of initiation is the position strongly supported by the recent official teaching of the Church, especially in the directives of Vatican II regarding the revised rite of confirmation and the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA). This teaching will be examined more closely later.

The liturgical initiation school states that initiation is a continuum bringing together in process and ritual a unified celebration of the sacraments of initiation as they had been celebrated in one event in the early Church. The sacraments of initiation (baptism, confirmation, eucharist) are the final stage in which the elect come forward and, with their sins forgiven, are admitted to the people of God, receive adoption as the children of God, and led by the Spirit, come to the banquet of the Kingdom in the eucharistic sacrifice and meal. Bolstering this entire matter and emphasizing the process involving the integrity of the sacrament of initiation, Kavanagh argues:

Baptism begins to appear more as the communal watershed event that both signifies one's having come into communion with Jesus Christ dead and rising among his faithful people and causes that entrance to attain new levels of intensity. Baptism begins to appear less as a preliminary and rather "exorcistic" excision of infants from the power of evil and the jaws of hell. Confirmation begins to appear less as a brief ceremony of maturity in faith, or of puberty in early adolescence, and more as a solemn pneumatic conclusion to baptism that finally equips one for full sharing in the eucharistic celebration of a people filled with the Spirit of Jesus whom the Father sends as that people's living bond of unity. And finally, the Church itself begins to appear less as a static institution resistant to change, and more as an organic and power-laden mystery that is constantly coming into existence.

This position affirms that outside of Christian initiation, and baptism in particular, it is difficult if not impossible to see confirmation as a wholly independent sacrament. Such an understanding, as we will see, is in accord with the early Church's understanding of confirmation. In this regard, Bernard Cooke observes that since the RCIA stresses the intrinsic link of chrismation with baptism as parts of one process of initiation, it is probably not useful to search for any distinctive meaning for confirmation. It can be noted as well that the emphasis on the sacraments of initiation as a whole has corrected the sequence of the sacraments, restoring the traditional order of baptism, confirmation, and eucharist, a sequence which existed in the universal Church until 1910. As well, the original order

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10 Kavanagh, p. 4.
11 Roberto, p. 268.
alleviates the serious theological and pastoral problems in understanding the celebration of confirmation following the eucharist.

The Results of Historical Research

An element that contributes rather substantially to bringing about a solution to the dilemma is historical research. Until Vatican II, liturgy had embodied mostly the experience and tradition of the medieval Church. Since Vatican II it has become apparent that Catholic tradition is larger than the tradition of the Middle Ages and broader than the Council of Trent. In the experience of the early Church, where many ideas and models were tested, we find many forms for interpreting and expressing our own experiences of Christian faith. 13

Today, most serious scholars attest that there is no evidence for the existence of a separate rite of confirmation in the New Testament, nothing indicating that Jesus instituted a separate rite. Furthermore, the giving of the Spirit is associated with baptism; the effects which are spoken of—forgiveness of sins, incorporation into Christ, gifts of the Spirit, pledge of immortality—are all attributed to a single rite of baptism with water accompanied by a word of faith. 14

The celebration of initiation in the first six centuries of Christianity was not simply what we now call baptism. Rather, it was an elaborate rite which, in hindsight, included the three sacraments of baptism, confirmation and eucharist. All were simply three steps of the same act in the process of becoming a Christian. They formed a unit; each was an aspect of the same rite. 15 At first the rites were relatively simple. With time, however, and in order that different parts of the rite give expression to different aspects of becoming a Christian, the rites became more elaborate and complex. It was still one celebration, still one ceremony which brought into being a Spirit-filled member of Christ in the Church. 16

A rite that developed alongside the water bath was an imposition of hands. Eventually this rite took on the dimension of anointing or sealing, and in the fifth and sixth centuries anointing replaced the laying on of hands; the effect remained the same. This one ritual of initiation was usually celebrated by or presided over by the bishop. A time came, however, when the bishop was not always able to be present, and initiation was celebrated in his absence. At this point in history the Eastern Church decided to keep the initiation ritual intact; priests were delegated to celebrate the entire rite of initiation, the bishop being present through the oil previously blessed by him. In the West the bishop’s presidency was safeguarded, and the ritual was divided. One part of the rite, the

16 Searle, p. 111.
imposition of hands (or anointing), was left to the bishop. Up to this time the initiation process was one continuous rite; with this division of the rite the problems began.

The separation of the rites in the West is a problem that is complex, thorny and delicate, and obscure. Because of the complexity of the issue and the limited scope of this paper, only the developments that shed light on the reasons for the separation and on the twofold sacramental effect will be included.

Although not having as their purpose the separation of the rites, two factors are considered to have been major contributors to this separation: the increase of infant baptism and the remoteness of the bishop. Recent scholarship has uncovered evidence indicating that the strict separation of the rites appeared much later in the history of the Church than was initially believed. Gabrielle Winkler questions whether the rites in the Gallican missals of the eighth century ever included any post-baptismal rite other than the anointing performed either by the bishop or the presbyter. She concludes from evidence of the various councils in Spain from the fourth to the seventh century that the question appears well founded. Mark Searle observes that chrismation by a priest in the West was officially ended by Charlemagne in the ninth century.

There is already in the Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus an additional laying on of hands and anointing by the bishop, accompanied by a prayer asking that the candidate be filled with the Holy Spirit, in the initiation celebration. In Cyprian's time two practices which widened the gap between baptism and the reception of the Holy Spirit through the further imposition of hands existed: celebrating a full rite at a later time for those baptized in sickness by presbyters and lesser clergy and a rite receiving into the Church those baptized by heretics. During the fifth century the growing sense of obligation of Christian parents to have their infants baptized led to a great increase in presbyteral baptisms, which were to be completed by the bishop's laying on of hands.

This practice, which began in southern Gaul, spread; the practice of separating confirmation from baptism was slowly growing. Since it was said that confirmation was not absolutely necessary for salvation, parents started to question the value of it and were becoming somewhat negligent in having their children confirmed. There is evidence that bishops as well were somewhat lax in fulfilling their responsibilities. In response to this situation a dubious Pentecost homily, possibly from the fifth century, was given considerable significance by several authors, and it too became a contributing factor.

17 Searle, p. 115.
20 Milner, p. 22.
21 Winkler, p. 13; Searle, p. 118; Milner, p. 44.
The homily was originally attributed to Eusebius of Emesa. Recently some authors have attributed it to Faustus of Riez, a fifth-century Gallican bishop. Winkler observes that in all probability it is of Gallican provenance but likely later than the fifth century because its theology is more developed than that of the authentic works of Faustus.\(^2\) The homily referred to a separate laying on of hands and repeatedly used the term, confirmare.\(^3\) In effect it did two things: remove baptism from the pneumatic imagery of John 3.5 and limit the pneumatic character of the post-baptismal rite to the notion of being strengthened for battle. Such an explanation of the role of the Spirit was distanced from the overwhelming theophanic event of Acts 2.\(^4\) The following passage from the homily demonstrates much of what was being said:

So the Holy Spirit, who descended upon the baptismal waters bearing salvation, gave at the font all that is needed for innocence; at confirmation he gives an increase for grace, for in this world those who survive through the different stages of life must walk among dangers and invisible enemies. In baptism we are born again to life; after baptism we are confirmed for battle. In baptism we are washed; after baptism we are strengthened. Thus for those who die at once the benefits of rebirth are sufficient, but for those who survive the aids of confirmation are also necessary. The rebirth of itself saves those who are soon to be received into the peace of the blessed age; confirmation arms and equips those who are reserved for the conflicts and battles of this world. He who after baptism comes to death immaculate in the innocence he has acquired is confirmed by death itself—for after death he is no longer able to sin.\(^5\)

In commenting on his homily, Winkler notes that baptism, with the complementary rite of confirmation, celebrates Pentecost, indicating the time when the disciples became apostles and were sent as Jesus was. Hence, to substitute the image of soldier for that apostle, as this homily did, trivializes the Pentecost event. Comparative liturgy indicates that originally the imagery of military battle belonged to a pre-baptismal context and was not associated with the coming of God’s Spirit. Winkler argues further that to associate military imagery in its defensive connotation with the post-baptismal rite tends to reduce the gift of the Spirit to the effect of strengthening. It is to be noted that strengthening is the outcome, not the essence, of a much deeper and infinitely more consequential event, the giving of divine life.\(^6\)

One can see how the theology proposed in this homily would, among other effects, encourage a delay until such time as the strength indicated was actually needed by the child.\(^7\)

\(^{22}\) Winkler, p. 13.
\(^{23}\) Milner, pp. 44-47.
\(^{24}\) Winkler, p. 14.
\(^{25}\) Milner, p. 45.
\(^{26}\) Winkler, p. 15.
\(^{27}\) Searle, p. 118.
There is evidence that in the ninth century this homily became absorbed into a letter of Pope Melchiades. As a result it became invested with papal authority, was incorporated into the “False Decretals,” and these in turn were incorporated into the authoritative decree of Gratian. Now confirmation was viewed as the sacrament by which one became a full Christian. It was celebrated by the imposition of the hands of the bishop, and its celebration became necessary except in danger of death.

The theologians of the High Middle Ages, faced with the heritage of two related but distinct sacraments, attempted to work out a systematic theology for each. Peter Lombard, using the “False Decretals,” incorporated in his “Book of Sentences” a formulation of a doctrine on confirmation. Functioning as a hinge by basing himself on previously existing sources and providing the foundation for further scholastic theology, he taught that the form of the sacrament was the signing of the forehead with chrism combined with the laying on of the hand. The sacrament was to be conferred by the bishop for the giving of the gift of the Spirit for the strength needed to make exterior acts of confession. Baptism was seen as giving the fullness of life, and confirmation was related to it by giving the fullness of strength. Confirmation was the sacrament *ad robur*, that is, strengthening one for the battles of life. Because it could not be repeated, it was believed to confer a character.

Later St. Thomas used this notion to further distinguish between baptism and confirmation. He understood character as giving a special deputation. In baptism the Christian was deputed to take part in Christ’s priesthood through the worship of the Christian life and through its sacramental expression. In confirmation one was deputed to those actions which belonged to the spiritual fight against the exterior enemies of the faith. Baptism gave the power pertaining to one’s own salvation because it was the sacrament of rebirth to the spiritual life; confirmation empowered one to proclaim the faith before others, for it was the sacrament of Christian adulthood, and it belonged to the adult to communicate socially.

This teaching was endorsed at the Council of Lyons in 1274. The doctrine on the sacraments set forth in the Decree for the Armenians in the Council of Florence in 1439 was taken largely from the writings of St. Thomas. The Council of Trent in 1547 added nothing new, simply emphasizing that as one of the sacraments of the New Law confirmation must have been instituted by Christ and that the ordinary minister was the bishop.

An interesting addendum surfaces from historical study: a survey regarding the age for confirmation. The Carolingian reformers affirmed that, in principle, confirmation should be administered as soon as possible after baptism. In fact, often a period of several years elapsed between the two. In 1280 a synod at Worcester, as well as one at Chichester the following year, ordered that confirmation take place

28 Winkler, p. 13.
29 Milner, p. 72.
within a year of baptism. Around 1280 a synod of Durham recommends the age of seven years, and in 1287 a synod of Exeter recommends the age of three. A council at Cologne in 1280 declared that persons under seven were too young to be confirmed, and other evidence indicates that this was a rather widely held opinion at this time. In 1536 another council at Cologne reaffirmed this statement, saying that “before a child has reached the seventh year of his life he will understand little or nothing of what is done, much less remember it.” Thereafter, many local councils reaffirmed this statement, and something similar was reiterated in the catechism of the Council of Trent.

J.D. Fischer observes that there would have been no need for these councils of the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries prohibiting the confirming of children under seven years of age if this practice had completely died out. There is some evidence that certain bishops continued to confirm immediately after baptism. In more recent times Pope Pius XII gave general permission to parish priests to confirm in danger of death. It is important to note that until 1910, when the decree, Quam singulari, was promulgated, the order for the actual celebration of the sacraments of initiation was baptism, confirmation and eucharist.

In retrospect, theologians offer some explanations for what might have led to the development of a separate rite with a separate effect. There is first of all the matter of an improper relationship between memorial and epiclesis. Ordinarily these should be viewed as the inside and the outside of the same reality. However, once baptism came to be viewed primarily as initiative behaviour—memorial in the weakest sense—it seemed more and more necessary to complete, perfect, or finish the act of baptism by a separate ritual act of epiclesis, confirmation.

A second explanation is that of accumulated symbolism. Rituals are needed to express the interior reality. Often elements are added in order to make the rite more expressive. At a given point the rite becomes overloaded, and it may collapse. The initiation rite could no longer carry everything, and the ritual gave way. It was quite natural that the anointing would go, because it was more substantial in itself and had a strong background in view of the anointing rites in the Old Testament as well as the anointing of Jesus. Also, there was a sense of loss concerning the experience of the Holy Spirit. There was some danger of reducing the role of the Spirit, and therefore the Church capitalized on the already existing separate anointing, eventually calling it “confirmation” and ascribing to it the experiential aspect of the Spirit so stressed in the New Testament. There is as well the possibility that confirmation provided an opportunity for the child to be baptized over again. When infant baptism became the norm, a catechesis after

31 Milner, pp. 74-75.
32 Küng, p. 67.
34 Mitchel, pp. 70-72; Bausch, p. 116.
baptism was developed. In this case confirmation could have been an attempt to come to terms with a catechumenate that had to be delayed because of baptism in infancy and now reclaimed for a later time.35

Historical research indicates that in the early Church initiation was one liturgical rite. It also appears that efforts made to justify theologically the separation of the rites with distinct effects is a rather arbitrary endeavour. Hans Kung summarizes the situation this way:

Progress in theology and the Church has ultimately and finally revealed as questionable that process which led to a separation of “confirmation” from baptism—with all of the consequences regarding “matter,” “form,” “effect,” “minister,” and “recipient.” Hence the way has finally been opened up for a new consideration of the matter, and possibly a new arrangement.36

Recent Teaching of the Church

An examination of the more recent teaching of the Church proves to be quite enlightening. The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, in discussing the nature, purpose, and mode of efficacy of the sacraments, states that it is of capital importance that the faithful easily understand the sacramental signs.37 It also states that with passage of time certain features have crept into sacraments and sacramentals, rendering their nature and purpose less clear to the people of today. Therefore, certain aspects of these rites need to be adjusted to the requirements of our times, and revisions were to be made.38

Two things in particular in the teaching of Vatican II pertain to the issue:

The rite of confirmation is to be revised and the intimate connection which this sacrament has with the whole of Christian initiation is to be more lucidly set forth; for this reason it will be fitting for candidates to renew their baptismal promises just before they are confirmed.39

The catechumenate for adults, comprising several distinct steps, is to be restored and to be put into use at the discretion of the local ordinary.40

The Decree on the Church’s Missionary Activity, referring to the catechumenate process of initiation, states:

Then, when the sacraments of Christian initiation have freed them from the power of darkness (cf. Col 1.13), having died with Christ, been buried with Him, and risen with Him (cf. Rom 6.4-11; Col 2.12-13; 1 Pet 3.21-22; Mk 16.16), they receive the Spirit (cf. 1 Th 3.5-7; Acts 8.14-17) who makes them adopted sons, and celebrate the remembrance of the Lord’s death and resurrection together with the whole People of God.41

35 Bausch, p. 116ff.
36 Kung, p. 88.
38 CSL, no. 62.
39 CSL, no. 71.
40 CSL, no. 64.
41 Decree on the Church’s Missionary Activity, The Documents of Vatican II, no. 14.
It is clear from this general teaching that the official magisterium of the Church emphasizes the initiatory character of confirmation. Of particular significance is the overt reference to the revised rite of confirmation showing the intimate connection of this rite to the whole of Christian initiation. That candidates are to renew their baptismal promises emphasizes the baptismal character of confirmation. The references to the restoration and nature of the catechumenate clearly indicate the initiatory character of confirmation.

An examination of the revised and restored rites likewise clearly reveals the initiatory character of confirmation. The decree of the Sacred Congregation for Divine Worship, referring to the revised rite of confirmation, speaks of initiation in the Christian life being completed by confirmation. It refers to the request of Vatican II that the revised rite make “the intimate connection of this sacrament with the whole of Christian initiation” clearer.\textsuperscript{42}

In the Apostolic Constitution on the Sacrament of Confirmation, Pope Paul VI refers often to confirmation as a sacrament of initiation. “By means of these sacraments of Christian initiation (that is, baptism, confirmation, eucharist) they thus receive in increasing measure the treasures of divine life and advance toward the perfection of charity.” Referring to the gradual implementation of Vatican II he states: “Since the rite for the baptism of children, revised at the mandate of that general council and published at our command, is already in use, it is now fitting to publish the rite of confirmation, in order to show that unity of Christian initiation in its true light.”

The pope continues:

The aim of this work (revising the manner of celebrating this sacrament) has been that “the intimate connection which this sacrament has with the whole of Christian initiation should be more lucidly set forth.” The link between confirmation and the other sacraments of initiation is shown forth more clearly not only by closer association of these sacraments but also by the rites and words by which confirmation is conferred.\textsuperscript{43}

Regarding the unity of the three sacraments of initiation, the pontiff states: “...(C)onfirmation is so closely linked with the holy eucharist that the faithful, after being signed by holy baptism and confirmation, are incorporated fully into the body of Christ by participation in the eucharist.”\textsuperscript{44}

An examination of the rite itself also reveals this initiatory dimension of the sacrament. The Introduction to the Rite affirms that “those who have been baptized continue on the path of Christian initiation through the sacrament of confirmation” (no. 1). Paragraph 3 of the same introduction, in speaking of the task of parents, says: “They are to form and gradually increase a spirit of faith in their children and, with the help of catechetical institutions, prepare them for the fruitful reception of the sacraments of con-

\textsuperscript{42} \textit{Rite of Confirmation (RC), The Rites of the Catholic Church (ICEL), p. 289.}
\textsuperscript{43} RC, p. 290.
\textsuperscript{44} RC, p. 292.
firmation and eucharist.” An almost incidental observation is made in paragraph 5, but which simply confirms the same point: “In view of contemporary pastoral circumstances, it is desirable that the god-parent at baptism, if present, also be sponsor at confirmation…. This change expresses more clearly the relationship between baptism and confirmation.”

In paragraph 11 of this same introduction we find the unity of the sacraments of initiation again underlined:

Adult catechumens and children who are baptized at an age when they are old enough for catechesis should ordinarily be admitted to confirmation and the eucharist at the same time they receive baptism…. Similarly, adults who were baptized in infancy should after suitable preparation, receive confirmation and the eucharist in a common celebration.

In this official teaching one can single out at least three very clear affirmations which pertain to the question under discussion: It is always spoken of as a sacrament of initiation; it is always presented as a preparation for the celebration of the eucharist, and it is never presented as a sacrament of “adult” commitment. The way the prayers of the celebration speak of the grace of the sacrament as a “helper and guide” to people and enabling them “to be more like Christ,” would certainly favour initiation rather than adult commitment.

To the official teaching of the Church one can add that found in the Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults (RCIA). The whole thrust of the RCIA is that initiation into the community takes place gradually, in stages, and that it reaches the climax of initiation in the celebration of the initiation sacraments.

The sacraments of baptism, confirmation, and eucharist are the final stage in which the elect come forward and, with their sins forgiven, are admitted into the people of God, receive the adoption of sons of God, are led by the Holy Spirit into the promised fullness of time and, in the eucharistic sacrifice and meal, to the banquet of the kingdom of God.45

Of all of the references made concerning confirmation as a sacrament of initiation coupled with baptism, the most important one is found in paragraph 34 of the Introduction to the RCIA.

According to the ancient practice maintained in the Roman liturgy, adults are not to be baptized unless they receive confirmation immediately afterward provided no serious obstacles exist. This connection signifies the unity of the paschal mystery, the close relationship between the mission of the Son and the pouring out of the Holy Spirit, and the joint celebration of the sacraments by which the Son and the Spirit come with the Father upon those who are baptized.46

In the rite of election the request for the elect is that “after further preparation and the celebration of the scrutinies,

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45 Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, The Rites of the Catholic Church (ICEL), no. 27, p. 28.
46 The Rites of the Catholic Church, p. 30.
they will be allowed to receive the sacrament of baptism, confirmation and the eucharist. It can also be noted that often in the examinations and prayers there are both implicit and explicit references to the "Easter sacraments," implying all three.

Theologians continue to discuss, in light of historical research and the recent teaching of the Church, the relationship of baptism and confirmation. Küng affirms that since confirmation comes from baptism, its true meaning today can be discerned only through its connection with baptism. Any other meaning simply delivers it up to totally arbitrary ends. Baptism, like confirmation, is concerned with the one and the same Christ, one and the same Spirit, one and the same grace and faith. Its meaning can be considered as the ultimate phase of the one rite of initiation but must be celebrated before the eucharist.

Along with others Bausch concludes that there is no theological or historical basis for making confirmation into a sacrament for a Christian coming of age. It is not a sacrament of maturity in that sense and is not designed to help young adolescents to cope with the struggles of life. Referring to a statement of Charles Davis, Bausch concurs that the sacraments enabling one to cope with the struggles of life are the eucharist and reconciliation. Needed in this entire dilemma is to have baptism restored to its primary status as the place for conversion and commitment. To insist on confirmation as the real sacrament of commitment is to reduce baptism, making one think that one is merely baptized in order to wait for the fuller commitment of confirmation at adolescence. Baptism is the full commitment and confirmation is more a ratification of baptism, as the renewal of baptismal vows at confirmation indicates. To say that confirmation "completes" baptism may be true if what is meant is a further organic step in the initiation process. This is less true if the implication is that baptism left something unfinished or dangling and which a later supplementary rite must supply. If this were true, we would not confirm adults immediately after their baptism. It is obvious, however, that the confirmation given to adult candidates immediately does not "complete" their baptism but rather is an integral part of the rite. If baptism is considered only as a first stage, admitting one to only a qualified participation in church life, it is diminished as a sacrament. As long as something essential remains to be granted by some later stage of progressive initiation, we seem to be saying that by baptism we are only partially related to God.

Confirmation has had two kinds of meanings association with it in Western tradition. In the first group are those who speak about growth and increase of grace, interpretations which appeared after the rite had been separated from infant baptism and set within a later period of life. The second group includes the gifts of the Spirit, priesthood, anointing, spiritual combat, and commitment to the...

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47 The Rites of the Catholic Church, no. 143, p. 64.
48 Küng, p. 89.
49 Bausch, p. 107.
50 Bausch, pp. 108-09.
world. All are baptismal meanings, and if they are associated in an exclusive way with confirmation, baptism is deprived of them. If they are shared by the two rites, they duplicate each other. Thus the unity and decisiveness of baptism becomes qualified. As a sacramental rite, confirmation makes sense only in close association with the baptismal action. 51

Speaking of confirmation as a sacrament of commitment and maturity does violence to the biblical and patristic tradition of baptism, making it a kind of catechumenal preparation for life in the Church. If baptism is as irrevocable as we claim it to be, and if in fact, as Scripture and the liturgy affirm it to be, it is a passage from death to the life of the risen Lord and of his Spirit (radically inseparable realities), then we cannot baptize and hope that some of those who are baptized will one day become real Christians. The retention of confirmation celebrated at a later age and interpreting it as a sacrament of commitment or maturity because of the insistence on the priority of the actual experience of transformation (conversion), responsible acceptance of the gospel, and making the experience of conversion and transformation visible and public before the whole Church is to do serious damage to the understanding of a sacrament as an action of God as well as a human action. 52

One of the strongest arguments supporting the unification of the rites of initiation and highlighting the initiatory character of confirmation is based on paragraph 34 of the Introduction to the RCIA. After specifying that the rites of baptism and confirmation should be celebrated together, it states:

This connection signifies the unity of the paschal mystery, the close relationship between the mission of the Son and the pouring out of the Holy Spirit, and the joint celebration of the sacraments by which the Son and the Spirit come with the Father upon those who are baptized.

The reasons given here are deeply theological, based on trinitarian theology and the relationship of the Trinity to the person baptized. Kavanagh observes that the theological point that is being made here is of such seriousness that one feels compelled to ask why and how it can be concluded that it applies only to adults and not to infants and children, especially if they are baptized at the Easter Vigil. His conclusion is that unless the remark is pure rhetoric, it seems inescapable that all who are deemed fit for baptism, regardless of their physical age, should also be confirmed within the same liturgical event. 53 Roberto draws the same conclusion. 54 The rite of initiating children of catechetical age makes the same point: “At this third step of their Christian initiation, the children will receive the sacrament of baptism, the bishop or priest who baptizes them will also confer confirmation, and the children will for the first time participate in the liturgy of the eucharist.” 55

54 Roberto, p. 269.
It seems to be that this reform results from changes in the Church's theory and ministry in the modern world, a world which bears a closer resemblance to the pre-Christian third century of Hippolytus than to the Christian thirteenth century when the scholastic theologians were at work.\(^{56}\)

One final argument highlighting the connection between confirmation and the other sacraments of Christian initiation is based on elements in the new rite that emphasize this. Milner singles out the inclusion of scripture readings, the homily, renewal of the baptismal promises, the bidding prayers, and the concluding blessing.\(^{57}\) The fact that the minister of baptism and confirmation may be the same, as well as the encouragement to have the same sponsors for both baptism and confirmation, likewise highlights the unity of the sacraments and supports the initiatory quality of confirmation.

In the light of historical research and the evidence gleaned, the recent teaching of the magisterium of the Church, together with the actual liturgical celebration of the sacraments, it is very difficult—if not impossible—to conclude that confirmation is anything other than a sacrament of initiation. It appears that ideally confirmation is to be celebrated together with baptism and certainly always as a preparation for the eucharist.

**Applications and Conclusions**

Even though the evidence mentioned provides much clarification, all of the problems are not solved, since there are two official practices: adult initiation and infant baptism. Regarding adult initiation, the picture is quite clear: Adults are not to be baptized unless they receive confirmation immediately after their baptism (RCIA, no. 34).\(^{58}\) The difficulty surfaces in infant baptism.

One can put the various opinions on the issue into three general categories: those favouring infant baptism and suggesting that confirmation be a rite of commitment that would come sometime later in life following prolonged catechesis and a personal commitment; those suggesting that at birth infants be enrolled as catechumens and, with ongoing catechesis and periodic celebrations, be initiated sacramentally into the community, and those who suggest that we celebrate the sacraments of initiation with infants. Each of these opinions merits consideration.

In reference to the position which favours delaying confirmation until a mature responsible commitment can be made, it must be noted at the outset that all authentic evidence of the past and present negates the "commitment" dimension of confirmation, and the practice necessarily separates the liturgical rite. If the preparation for this mature and responsible commitment includes an in-depth course of Christian instruction, co-ordinated apostolic activity, valuable prayer experiences and the presentation of alternatives, it is impossible to celebrate the ritual action of confirmation in a way that will sustain the intensity

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\(^{57}\) Milner, p. 79.

\(^{58}\) See *Rites of the Catholic Church* (ICEL), p. 30.
of the preparation and its great expectations. It does not matter how well the sacrament is celebrated in its main elements of renewal of promises, laying on of hands, and anointing, since all are symbols of what already exists in baptism.\(^5^9\)

There is indeed a need for personal commitment, perhaps ongoing commitment. But to take a particular rite and ascribe to it a specific meaning without paying attention to its origins appears to be quite arbitrary. The original meanings associated with confirmation, such as "sealing with the Spirit" or "conferring the gifts of the Spirit," are also baptismal meanings. At times it seems that we search diligently to assure the relationship between cultural rituals and Christian sacraments. Those rituals which celebrate the life cycle are often confused with the sacraments which are intended to mark the moments of personal conversion and faith. Thus, baptism becomes attached to birth and confirmation to adolescence. As already indicated, attributing this amount of emphasis to confirmation makes baptism a kind of catechumenal preparation for life in the Church.

If confirmation is to be this sacrament of mature commitment, a valid question is: At what stage in life is it appropriate to symbolize sacramentally this lifelong conversion process? Should it be at the very beginning of life when the child has no reflective awareness of the journey but the Church pledges to bring about this awareness? Should it be as a young adult, when one has a degree of awareness and a conscious sense of the divine self-giving and is trying to appropriate the identity of the "new being"? Is mid-life the opportune time when one has lived out the Christian adventure with greater intensity and played out the role of the prodigal child? Perhaps the end of life is the opportune moment, when the evidence of transformation is apparent. Two things need to be kept in mind: A sacrament is not only a sign of process but also a catalyst furthering the process; other sacraments, especially the eucharist and reconciliation, are available along the way to further the process.\(^6^0\)

One last observation must be mentioned regarding confirmation as the sacrament of mature commitment: The pastoral practice has not lived up to its expectations. Many confirmed youth are no longer active in the Church, and as a result confirmation is sometimes referred to as the sacrament of apostasy.

These negative comments in no way intend to deny the need to search for ways to revitalize the adult community and for a process to initiate new members into its vitality. The argument is that theologically and liturgically it is wrong to look to confirmation as the panacea for the problem.

The second opinion addressing the issue of infant baptism suggests a type of catechumenate process whereby the child is enrolled as a catechumen at birth and, following a gradual catechesis, is initiated sacramentally when able to make some conscious commitment. Although this practice has some

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merit and is attractive in some of its aspects, apart from the situation of children from families where faith is weak or extinct, it is not to be encouraged. In a directive reaffirming the Church's teaching on baptism, the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith states that although admitting a delay in infant baptism in certain circumstances, this is not to be interpreted as part of the Rite of Initiation for Children of Catechetical Age, nor does it mean that the Church prefers or regards as normal the postponement of baptism to that age. 61

The third opinion is that which speaks of infant initiation. Although not intending to promote the indiscriminate initiation of infants, theologians affirm the validity and meaning of the practice. To simply abandon the practice of infant baptism places too much emphasis on the conscious participation of the subject in the ceremony, as Christopher Kiesling observes:

...(T)he idea of postponing baptism until a child is old enough to make up his own mind is an idea which overemphasizes the ceremonial aspect of baptism at the expense of the more important gift of God's grace which is already at work in the gift of upbringing by Christian parents and the Christian community and which the ceremony of baptism celebrates. Postponement of baptism is an idea which overemphasizes the individualness of salvation by not recognizing sufficiently the intimacy of human relations, especially between a child and his family and community, through which God grants his grace. It is an idea, finally, which threatens to cut off from a child a critical grace from God—the pledge of Christian parents and the community to rear a child so that he is oriented to God in the likeness of Christ is the depths of his personality. 62

Küng affirms that infant baptism is not ruled out, for it indicates that God's gracious call precedes faith. The child is not alone but is part of the living faith community. 63 Cooke offers two helpful insights regarding Christian faith. He speaks of faith as a life process which involves human consciousness. It grows into mature fullness along with consciousness itself, and like full consciousness, it emerges from pre-conscious psychological perception. He concludes that there must thus be elements of "pre-conscious faith" growing quietly in the child's psyche long before a personally chosen faith appears. Secondly, Christian faith is more than a rational acceptance of facts and deliberate willingness to accept Christian teaching and live by it. Christian faith, which is a personal acceptance of Jesus and the God revealed in him and essentially a friendship, involves the whole range of knowledge, feeling, sense perception, imagination, and affectivity. All this indicates that the beginnings of that life process start with birth and will be developed by context, circumstances and relationships. The same is true of faith. Thus, early entry into a Christian community which lives out those values should mean that the community becomes an evangelizing reality in the

63 Küng, p. 92.
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pre-rational life of the child. In the liturgy of baptism the child enters into the Christian community on the level of the critically important psychological resonances that condition all our formal consciousness. 64

Infant baptism becomes a theological problem only if one thinks of the sacrament as something which is done to the baby rather than as something which is done by the community. The element of conscious commitment is not something that comes along only later as the child is capable of making a conscious commitment. It is already present, and must be present, in the faith of the parents and those who surround the child with the atmosphere of faith. 65

By way of conclusion, a point which must be underlined is that the liturgy is considered to be a locus theologicus. Theologians argue that liturgy is a source from which we can draw conclusions regarding teachings of faith. As a concrete manifestation of what can be concluded concerning confirmation, Fischer observes:

Unless we admit that the Church was wrong in admitting infants as well as adults to confirmation in the third century, if not earlier, and during the next thousand years, and also that the Eastern Church has been wrong to do so all through its history, no definition of the grace conferred in confirmation is adequate unless it is applicable to candidates of all ages from infancy upwards. 66

64 Cooke, pp. 140-41.
65 Guzie, p. 170.
66 Fischer, pp. 134-35.

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Reflections on Confirmation in Pastoral Practice

Remi J. De Roo

The approach of the Great Jubilee in the Year 2000 provides us with an opportunity to consider the realities of sacramental life in the light of pastoral experience. I rejoice in Pope John Paul II's invitation to spend the current liturgical year focusing on the role of the Holy Spirit in our lives and in the Church.

Pastoral experience has gradually led me to sense that a sound theology of the Holy Spirit is pivotal to the understanding of the sacrament of confirmation. There is much confusion around this troublesome subject regarding when, whether, or why to confirm at one age or another. Some of it appears to me to be due to arbitrary factors such as age, school grades, intellectual progress, administrative convenience. Given too much emphasis, these external criteria have occasioned a lot of misunderstanding.

How then could a sound theology of the Holy Spirit address both the pastoral and theological aspects of confirmation? It is the gift of the Spirit which leads us to other sacraments. When preparing children for first communion, we use discernment as a basic criterion. But what makes spiritual discernment possible if not the gift of the Holy Spirit? By inviting to the eucharistic table candidates who have not been properly awakened to the presence of the Holy Spirit dwelling in their hearts, are we not imparting a seriously misleading religious education? By insisting that children wait until they are "more mature" and ready to make an "adult decision" or "commitment," what are we achieving? Why wait until after first communion to awaken children to the gift of the Spirit who enables them to enter into the mystery of the eucharist?

It is the Spirit promised and sent by Christ who continues the work of God's reign down the ages. Is it not time to recover more fully the pneumatological dimension of our eucharistic doctrine? Jesus died for our sins. He rose and returned to the Father; his glorified humanity is now the bridge with the divine and the sacrament of our encounter with the Godhead. We are not dealing with a "continuous incarnation" as too many Christians seem to believe. The agent of our sanctification is the Spirit sent by Christ.

Why do so many people reduce the eucharist to communion with Jesus Christ in an individualistic manner, while ignoring his body which is the Church? Why do people fail to see that faith in the real presence of Christ also involves outreach into society and commitment to social justice? Can we truly live the eucharist, body of Christ broken, blood poured out for all, without engaging as members of his body in the salvific action of the Holy Spirit transforming the world? Is not this the temporal vocation which Vatican II and Pope John Paul II have repeatedly declared to be the primary calling of the laity? It is the Spirit of Jesus offered in confirmation which motivates us to reach out to society.

Some of my most satisfying pastoral experiences have involved confirming children in their earlier years. I will never forget the lit-
tle girl who broke into a spontaneous dance, circling around the paschal candle as people in the congregation held their breath in admiration. I have marveled at the spontaneity with which well-prepared candidates will respond to the Spirit of Jesus Christ.

Other experiences have caused concern. I have sometimes been alarmed at the hostile body language of some older candidates. I have wondered what impact a "command performance" of confirmation, based on someone else's decision, would have for their personal faith and the remainder of their religious practice.

The Diocese of Victoria has been encouraging the practice of placing confirmation in its traditional setting of the sacraments of initiation. Most parishes have accepted guidelines to this effect and have found this approach beneficial from several perspectives.

Sacramental preparation is frequently done on an inter-generational basis. Parents and sponsors, and even other interested members of the family, are invited to participate. When the entire family becomes part of the process, there is more likelihood that a follow-up program will be ensured.

Confirmation is presented as a bridge between baptism and eucharist, not as a "rite of passage" or an adult commitment ceremony. Removing the factor of age has freed a number of parents from feelings of guilt or of inadequacy. The children advance when they are prepared, not on command from an outside authority such as the parish or school.

Confirmation is often a problem for adolescents. Who has not wondered at their critical comments as they enter the analytical phase of life? Who has not experienced their negative attitudes that some show toward religion?

Restoring the traditional order of initiation also facilitates involvement of younger children who often manifest a great openness to the gift of the Holy Spirit. Parents may also appreciate having their own memory refreshed through a few lessons in the history of the initiation sacraments. Spouses who may have drifted away from regular practice or are uncomfortable with a liturgy they do not understand well can also benefit from this support group. Parents and sponsors alike are invited to become involved. By becoming part of the process they will more readily accept to ensure a follow-up.

This approach also permits other people with different ministries to be part of the process. Parishes who welcome children as catechumens rejoice to see the candidates finding support and companionship from an extended community family. In this way, confirmation ceases to be simply a one-time event. It is part of an ongoing experience in faith development related to everyday life.

The Novalis publication, Come, Join Us at the Table (Muriel Loftus and Lawrence DeMong), has proven its worth and is highly recommended as a tool for initiation. An adequate program of preparation needs to be grounded in a sound liturgical catechesis, with a focus on the power of symbols: water, oil, light, fire, death and resurrection.

An explanation of basic teachings like the sign of the cross and paschal mystery can open vistas into faith and guide participants into deeper personal and community prayer life. We do not really know how to pray, but the Spirit dwelling in our hearts prays to "Abba God" (Romans 8). Leading people step by step through the ritual and "unpacking" this fundamental resource is particularly fruitful in this regard.

I have been asking myself some hard questions. Is waiting for an unproven advance in maturity a compelling reason for delaying the receiving of the Holy Spirit? How does one define "maturity" in matters of faith? How many young people whose confirmation is delayed have then seen this celebration as a "graduation"? Might the tendency to delay confirmation not mask a subtle capitulation to the modern spirit of individualism and personal achievement? We would do well to learn from the Eastern discipline with its emphasis on the Spirit of Christ as the divine gift who enables us to
understand better the mystery of the eucharist.

It is axiomatic in theology that grace builds on nature. Did not the incarnate God choose to progress in wisdom and strength, in divine and human favour, learning from the experience of life? Why not respect this natural process? The sacrament of confirmation is a call to be aware of the gift of the Spirit, to be with the Spirit, to live in the Spirit and have the Spirit dwell in our hearts. Why not celebrate the gift of the Holy Spirit in confirmation as soon as the child awakens to its power and its beauty?

The Bishop and the Eucharistic Assembly

James M. Hayes

In June 1995 the annual conference of the Notre Dame Center for Pastoral Liturgy took as its theme: “The Renewal That Awaits Us.” The days were spent reliving the hopes and expectations inspired by the renewal of the liturgy launched and so strongly promoted by Vatican II. At the same time, a strong dose of realism was administered as the participants saw the road still to be travelled before the council’s vision becomes a reality.

The event was an encouraging experience that brought the participants to appreciate the work already done and to recognize that the council is continuing in the ongoing phase of its reception by the Church. Historians describe this process of reception as “a privileged phase in the life of the Church” because during this time the Church strives “to authenticate the harmony between council decisions and ecclesial consciousness by setting into motion latent forces and sleeping energies present in the people of God and bringing into play a dynamic rarely found in other societies.”

Reception does not occur in one movement or a single event. It is rather a series of stages whereby a council’s teaching becomes a part of the reality of daily life in the Church. Some councils called to settle a single issue were accepted quickly. Others which had a profound effect on the pastoral life and devotion of the people brought about a long period of implementation. The marriage discipline of the Council of Trent, which closed in 1565, was not put into force in most of Canada until 1908.

Vatican II, which was described by Pope John XXIII as a “pastoral council” and which launched a call to aggiornamento, is the kind of council that will call for a process of implementation and acceptance in a number of stages. The process is further complicated by the radical changes

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Archbishop James M. Hayes, archbishop emeritus of Halifax, was one of the bishops who participated in the Second Vatican Council.
that have taken place and are still going on in today's society and in the Church, which is always striving to serve that society by continuing the presence of Christ incarnate in the world.

Reception is not a vague attitude or energy apart from the council. The spirit of the council is found in its documents, but specifically in the case of the liturgy, so many decisions involved passing on the task of renewing the Church's worship to other ecclesial groups and bodies. 3

As it became evident, especially in the second session of the council, that the renewal of the liturgy was in fact a model for the renewal of the whole Church, the task took on much larger proportions. Ultimately the whole renewal process had to be brought to the local churches, the diocese, the parish, and to the communities that gather to worship. In the liturgy there were new rites more faithful to authentic traditions; a liturgy in the language of the people that would become, in the words of Paul VI, "the voice of the Church"; a rich selection of scripture readings and prayers; a repeated call to clerics to preach the gospel, and always the "aim before all else," active participation. 4 These were some elements of the vision—glorious indeed but not yet fully realized.

Still, we cannot be discouraged. The process may be slow and the journey may be long, but it must continue. The thirty years since the council may seem a long time to many of us, but they are a brief moment in the life of the Church. Looking back again to the Council of Trent, we may be heartened by remembering that while that council made the establishment of seminaries for the education of the clergy a key element for renewal of the Church in the sixteenth century, the persons who brought those decision to fruition, St. Vincent de Paul, Monsieur Olier, St. John Eudes, for example, were not even born until twenty-five or thirty years after the council. Perhaps the ones who are to fulfill the dreams of the Church of Vatican II are just now coming into the world.

The principal documents of Vatican II are a charter for the renewal of the whole Church. This was the evaluation of the council given by the special synod held in 1985 to mark the twentieth anniversary of the end of the council. The same synod made it clear that the direction taken by the council must continue in the Church. The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, the first document of the council to be published, placed this all-embracing work of renewal in the context of the Church as a sacrament: "For it was from the side of Christ as he slept the sleep of death on the cross there came forth 'wondrous sacrament of the whole Church'" (no. 5).

Here the council uses the familiar term, "sacrament," not in the restricted sense of the seven sacraments but in its broader meaning as a sacred sign that effects and makes present what it symbolizes. The Church is the sacrament of Christ. It is the sign, for all to see and experience, that makes Christ present in the world. It is in the Church that the members become the living cells, the charismatic gifted members of this mystical body, the ones who will continue his work of redemption in the world and bring about the unity in faith and peace that his paschal mystery assures.

The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy tells us what his Church is and how women

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3 Himes, p. 3.
and men actually become members of that mystical body and intimately share in the work of redemption. Paragraph 41 of the document states:

All should hold in high esteem the liturgical life of the diocese centred around the bishop, especially in his cathedral church. ... The principal manifestation of the church consists in the full, active participation in the same liturgical celebrations, especially in the same eucharist ... at which the bishop presides, surrounded by his college of priests and ministers.

This theology of the Church as the eucharistic assembly of the bishop is presented more fully in the Constitution on the Church (no. 27). The embodiment of the Church is the community of the local Church which gathers around the bishop. This is the Church we join and in which we live and function and worship. The Church is real, it is localized, it is in a certain place. We become members of that Church through the sacred signs that tell us God has chosen us as his own, the sacraments of initiation. The council mandated the reform of the rites of initiation and called this action a "restoration" to be carried out in such a way that the sacraments of baptism, confirmation, and eucharist should be clearly related and integrated. The Code of Canon Law following the liturgical reforms between 1964 and 1983 is very clear about this point. "The sacraments of baptism, confirmation, and the most Holy Eucharist are so interrelated (inter se coalescunt) that they are required for full Christian initiation" (canon 842§2).

In the years since the council the rites of initiation have received a great deal of attention. The rites for adult initiation celebrated at the Easter Vigil have become an important and impressive part of the liturgical activity in dioceses across our land. The preparation of catechumens and ongoing instruction of the new members of the Church have involved many church members and have had a powerful influence on parish and diocesan communities. This has had a definite positive impact on the whole Church.

The liturgical documents and the revised rites since the council present the initiation of adults as the centre-piece and model for celebrating the sacraments of initiation. Completing the initiation process for children or youths baptized in infancy has led to a variety of approaches and theological or sociological emphases in different dioceses. The result is a lack of clarity about the meaning and purpose of confirmation and about its place in the sequence of sacraments. The usual scenario in many local churches is that young people receive the eucharist before confirmation. That inevitably leads to the conclusion that confirmation and not eucharist completes the process of becoming a full, mature member of the Church. This position cannot be supported theologically, and it is certainly out of line with the clear statements of the council and traditional teaching on the sacraments of initiation.

It is an indisputable fact that from the earliest times in the Church confirmation was linked with baptism, and both sacraments were celebrated before a person received the eucharist. Certainly from the fifth century and perhaps for the third, the minister of confirmation was the bishop. I believe that this prac-
The bishop and the Eucharistic Assembly • James M. Hayes

tice has deep theological roots based on the fact that the Church is the community gathered around the bishop and led by him as the chief pastor of the local church. It seems that the hand-laying and anointing by the bishop after baptism was the solemn proclamation and announcement of the spiritual reality that this baptized person was recognized, acknowledged and accepted as a member of this local Church and must now be admitted to full communion by sharing in the eucharist. The fact that confirmation came to be delayed even for years so that the bishop could administer it indicated the importance attached to this episcopal ministry. Canon law still declares, as it did in the 1918 code, that the bishop is the usual minister of baptism, confirmation and eucharist for adults and children of catechetical age. This ministry may be delegated to priests for good reasons, but the chrism used for confirmation must be blessed by the bishop, thereby symbolizing sacramentally the bond between the new Christian and the Church over which the bishop presides. One of the reasons why this permission may be delegated is to retain the proper sequence of baptism, confirmation and eucharist. The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults even states that “baptism of adults should not be celebrated until confirmation follows immediately afterward, provided no serious obstacles exist” (no. 34).

The fact that the bishop was the person to ratify and in a sense guarantee a person’s membership in the Church was carried through in the discipline regarding the sacrament of reconciliation. If members of the Church separated themselves from the Church totally or partially and needed to be reconciled, it was the bishop who had to give the priest faculties to absolve the sinner. The revised rite for the sacrament of penance and the 1983 code still require that a priest receive from the bishop the faculty to give sacramental absolution.

The reality described by Vatican II as the “preeminent manifestation of the Church” has been preserved by the ancient traditions of episcopal ministry in initiation and reconciliation and by the canonical discipline surrounding these sacraments. Attempts to renew the celebration confirmation and bring it in line with the spirit and norms of Vatican II should be attentive to the order of the sacraments which points to the eucharist as the “summit and source” and the final step in initiation. When one is convinced of this, sharing in the celebration of the eucharist with the bishop takes on new significance and importance.

In Canada, as elsewhere, there is an ongoing study of various efforts and experiences to show the real nature and purpose of confirmation. To the present, there is no consensus on just how this should be embodied in celebrations of the sacrament. From the post-council liturgical documents and the studies and research undertaken over the past thirty years, it seems that the role of confirmation as the sacramental link between baptism and eucharist is essential. The rich theology of the bishop not merely as a minister of the sacrament but as the guarantor of authentic membership in the Catholic Church should also be clearly evident in sacramental practice. 

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6 See canon 744 (1918); canon 863, 882ff (1983).
The eucharist is the culmination of Christian initiation. We are washed in baptism and anointed in confirmation. In the eucharist we experience the power of the death and resurrection of Christ in the presence of the Holy Spirit. We give thanks and praise, and we share in the holy meal. This is summarized in the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, paragraph 210:

... (I)n the celebration of the eucharist, the newly baptized reach the culminating point in their Christian initiation. In this eucharist the neophytes, now raised to the ranks of the royal priesthood, have an active part both in the general intercessions and ... in bringing the gifts to the altar. With the entire community they share in the offering of the sacrifice and say the Lord's Prayer.... When in communion they receive the body that was given for us and the blood that was shed, the neophytes are strengthened in the gifts they have already received....

Catechumens, both catechized children and adults, experience Christian initiation by being baptized and confirmed, and by participating fully in the eucharistic liturgy. Eucharist completes Christian initiation. They pass from being washed in the font to being anointed with chrism to sharing the eucharistic meal at the holy table. In the celebration of the eucharist they are full members of the community. They exercise their common priesthood in their prayer of praise, thanksgiving and intercession. In their daily lives they are active participants in the mission of the Church.

The eucharistic liturgy expresses most fully the reality of the Church as a gathered community which experiences and celebrates the sacramental presence of the power of Christ's death and resurrection through the Holy Spirit. The Fathers of the Church speak of the eucharist as making or constituting the Church.

Ordinarily children receive first communion at the age of five or six, when they become full participants in the eucharistic life of the community. Before they are able to receive communion, they often are blessed by the priest or communion minister as they accompany their parents during the rite of communion.

Today there is discussion in the Church regarding the order of the sacraments of initiation. The order of adult initiation and catechized children is clear: baptism, confirmation,
Eucharist, the Completion of Christian Initiation • Martin Moser, omi

eucharist. This is the traditional order of initiation in the Church, which is still practised in Eastern Christian churches. In the Latin rite, practices differ. In Canada, most dioceses have infant baptism, first communion at ages five or six, and confirmation at ages eleven or twelve. Several dioceses have returned to the same order as the initiation of adults: baptism, confirmation and eucharist. Children who are six years old are confirmed and then receive first communion in the same liturgy. This order of celebrating the sacraments of initiation underlines the link between baptism and confirmation before the completion of initiation with first communion.

In some countries the age of confirmation is between sixteen and eighteen, years after first communion. This practice affirms that confirmation is understood as the sacrament of Christian adulthood, with a strong emphasis on the personal commitment of faith.

The Eastern Christian churches have generally maintained the full initiation of infants. Infants are baptized, chrismated/confirmed, and they receive first eucharist. This is true for the Orthodox churches as well as many but not all Eastern Catholic churches.

In 1996 the Roman Congregation for Oriental Churches published a document called “Instructions for the Application of the Liturgical Prescriptions of the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches,” which states regarding receiving communion:

Canon 697 of the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches prescribes that the Eucharist should be administered as soon as possible after Baptism and Chrismation. ... The administration of the divine Eucharist should not be limited solely to the celebration of Initiation. The Eucharist is the Bread of Life, and infants should be constantly fed on it from that moment onwards, in order to grow spiritually. The modality of their participation in the Eucharist shall correspond to their capacity; initially it shall be different from that of adults, inevitably less conscious and reasoned, but it will progressively develop, through the grace and pedagogy of the sacrament... (Article 51).

In the Eastern tradition the eucharist has always been seen as an important source of life for all Christians, including infants. They understand John 6.51-57 to be a gospel call for all Christians, including infants and young children, to share in the eucharist.

For Catholics in the Western tradition, this may strike us as strange. And yet, anyone who has studied the history of liturgy knows that infants received the eucharist in the Western Church until around 1200 and in some places until 1400. The practice of infant communion goes back to the early Church, and it is found especially in the writings of Cyprian and Augustine, and in statements by fifth-century popes, Innocent I and Gelasius. On the basis of John 6.51-58, the eucharist was considered to be as important as baptism. Why did the practice change? There were several reasons: infrequent communion by adults, the fact that lay people no longer received communion from the cup, the legislation of the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215 that everyone beginning from the age of discretion must receive communion at least once a year, and a misinterpretation of Augustine’s teaching by Florus
of Lyon which had been passed on to the medieval theologians. One of the most important liturgists at the Second Vatican Council and in the post conciliar reform of the liturgy, the French Dominican Pierre-Marie Gy concludes his study of infant communion in the Latin Church by stating that it would be highly desirable to offer communion to small children again.¹

Communion of infants has not received much attention in the Catholic Church. However, it has been an important topic of discussion in ecumenical circles and in other Western churches.² The practice of allowing infants to receive communion was approved by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada in 1995 and by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America in 1997. In 1985 the International Anglican Liturgical Consultation stated “that since baptism is the sacramental sign of full incorporation into the church, all baptized persons be admitted to communion.”³ Communion of infants is practised in some Anglican dioceses.

These varied practices remind us that the time and order of the sacraments of initiation will continue as important topics of discussion. Yet we all agree that the sacraments of initiation include baptism, confirmation/christmation and eucharist, and that full participation in the celebration of the eucharist is completion of Christian initiation.⁴

² Geiko Mullen-Fahrenholz, editor, ...And Do Not Hinder Them: An Ecumenical Plea for the Admission of Children to the Eucharist (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1982), pp. 70-81.

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**Prayer for the Gift of the Holy Spirit**

Send down, O God, upon your people the flame of your Holy Spirit, and fill with the abundance of your sevenfold gift the Church you brought forth from your Son’s pierced side.

May your life-giving Spirit lend fire to our words and strength to our witness.

Send us forth to the nations of the world to proclaim with boldness your wondrous work of raising Christ to your right hand.

We make our prayer through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God for ever and ever. Amen.

*Alternative opening prayer for Pentecost, Sunday Celebration of the Word and Hours (Ottawa: CCCB, 1995).*
Today's movement to restore the original order of Christian initiation has great significance for the life of the Church. When the eucharist is always and everywhere the terminus ad quem (the goal) of the initiation process, the way is opened for us to see the Church in its proper and extraordinary light. For the Church is essentially a eucharistic community and its spiritual life is essentially a eucharistic life. As the Second Vatican Council has affirmed, the eucharist is the source and summit of the Christian life.¹

The recovery and promotion of the Church's distinctive spirituality could well be the most important contribution that liturgists can make as we approach the third millennium. The purpose of this article is to suggest a first step in that direction.

Reclaiming the centre

When we say that the Church's spirituality is essentially a eucharistic spirituality, we mean that the eucharist is the decisive centre of our spiritual lives. The eucharist founds and forms our spiritual lives (the source), and the eucharist is the supreme expression of our spiritual lives (the summit).

We should stay with this point long enough to note the dramatic shift in focus that it brings. By reclaiming the eucharist as the centre of our spiritual lives, eucharistic spirituality challenges a number of assumptions in contemporary thought. The eucharist is not simply one of many "obligations" Catholics assume when they are baptized. And the eucharist does not simply "nourish" a spiritual life that is grounded and lived elsewhere: in personal devotions or in an independent relationship with God. Rather, the eucharist is the normative experience and expression of our Christian lives.

Charting the way

If our spiritual lives are rooted in the eucharist, then we will want to experience its celebration in the fullest possible way. But this experience will depend in large measure on our ability to interpret the sacramental signs. Put simply, we need to know what is going on.

However, it is precisely here—in the "reading" of the signs—that popular piety has taken a number of twists and turns that give rise to a high degree of confusion. For example, is the eucharist something that we do for God, or is it something that God does for us? Is the goal of the eucharist to make Christ present on the altar, or is it to bring about communion of life in God? In other words, what do the signs "say"?

Authentic eucharistic spirituality depends on the proper interpretation of the sacramental signs, and the first task of reconstruction is to overcome the ambiguity that currently exists. That being said, it is not as difficult as

¹ See Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, no. 11; Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, no. 10.
it might seem to retrieve the real meaning of the eucharistic signs. The secret is to find the right point of reference, and that point of reference is, of course, the original, foundational and normative event: the Last Supper.

It was during that supper that Jesus “instituted” the eucharist: “Do this (that is to say, hold this supper) in remembrance of me” (1 Cor 11.24). Thus, every eucharist bears a sacramental identity with the Last Supper. And if this is so, the Last Supper is our sure source for interpreting the eucharistic signs.2

Exploring the content and process
Eucharistic spirituality leads us into the inner chambers of the eucharist, there to be transformed by its awesome beauty and its saving power. The following examples sketch portions of its content and serve to illustrate the process. A few of the differences between popular piety and eucharistic spirituality are noted along the way, because liturgical catechesis will need to construct a bridge between the two.

Dining with the Lord
Let us try to imagine the most important event in our lives. Well, if we can “read” the eucharistic signs—if we can see with eyes illumined by faith—that event would surely be the Sunday eucharist. For the Lord of heaven and earth invites us to dine with him. Today.

The Lord himself is the host of the sacred meal. For this is his supper—the Lord’s Supper.3 It is he who call us; it is he who gathers us around him; it is he who speaks to us from the heart; it is he who “presides” at the table of the feast.4 Just as he gathered his disciples around him at the Last Supper, so he gathers us today.

Yes, the Lord invites us to dine with him today. Imagine how this revelation can change our lives. In fact, it is in this invitation that we experience who we truly are: beloved disciples of the Lord, his very own friends.5 What a privilege this is! The very invitation fills us with wonder and awe, and we want to run to the feast. The personal experience of the Lord’s call can surely change our lives for ever.

Unfortunately, popular piety seems to assume the absence of Christ; his ascension into heaven means that he is no longer with us. Thus, the Lord is not recognized as being present in the eucharistic celebration until the bread and wine are transformed into the body and blood of Christ. This perception is, of course, quite at odds with the picture and dynamics of the Last Supper.

In fact, the Lord himself has told us quite the opposite: “And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age” (Mt 28.20). And eucharistic spirituality teaches us that Jesus’ ascension into glory means precisely his presence,

2 See Enrico Mazza, The Eucharistic Prayers of the Roman Rite (New York, 1986), p. 28: “If the Last Supper is the code, then it is in the Last Supper that we look for the truth of our present-day eucharistic celebrations, that is, their identity with what Christ did or, in short, their sacramentality.”
4 See Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (CSL), no. 7. The presence of Christ as, for example, “presider” at the eucharist is a real presence; there can be no other kind.
5 Jn 15.15: “I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father.”
in a new, real and powerful way, in the world. The sacraments are, by defini-
tion, dramatic, saving signs of that presence in our midst, for it is he who
baptizes, he who confirms, and he who presides at his supper. This is a wisdom
teaching that colours and brightens the whole of our Christian lives.

The failure of popular piety to recog-
nize the presence of the Lord as host of
the Church’s eucharist compromises
the integrity of the Lord’s Supper and
obscures a fundamental characteristic
of the spiritual life: the spiritual life is
always a response to the prior initiative
of God; it is always a response to the
God who calls us in Christ today. A
passage from the psalms seems well
suited to express the truth and great-
ness of the sacred meal: “This is the
Lord’s doing; it is marvellous in our
eyes” (Ps 118.23).

Covenant meal
It is easy for us to imagine the warmth
and intimacy of the Last Supper. For
Jesus and his disciples, this was truly a
feast of love, a covenant meal that
bound them together in a common
life, a common destiny, a common
cause.

John begins this section of his gospel
with a poignant observation: “Jesus
knew that his hour had come to
depart from this world and go to the
Father. Having loved his own who
were in the world, he loved them to
the end” (Jn 13.1). Regarding the dis-
ciples, this covenant meal would
engage them in an enduring commit-
ment to live the life of the Lord: “I
give you a new commandment, that
you love one another. Just as I have
loved you, you also should love one
another. By this everyone will know
that you are my disciples, if you have
love for one another” (Jn 13.34–35).

Thus, the Lord’s Supper is that sacred
ground where the world makes a
covent of love with the Lord. Joined
to Jesus in the table blessing, we con-
secrate our lives to the glory of the
Father. Sharing in the holy food and
drink, we seal our covenant of love in
the body and blood of Christ.

In a word, the eucharist changes our
lives for ever. We now live religious
lives, lives bound back to God in
Christ. The whole of our lives
becomes a living out of the covenant
of love we have sealed in the body and
blood of Christ. For eucharistic spiritu-
ality, the Lord’s Supper is unalterably a
matter of the heart. It fashions us into
a community of disciples in the service
of our God.

The covenantal nature of the
eucharist should come as no surprise.
We hear Jesus’ words at every celebra-
tion: “This is the cup of my blood, the
blood of the new and everlasting
covenant.” When we eat and drink,
we stand in the posture of engagement;
and, in the midst of the whole assem-
by, we speak the covenantal words:
Amen. Amen. And when the whole
assembly has made its vows in the body
and blood of Christ, it becomes once
again what it truly is: the New
Testament Church.

6 CSL, no. 7.
7 “Religion” comes from religi: to be bound back or vowed (to the Lord).
8 CSL, no. 10: “The renewal in the eucharist of the covenant between the Lord and his people draws the
faithful into the compelling love of Christ and sets them on fire.”
With regard to covenant, popular piety continues to miss the mark. For many Catholics, the Sunday eucharist is a ritual action that is merely “done”—even by someone else on our behalf. Participation is not really important; perhaps it is no more than a passing fad. And holy communion is simply “receiving” the body and blood of Christ. Such a misreading of the sacramental signs will not lead us into the heart of the sacred meal and will not help us to be what we are called to be: a covenanted Church.

Paschal banquet

Luke tells us that Jesus “eagerly desired” to eat the Passover with his apostles.9 His intention was to transform the ancient Passover meal, celebrating the passage of the children of Abraham and Sarah into the promised land, into a new Passover meal drawing the world into his own passage into the kingdom of God. Jesus, the true Passover, would hand on his own paschal life. He would open out the feast of the kingdom of God.10

Thus, the Lord’s Supper is the celebration of the paschal mystery of Jesus Christ.11 It is the festival of festivals, the celebration of our liberation, the world’s feast of joy. Here we make passage in the Lord to the table of the heavenly banquet.12 Here the long-awaited kingdom of God opens out before us and leads us in. Here we are “at home” with our God.

What freedom and joy this revelation brings to our spiritual lives!

The paschal nature of the feast is announced in its sacred signs. The bread that becomes the body of Christ is at once the bread that is broken and the bread of everlasting life. And the cup of wine that becomes the cup of the blood of Christ is at once the bitter cup that must be drunk and the cup of blessings that overflows unto eternal life.

Popular piety misses all the excitement and energy surrounding the “inbreaking” of the kingdom of God. For many Catholics, the kingdom is somewhere in the far-distant future. When we die, “we hope to get to heaven”; meanwhile, we struggle on. The eucharist is only about the death of Christ, even though the liturgy tells a different story.13 Misreading the signs in this way means the eucharist loses its potential joy; in fact, “too much” joy becomes an inappropriate expression of our faith.

Returning to eucharistic spirituality, we recognize that Jesus stands at the centre of all history, and his return to the Father unleashes the power of the Spirit, inaugurates the final age of the world (the end times), and opens out the kingdom of God. The eucharist is

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9 Lk 22.15.
10 Mt 22.2: “The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding banquet for his son.”
11 CSL, no. 6: “From that time onward (Pentecost) the Church has never failed to come together to celebrate the paschal mystery.”
12 CSL, no. 8: “In the earthly liturgy we take part in a foretaste of that heavenly liturgy celebrated in the holy city of Jerusalem toward which we journey as pilgrims, where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God, a minister of the holies and of the true tabernacle.”
13 See, for example, Eucharistic Prayer I: “Father, we celebrate the memory of Christ, your Son. We, your people and your ministers, recall his passion, his resurrection from the dead, and his ascension into glory.”
the revelation of that kingdom breaking into this world. It is the beginning of the everlasting feast of the kingdom of God. The eucharist is indeed the sacrifice of Christ, but it is a sacrifice in which "the victory and triumph of his death are again made present."\(^{14}\)

Failing to see the radical setting of the Church’s eucharist, popular piety is left with only a limited understanding of the outcome of the sacred meal. Holy communion comes to mean a temporary and passing presence of the Lord instead of our lasting transformation in him. We leave the eucharist unchanged, except for an “increase in grace.”

But sacraments are precisely signs of transformation, and in the experience of the Lord’s Supper our lives are transformed into kingdom life. Eucharistic spirituality teaches us that we now live in Christ, the risen Lord of glory, and he lives in us. We have become the body of Christ, the temple of the Holy Spirit, the sacramental presence of Christ and of his kingdom in this world. St. Augustine is renowned for the clarity with which he spoke this truth:

If you wish to understand the body of Christ, hear the apostle speaking to the faithful, “You are the body and members of Christ.” If then you are Christ’s body and members, it is your mystery which is laid upon the Lord’s table. You receive your own mystery. When you answer “Amen,” you answer to that which you are, and, in answering, you assent. For you hear the words, “The body of Christ,” and you answer “Amen.” Be a member of the body of Christ that your “Amen” may be true... Be what you see, and receive what you are.\(^{15}\)

**Cosmic feast**

Jesus gathered only a small band of disciples around him at the Last Supper. But his goal was revealed when he said, “Do this in remembrance of me.” The supper would become the meeting place between the Lord and the whole of the world. It would be the sacrament of unity, reuniting the world in the cosmic Christ.

In his “farewell discourse,” Jesus prays for the unity of his disciples; but he also looks beyond them to the communion of all peoples and nations: “I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me” (Jn 17.20-21). The supper will be celebrated everywhere throughout the world, so that “the scattered children of God may be gathered together, until there is one sheepfold and one shepherd.”\(^{16}\)

Here we see the measure and the stature of the Lord’s Day assembly; it is the gathering of the nations at the table of the Lord, the reconstruction of a fallen world, the re-creation of all things in Christ:

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the

\(^{14}\) CSL, no. 6.  
\(^{15}\) Sermon 272.  
\(^{16}\) CSL, no. 2.
sea was no more. And I saw the holy
city, the new Jerusalem, coming
down out of heaven from God, pre-
pared as a bride adorned for her hus-
band. And I heard a loud voice from
the throne saying, “See, the home of
God is among mortals. He will dwell
with them as their God; they will be
his peoples, and God himself will be
with them” (Rev 21.1-3).

Eucharistic spirituality opens our eyes
to the wonders of the new assembly. It
teaches us that it is here, in the house-
hold of God, that we find our salva-
tion: I belong to the assembly; there-
fore I am who I am. It teaches us to
reach out to others in joy and invite
them into our midst. It teaches us to
pray with confidence for that day—the
Day of the Lord—when the whole of
creation will be gathered in the Lord.
On that day, he, who is the Alpha and
the Omega, 17 will hand over the king-
dom to God the Father (1 Cor 15.24),
and the sacrament will give way to an
everlasting liturgy of love.

Popular piety has not yet recognized
the significance and importance of the
Sunday assembly. Many Catholics see
simply a large number of people com-
ing together in a convenient way to
fulfil their individual obligations, say
their own prayers, and receive their
personal communion. In a way, the
eucharist then becomes (for them) a
private devotion, and the presence of
others may be no more than a neces-
sary distraction. Here is a major obsta-
cle that needs to be overcome.

Conclusion
Eucharistic spirituality is the tradition-
al, authentic spirituality of the New
Testament Church, and it brings
untold riches to our Christian lives.
The recovery and promotion of this
spirituality should be considered an
urgent imperative of our day.

The liturgical renewal advanced by
the Second Vatican Council and the
return to the original order of
Christian initiation provide the incen-
tive and the necessary framework for
this restoration. To the degree that we
succeed in this endeavour, the liturgy
will be, for all the people of God, “the
outstanding means whereby the faith-
ful may express in their lives and man-
ifest to others the mystery of Christ
and the real nature of the true
Church.” 18

17 Rev 22.13: “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.”
18 CSL, no. 2.
Nurturing the Assembly into a Sponsoring Community: Vision and Practice

Gregory L. Klein, O.Carm.

This article is based on a series of talks given in Willowdale, Ontario, at a workshop for RCIA and liturgy ministers.

Introduction

How does a local parish community become a sponsoring community? This question articulates one of the major challenges pastoral ministers face as they continue to implement the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults in their local parish communities. The rite itself makes the challenge clear:

In light of what is said in General Introduction for Christian Initiation (no. 7), the people of God, as represented by the local Church, should understand and show by their concern that the initiation of adults is the responsibility of all the baptized. Therefore the community must always be fully prepared in the pursuit of its apostolic vocation to give help to those who are searching for Christ. In the various circumstances of daily life, even as in the apostolate, all the followers of Christ have the obligation of spreading the faith according to their abilities. Hence, the entire community must help the candidates and the catechumens throughout the process of initiation: during the period of the pre-catechumenate, the period of the catechumenate, the period of purification and enlightenment, and period of post-baptismal catechesis or mystagogy.1

How does a local parish community take responsibility for Christian initiation and become a sponsoring community?

Nurturing the assembly into a sponsoring community requires that we nurture, cultivate, and encourage one another within the Catholic communities we represent. Our challenge today is nothing more and nothing less than the challenge Jesus issued to the people of his day. Mark tells us that as Jesus began his public ministry he came to Galilee proclaiming: “This is the time of fulfillment. The kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel” (Mk 1.14-15).

Luke’s description of the beginning of Christ’s ministry is more specific:

Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (Ottawa, Canada: Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1987), no. 9.

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Jesus came to Nazareth, where he had grown up, and went according to his custom into the synagogue on the Sabbath day. He stood up to read and was handed the scroll of the prophet Isaiah. He unrolled the scroll and found the passage where it was written:

The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, and to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord.

Rolling up the scroll, he handed it back to the attendant and sat down, and the eyes of all in the synagogue looked intently on him. He said to them, “Today this scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing” (Lk 4.14-21).

At the end of Matthew’s gospel we find this summary of what it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ:

The eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had ordered them. When they saw him, they worshiped, but they doubted. Then Jesus approached and said to them, “All power in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age” (Mt 28.16-20).

Our challenge is to understand that participation in the Sunday eucharistic assembly means living in relationship with Jesus Christ and with all others in a way that relentlessly transforms and renews us and the world in which we live. Evangelization, conversion and mystagogy are central features of the mission of Jesus and the mission of the Church. Worshiping God includes the radical transformation of the world.

There is a wonderful story from Judaism that illustrates quite well the practical meaning of what it means to be initiated into the eucharistic assembly:

An ancient rabbi once asked his disciples: “When is it light enough to see?” “I know,” one answered. “It is light enough to see when I can distinguish an oak from a maple.” “No,” said the rabbi. “I know,” a second volunteered. “It is light enough to see when I can tell a horse from a cow.” “This is not correct either,” noted the rabbi. There being no other attempts at an answer, the rabbi stated: “It is light enough to see when I can look a person in the face and recognize a brother or sister.”

This rabbinic story is reminiscent of a very familiar story told in Matthew, Mark and Luke’s gospels. It must have been a very important story from the life of Jesus, since all three of these gospels tell the story.

While Jesus was still speaking to the crowds, his mother and his brothers appeared outside, wishing to speak with him. Someone told him, “Your mother and your brothers are standing outside, asking to speak with you.” But Jesus said in reply to the one who told him, “Who is my

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mother? Who are my brothers?” and stretching out his hand toward his disciples, he said, “Here are my mother and my brothers. For whoever does the will of my heavenly Father is my brother, and sister, and mother.”

Both the rabbi and Jesus knew about nurturing the assembly into a sponsoring community.

Nurturing the assembly into a sponsoring community is a counter-cultural task; it has always been so. Western culture emphasizes the autonomy of the individual, the primacy of reason, a vision of reality that has the self and human initiative at its core, and an agenda that concentrates on personal achievement, accumulation, and advantage. When the baptized gather for worship on Sundays, they bring this script with them. At the table of word and eucharist a different script is presented. The eucharistic assembly emphasizes the primacy of the community, the balancing of reason and imagination, and a vision of reality that has the universal destination of all of the earth’s goods and resources at its core. The agenda is evangelization, conversion and mystagogy. Nurturing the assembly into a sponsoring community is both an ancient and a new challenge for the disciples of Jesus Christ.

Initiation into the eucharistic assembly demands that we identify with Jesus Christ as disciples, as evangelizers, and as counter-cultural agents of change in the world. When the good news of salvation is interiorized in celebration, we move from isolation to community, from indifference to concern, from hesitation to action, from doubt to trust, from hatred to love, from despair to hope, from alienation to reconciliation, from selfishness to generosity, from fear to courage, from sin to grace.

The Vision

Nurturing the assembly into a sponsoring community means that Sunday eucharist is the touchstone of our Catholic faith. Sunday eucharist challenges the assembly to create spaces for others; this is the task of evangelization. Sunday eucharist challenges us to make the world more hospitable, to welcome the stranger and all others in need of a place, of security, and a future; this is the task of conversion. Sunday eucharist challenges the assembly to experience wisdom that saves, hope that frees, weaknesses that strengthen; this is the task of mystagogy. In the eucharist loneliness is assuaged and friendship is fashioned. In the eucharist the assembly celebrates and gives thanks that God is hidden and dwelling in forests and earth, among the poor and the outcast, the children and the old, the mothers and the fathers, and in whoever believes in God’s love and desire to stay with us.

Nurturing the assembly into a sponsoring community means that the eucharist makes the Church. We are most naturally Church when we are gathered together as a people eucharistic assembly. In many ways Sunday

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3 Mt 12.46–50; Mk 3.31–35; Lk 8.19–21.
eucharist is the oldest custom and practice of the Church. The *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, in describing the period of post-baptismal catechesis or mystagogy, makes this quite clear:

This is the time for the community and the neophytes together to grow in deepening their grasp of the paschal mystery and in making it part of their lives through meditation on the Gospel, sharing in the eucharist, and doing the works of charity (no. 234).

The RCIA is not the most important parish program. The RCIA is not one parish group among a host of others. The RCIA is a paradigm, a blueprint, a model for what it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ. The RCIA is the lifelong model for what it means to be Christian, a paradigm for what it means to be a member of a eucharistic, sponsoring community.

If we are to be faithful to the vision of nurturing the assembly into a sponsoring community, then there are at least three ways for the assembly to live as disciples of Jesus Christ.

First, the eucharistic, sponsoring assembly is a community of evangelizers. What is evangelization? It is that lifelong activity of listening to the word of God, the gospel of Jesus Christ, taking it to heart, and putting it into practice. Vatican II's *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church* describes evangelization as the responsibility not only of the bishops and the clergy, but of "every disciple of Christ, according to his or her ability." 7

Evangelization is the process of proclaiming the Good News of Jesus Christ and enabling the Good News to be accepted more readily by those people disposed by grace to receive it. 8

What does Sunday eucharist have to do with evangelization? Luke's gospel tells us a wonderful story which helps illustrate the power of the word of God and the gospel of Jesus Christ in our Christian lives. Luke tells us that Cleopas and another unnamed disciple began to walk back home on Easter morning. Two traveling disciples who have lost hope, who cannot fathom all that has happened during the past few days, decided to go back home. They "had hoped that Jesus was the one to redeem Israel." But the betrayal, the arrest, the trial and the execution of Jesus dashed their hope. Luke tells us that during the course of their lively discussion of all these events, as they traveled together back home, their "hearts were burning within" them. They began to understand the Scriptures, and as they gathered around a table to share a simple meal, they came to recognize and believe that Jesus was risen from the dead. And they got up from their meal and returned to Jerusalem. This time they were really going home, to the community of faith, to celebrate Jesus Christ risen from the dead (Lk 23.13-35). The powerful symbol of the Lord's supper, the breaking, sharing and being bread for one another, challenges us to travel together, in the community of faith. Without the eucharist, there is no evangelization. At the eucharist, the Church recognizes itself as the sacrament of the salvation of

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the world. This is evangelization. It occurs Sunday after Sunday, as we gather in our churches around the table of the word and the eucharist. As we listen to the word of God, we take it to heart as we give God thanks for Jesus Christ and share the body and blood of Christ, and as we "go in peace to love and serve the Lord," we become a eucharistic, sponsoring community of evangelizers.

Second, the eucharistic sponsoring assembly engages in a life of conversion. What is conversion? Conversion is accepting God's invitation to experience life from the perspective of God. The stories of the New Testament tell us that when in the presence of Jesus people experienced life and their relationship to God in a new way. In the presence of Jesus people felt that they belonged—baptism. They felt affirmed—confirmation. They felt a sense of fellowship, unity and bondedness—eucharist: they felt incredibly loved—marriage. They felt destined and called—orders. And they felt healed and forgiven—anointing and reconciliation. The New Testament preserves the Church's record of Jesus' response to God's invitation to experience all of life from the perspective of God. The gospels present the theme of Jesus' preaching and teaching: the kingdom of God. It is an invitation to conversion. The parables of Jesus present the process of conversion as a call to transition, hope and courage.

What is the kingdom of God? Methodist theologian James Fowler has suggested that the kingdom of God is the commonwealth of justice and peace that God intends for all the world. In other words, God intends that the wealth of all the people of the world must be justice and peace. The kingdom of God includes conversion to the idea that God structures in time and history an all-inclusive justice, and that God is the Spirit who in many subtle and convergent ways inspires the maintenance and transformation of the world, that God is the power of a future commonwealth of love and justice envisioned and enacted by Jesus that is already breaking into and transforming nature and history and that demands our choice and loyalty.9

The eucharistic, sponsoring assembly responds to God's invitation to the kingdom through the transformation of the world and all of creation. It is a paradigm of initial and on-going conversion in the life of the community of faith.

Third, the eucharistic, sponsoring assembly engages in a life of mystagogy. What is mystagogy? It is not a mystery or problem to be solved but rather a mystery to be celebrated and experienced within the context of the community of faith, gathered around the tables of word and eucharist. When people use the word "mystery" in common speech, they often mean an intellectual problem or puzzle that begs for a solution. But there are other mysteries that are not meant to be solved but rather to be experienced, such as the mystery of love, of forgiveness, of suffering and death, and of God. We will never quite comprehend or solve these mysteries. With God's help we may be able to experience them more deeply and live them more fully, and perhaps that is enough.

Perhaps we have had the experience of reading or hearing some of the parables of Jesus and thinking to ourselves: “That doesn’t make any sense.” It is similar to the experience of reflecting on our own lives sometimes and thinking: “My life doesn’t make any sense.” The parables of Jesus, like life itself, often leave us with questions rather than answers. Our lives are not played out in logical sequence but in the mystery of story. Human experience is inherently narrative in form.

The eucharistic, sponsoring assembly experiences the mystery of God for a lifetime. The process of mystagogy invites participation in a community and a way of life based on the gospel of Jesus Christ. Mystagogy is a way of life, an entering into the mystery of God and a sharing in a living communion of life in God. Mystagogy leads us to recognize Jesus Christ as the only light of our world, a light that enables us to recognize all others as our brothers and sisters. Mystagogy leads us to recognize that if our past and present history is uninviting and our future history seems ominous and unpromising, then we have to step off the road, gather our resolve and, carrying only the necessary baggage, choose another direction. Mystagogy is about initial and on-going conversion in the life of the eucharist, sponsoring assembly. Mystagogy invites us to “know, name and experience the inexhaustible mystery of God within the ordinary textures of human life.”

Evangelization, conversion and mystagogy are central features of the mission of Jesus. Nurturing the assembly into a sponsoring community begins with this mission of Jesus. “This is the time of fulfillment. The kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel” (Mk 1.14-15).

The Practice
How do we translate this vision into practice? How can pastoral ministers nurture their assemblies into sponsoring communities? The paschal mystery of Jesus Christ says it all. The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults articulates our task quite well. The practice of fostering the assembly into a sponsoring community is best done “through meditation on the Gospel, sharing in the eucharist, and doing the works of charity” (no. 234).

I suggest that we focus our attention on four strategies: the assembly, the liturgy of the word, the liturgy of the eucharist, and the liturgy of the world.

First, the assembly. Vatican II emphasized the vital importance of the assembly as the primary mode of Christ’s presence to the Church. Christ’s presence is first experienced as the baptized gather for worship. Christ’s presence is then experienced in the word of God, in the great prayer of thanksgiving, and in the assembly as it goes forth to the world to love and serve the Lord. We need to pay attention to the assembly from the moment they arrive in the parking lot to the moment they depart to go back home. How are they welcomed? Do they feel comfortable with the people they gather to celebrate eucharist with? What is the worship environment like? Does it reflect this community of persons and the liturgical season? Do they experience this place as sacred space? How do we connect people with one another as they gather to celebrate Sunday eucharist?

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If we are to be an evangelizing community of faith, then we need to create spaces for one another which are hospitable, so that we can engage in the mission and ministry of Jesus Christ. Male and female, young and old, single and married, all need to feel welcomed and valued as integral members of the assembly gathered for Sunday eucharist.

Second, the liturgy of the word. After the brief, introductory rites of the Sunday eucharist, we proceed to the liturgy of the word. This is a time to actively listen to God’s word, to silently savour its message and meaning, and to celebrate its challenge to our daily living in our own time and place. The lectionary and the Book of the Gospels need to be visible and beautiful so that they engage our reason and imagination. What do these books look like in our assembly? What do we do with these books in our assembly? How do we train and prepare our lectors for their ministerial role within the assembly? Do we observe the brief periods of silence required during the liturgy of the word? Does the assembly know what to do with these periods of silence? Is our assembly comfortable with and adept at singing the responsorial psalm and the gospel acclamation? Does the homily provide a living explanation of the word of God? Does the homily enable us to proceed to the mystery of Christ present in the assembly and to the mystery of Christ in the eucharist? Does the homily give us a reason for giving God thanks and praise in the liturgy of the eucharist and the liturgy of the world?

Third, the liturgy of the eucharist. The eucharistic prayer is the prayer of the assembly—a prayer of thanksgiving to God. The liturgy of the eucharist begins with the introductory dialogue between the presider and the assembly and proceeds to the preface, the eucharistic prayer, the Lord’s prayer, the sign of peace, the breaking of bread and pouring of wine, and the communion. There are over eighty prefaces, depending on the liturgical season or feast, and ten eucharistic prayers. Under the leadership of its presider, the assembly, which has just taken bread and wine, now gives thanks for bread and wine, breaks the bread, pours the wine, and gives them to the assembly. This activity of eucharist is accomplished during the liturgy of the eucharist.

During the liturgy of the eucharist the presider prays on behalf of the assembly and with the enthusiastic response of the assembly. How well does our assembly celebrate the liturgy of the eucharist? The focus of attention during the liturgy of the eucharist is the bread and wine, and to a lesser extent, the bowls and cups used for communion. What are these symbols like in our Sunday assembly? Is our assembly comfortable with and adept at singing the various acclamations required during the eucharistic prayer? Is our assembly comfortable with the various postures and gestures required to celebrate the liturgy of the eucharist? Do we use the eighty prefaces and the ten eucharistic prayers during the course of the liturgical year? What is the procession to communion like in our Sunday assembly? Does it enable the assembly to commune with one another and with the God who is present?

Praying with and reflecting on the texts of the ten eucharistic prayers is probably the best way I know to nurture the assembly into a sponsoring community. When the words of these prayers become the way we live, then we are truly Church. What can we do in our parish communities to enable people to know and understand the words of these prayers?
And finally, the liturgy of the world. The concluding rites mark the transition between the liturgy of word and eucharist and the work of being a Christian in the world. The rite itself is very simple. There are a concluding prayer, some brief announcements, a blessing and the dismissal of the assembly, usually followed by a procession with music and singing of the ministers and the assembly. The final words of the presider, “Go in peace to love and serve the Lord,” articulate the continued work of eucharist in the life of the Christian community in the home, the neighbourhood, the workplace, and the world. The assembly has gathered, the word has been proclaimed, the bread has been broken and shared. But the work is not done. The assembly, which has gathered for a purpose, now departs with a purpose. The assembly is bread for the world.

What are the opportunities available for doing works of charity in our parish community? The sponsoring assembly is one that comes face-to-face with the hungry, the homeless, the unemployed, the sick, the imprisoned, and all those in need. If anyone was in need within the boundaries of our parish community, would they know enough to come to us for help? Does our parish community offer various opportunities for members of the assembly to know and understand how they are to live the faith?

Some first- and second-century descriptions of the eucharistic assembly indicate that near the end of the eucharist members of the assembly brought to the presider gifts of food and clothing and money. These were immediately distributed to the poor who had gathered outside the place of assembly. The first Christians knew the importance of being of service to all those in need. How well does our Sunday assembly know the vital link between Sunday eucharist and service to the poor?

Nurturing the assembly into a sponsoring community means living in relationship with Jesus Christ and with all others in a way that relentlessly transforms and renews us and the world in which we live. Evangelization, conversion and mystagogy are central features of the mission of Jesus Christ. The assembly, the liturgy of the word, the liturgy of the eucharist, and the liturgy of the world are four strategies which enable us to celebrate our life-long initiation into the mystery of Christ and his Church.

We journey on, attentive to the Lord who calls us into the desert to renew us and fashion us as his own, who guides us by his providential care, who sustains us along the journey, and who leads us home from our exiles. The Church can never settle down and become comfortable with what is, but must journey ever on, attentive to the call of the Lord to serve him and his kingdom.

In this present time we are being called to trust in the providence of God and to allow him to purify us and renew us, to shape and mold us into what he wants us to be. This demands a spirituality of trusting, of letting go, of allowing one’s vision to be sharpened anew, a spirituality in which the word and life are in constant dialogue.11

Suggestions for Music from CBW III for Celebrations of Initiation

Prepared by Loretta Manzara, csj

(Numbers in boldface refer to articles in the ritual book; numbers in italics refer to Catholic Book of Worship III.)

The Rite of Baptism for Children

No. 35: Suitable hymn or psalm as the minister goes to greet the family at the door.

* 35—Psalm 84, Blessed are they who dwell in your house, O Lord.
* 109—Psalm 33, Happy are the people that the Lord has chosen as his own.
* 544—O sing to God a joyful song
* 585—Christians, lift up your hearts
* 587—Gather us in
* 588—Psalm 122, I rejoiced when I heard them say
* 589—Psalm 66, Let all the earth cry out to the Lord
* 590—On this day, the first of days
* 592—This is the day the Lord has made
* 593—O praise the Lord, sing unto God
* 632—Wondrous is your name

No. 42: Procession to the place where the liturgy of the word will be celebrated.

The rite suggests Psalm 84.

* 4a—Blessed be God, who chose you in Christ.
* 4b—Blessed be God, who chose you in Christ.

* 127—Psalm 119, Happy are they who follow the law of the Lord.
* 441—You are the way
* 442—Praise to you, O Christ, our Saviour
* 445—Earthen vessels
* 591—God is alive!

No. 46: After the silence following the homily a hymn may be sung.

* 613—A living hope
* 615—How great the sign of God's love for us

No. 48: The Litany of the Saints.

* 86

No. 52: Movement to the baptistry. The rite suggests Psalm 22.

* 101—Psalm 22, Lord, you are the song of my praise
* 193—Psalm 23, In the Lord's own house shall I dwell for ever and ever
* 220—Psalm 139, I praise you for I am wonderfully made
* 613—A living hope

No. 54: Blessing over the Water.

Form A—see the rite, p. 220.
Form B—acclamations

* 618—Blessed be God (first half of refrain)

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Music from CBW III for Celebrations of Initiation  •  Loretta Manzara, csj

* 14J—Hear us Lord (adjust to “Hear us, O Lord”)

No. 59: Community Assent.
* 4D—This is our faith

No. 62: Acclamation after each baptism.
* 4E—You are God's work of art
* 247—258 various settings of “Alleluia”
* 616—Rejoice, you newly baptized (refrain only)

No. 68: Procession to the altar
* 4F—You have put on Christ
* 613—Baptized in water
* 617—We praise you, Lord, for Jesus Christ
* 631—Where there is love (refrain only)

The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults

Rite of Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens

No. 48: A psalm or hymn is sung while the procession moves to greet those gathered outside the church. Select a text appropriate to the Sunday or season.
Others:
* 476—Come and journey with a Saviour
* 479—All my hope on God Is founded
* 482—Eye has not seen

No. 49: A song may be sung as the sponsors and candidates come forward. The rite suggests Psalm 63:1–8.
* 13D, 147, 175, 205, 656, 657, 658—Psalm 63
* 483—For you are my God
* 487—You are near

No. 53: Affirmation by the sponsors; the community sings an acclamation. The rite gives the example: “We praise you, Lord, and we bless you.”

* 279B—last acclamation on the page: “We praise you, we bless you, we thank you.”

Other acclamations:
* 546—refrain only: “Strong is God's love for us, alleluia!”

No. 55: Signing of the senses.
The rite suggests this acclamation: “Glory and praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ!” See 262, 264.
Other appropriate acclamations:
* 2A—Christ will be your strength
* 259, 260, 261, 263—Praise to you, Lord, Jesus Christ, King of endless glory

No. 60: Procession to the Word of God.
The rite suggests Psalm 34, verses 2, 3, 6, 9, 10, 11, 16.
* 127—Psalm 119, Happy are they who follow the law of the Lord
* 167—Psalm 34, Taste and see, taste and see that the Lord is good, the Lord is good.
* 173—Psalm 34, Taste and see the goodness of the Lord.
* 441—You are the way
* 442—Praise to you, O Christ, our Saviour
* 474—Lord, you search me and you know me
* 610—Taste and see

No. 65: Intercessions
The response may be sung. See 6E, 14J, 14K, 266–275.

No. 67A: Dismissal of catechumens. The rite makes no mention of music, but it would be appropriate.
* 442—Praise to you, O Christ, our Saviour
* 81—You will draw water joyfully
* 119—Teach me your ways, O Lord

No. 67C: All are dismissed. A concluding song is appropriate. Use a hymn of praise or a seasonal hymn.

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Rite of Election

No. 119: An appropriate song is sung during the enrollment of names.
The rite suggests Psalm 16.
* 78, 94, 150, 209—Psalm 16 (no. 78 is particularly appropriate because it will be used again at the Easter Vigil)
* 365—Jesus, Lord
* 473—God is love
* 479—All my hope on God is Founded
* 483—For you are my God (based on Psalm 16)
* 495—We walk by faith
* 498—Lord of Creation, to you be all praise
* 496—My refuge, my fortress
* 618—Who calls you by name

No. 121: Intercessions. For a sung response, select from 6E, 14J, 14K, 266-275.

No. 123: Dismissal of catechumens
The rite makes no mention of music, but it would be appropriate.
* 436—The Lord Jesus Christ
* 441—You are the way
* 442—Praise to you, O Christ, our Saviour

No. 123: All are dismissed. A concluding song is appropriate.
Use a hymn of praise or a seasonal hymn.

Scrubtinies
First Scrubtiny


No. 141: After the exorcism prayer the rite suggests singing an appropriate song and gives as example a number of psalms: 6, 26, 32, 38, 39, 40, 51, 116:1-9, 130, 139, 142.
* 128—Psalm 32
* 115, 116, 171, 216—Psalm 40

No. 142: Dismissal of catechumens
The rite makes no mention of music, but it would be appropriate.
* 25—Sing and shout for joy (Is. 12)
* 81—You will draw water joyfully (Is. 12, particularly appropriate because it will be used at the Easter Vigil)
* 237—With joy you shall draw water (Is. 12)
* 359—Come to the waters: use refrain 2 and verses 1, 2, 5
* 436—The Lord Jesus Christ
* 441—You are the way
* 442—Praise to you, O Christ, our Saviour
* 500—Surely it is God who saves me
* 582—Praise the One who breaks the darkness (verse 2)

No. 143: All are dismissed. A concluding song is appropriate.
Use a hymn of praise or a seasonal hymn.

Second Scrutiny
Intercessions—as listed above
After the prayer of exorcism
* 128—Psalm 32
* 115, 116, 171, 216—Psalm 40
* 41, 44, 57, 83, 364—Psalm 51
* 182—Psalm 116:1-9
* 56, 140—Psalm 130
* 220—Psalm 139
* 374—With our God (Psalm 130)
* 474—Lord, you search me and you know me
* 487—You are near
* 621A—Grant to us, O Lord
* 625—Love Divine, all love's excelling

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* 309—Listen, my people
* 480—Amazing grace

Dismissal of the elect
* 304—Awake, awake: fling off the night
* 359—Come to the waters: refrain 2, verse 5
* 482—Eye has not seen, verses 1, 3
* 582—Praise the One who breaks the darkness, verse 1

Third Scrutiny
Intercessions—as listed above
After the prayer of exorcism
* 128—Psalm 32
* 115, 116, 171, 216—Psalm 40
* 41, 44, 57, 83, 364—Psalm 51
* 182—Psalm 116:1-9
* 56, 140—Psalm 130
* 220—Psalm 139
* 10A—I know that my Redeemer lives
* 80—Psalm 30, I will praise you, Lord (also used at the Vigil)
* 94—Psalm 16, Show us, Lord, the path of life
* 182—Psalm 116, I will walk in the presence of the Lord
* 373—Tree of life
* 483—For you are my God

Dismissal of the elect
* 365—Jesus, Lord
* 441—You are the way
* 442—Praise to you, O Christ, our Saviour
* 574—We will extoll your praise
* 582—Praise the One who breaks the darkness, verse 3

The Celebration of Confirmation
The music for the liturgy of the word will depend upon the texts selected for the celebration.
Other music for the celebration of eucharist should be appropriate to the season and the readings.
Acclamations should be well known by the whole assembly.

The response to the intercessions may be sung – 6E, 14J, 14K, 266-275.
Two ideas for the preparation of the table:
* 614—Baptized in water
* 632—Wondrous Is your name

No. 23: Renewal of baptismal promises
After the rejection of Satan the rest of the renewal could be sung (see 619), or the refrain at 4D could be sung at the conclusion of a spoken renewal.

No. 29: During the anointing an appropriate song may be sung.

Psalm settings:
* 34—Psalm 105, The Lord remembers his covenant for ever
* 36—Psalm 67, O God be gracious and bless us
* 53—Psalm 23, The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want
* 76—Psalm 104, Send forth your Spirit, O Lord, and renew the face of the earth
* 107—Psalm 104, Send forth your Spirit, O Lord, and renew the face of the earth
* 120—Psalm 19, You words are spirit Lord, and they are life
* 158—Psalm 23, The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want

A number of hymns addressed to the Holy Spirit are available. Try to select a text that recognizes the Spirit is given in baptism.
* 410—O Holy Spirit, come to bless
* 412—O Holy Spirit, by whose breath
* 414—Send us your spirit
* 417—Holy Spirit, lord of love
* 418—Veni Creator Spiritus
* 419—Veni Sancte Spiritus
* 530—There is one Lord
* 570—Laudate Omnes Gentes
The Celebration of Communion for the First Time

The music should be selected according to the manner in which the parish celebrates every Sunday. The music should reflect the season and the readings of the day.

Teaching the children the acclamations and refrains known by the parish assembly will allow them to participate fully. Particular attention should be given to learning the responsorial psalm refrain, the gospel acclamation, and the eucharistic acclamations.

The following communion procession-al hymns have refrains that are easily learned by the children.

* 595—Christians, let us love one another
* 598—Gentle Shepherd
* 601—Gather us together
* 604—Seed, scattered and sown
* 606—My Shepherd is the Lord
* 608—Now in this banquet

The children may be introduced to some of the repertoire the parish uses for hymns of praise. Over a period of rehearsal, they can become acquainted with the texts.

Try 571—Praise the Lord with the sound of trumpet.

Follow-up to the Celebration of Baptism of Children

The parishes in Deanery I in Prince Albert, Sask., have developed a program of baptism preparation that is continued with follow-up by the parishes after the celebration of baptism. This follow-up takes the form of letters and small gifts sent to the parents of the newly baptized for a period of at least two years as a way of keeping contact with them.

The preparation program itself, which consists of three sessions, includes one session which is conducted at the deanery level with the parish baptism teams rotating for the presentations. The program is designed to take place before the baby is born; the first meeting is to take place during the sixth month of pregnancy, the second during the seventh month, and the third during the eighth month. If the preparation does not take place before the birth of the child, parents are expected to allow time for this preparation before the baptism is celebrated.

The first meeting is individually scheduled to take place in the home with a visit by a couple from the baptism team and/or the pastor, or it may take place in the home of the couple, the home of the sponsors if they have been chosen, or the rectory. Parishes that have many baptisms might arrange a group meeting for this first session. The objectives are to explore how the family is experiencing the coming of the new baby and what their expectations and fears are, to explore why they are requesting baptism for the baby, and to initiate a faith process that will prepare the family for baptism. Single mothers are
assured that the parish will give her human and spiritual support. The role of the sponsors is discussed, and the parents are given material to read before the next session. The visitors pray a blessing over the new parents and encourage these parents to bless the new baby when it comes as a way of connecting what takes place in the preparation sessions and the home. A paraphrase of a prayer used during the celebration of baptism is offered as a model.

My child, you are the love of my life; the Christian community looks forward to welcoming you with great joy.
I claim you for Christ, our Saviour, in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. (As the three persons in the Trinity are named, the sign of the cross is traced on the child’s forehead.)

The second session, which is a general meeting for all parents-to-be preparing for baptism in the deanery, gives these couples an opportunity to link with other couples also preparing for baptism. The objectives include an exploration of the meaning of baptism, of the role of Christian parents after baptism, and prayer together as a faith community. Regarding the meaning of baptism, the themes touched on include baptism as covenant, as entrance into the family of God, as entrance into the Church, and as a call to holiness. A skit demonstrates the need to nurture seeds when they are planted.

The third meeting takes place in the parish church where the baptism will be celebrated. The intent of the meeting is to familiarize the couple with the church facilities, to make the couple aware of the services and programs offered by the parish community, to explain the rite of baptism, review the symbols used in the celebration of baptism, and to make the couple realize that their involvement in the life of the parish is welcomed and appreciated. Someone who is familiar with the layout of the church building and with the parish’s history is on hand to give a guided tour; a member of the parish council speaks about the organization of the parish and the services it offers, and emphasizes that each member has a role to fulfill. The practical details of the celebration itself are addressed. Reflection on selected scripture passages closes the session.

Following the baptism, the parish sends letters and small gifts to the parents at three-month intervals. The letters have a selection from Scripture, some sample prayers, and information about baptism and about Christian faith.

The first letter reminds the parents about a way to make a connection between what is happening in the home and in the parish by praying with their child. This prayer is given as a sample.

Heavenly Father, lover of all, we praise you for giving us Jesus as our Saviour; he blessed the children who came to him and welcomes those who come to him now.
You have blessed our child with life. Look with love upon N., and protect him/her with your love.
Let him/her grow to full maturity in Christ.
May he/she grow in wisdom and strength;
may he/she become a leader among your people, a source of strength and encouragement for all.
We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.
(While making the sign of the cross over the child, say the following:)
May the Lord Jesus, who loved children, bless you and keep you in his love, now and forever. Amen.

The letter also includes this piece of information, with the title, “Did You Know”:

One of the first things we see when we enter a Catholic church is a pool of water. Baptism is our “door” to the Church. It is the way we enter into Christ’s family. The baptismal pool, or baptismal font, which ideally stands at
Follow-up to the Celebration of Baptism of Children

the door of the church, reminds Catholics that every time they come to celebrate the Eucharist, they come through baptism. They dip their hand in the water and mark themselves with the sign in which they were baptized, the sign of the cross. In some churches a bowl of water, or holy water font, at each door serves as a reminder of the baptismal pool.

The letter also assures the parents that they with their child are welcome in the parish and that they are a part of the parish.

The second letter gives more background on baptism and repeats the importance of prayer, and that the greatest responsibility of Christian parents is to pass on their faith to their children. Another prayer is given as a sample.

The letters continue in this style. The gifts that accompany the letters are items such as a tape of Christian music and later on some books with bible stories that the parents can read to their children.

History of Liturgical Renewal in Canada

In November 1994, at a triennial national meeting of English-sector directors of liturgy and liturgy commissions held in Mississauga, Ontario, the participants engaged in a process of assessing the state of renewal of the liturgy in the country. At the next meeting, held in November 1997 at Edmonton, the process was concluded by determining a course of action to continue this renewal.

Part of the process at the first session was devoted to charting significant events during this renewal and developing a time-line of these events. The following is the time-line that was described as the "history of light."

1955 • Restoration of Holy Week
1956 • Liturgical Week, London, Ontario
1958 • Decree on Dialogue Mass (Pope Pius XII)
1963 • Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (Vatican II)
1955 • Pope John XXIII including St. Joseph in the Roman canon
1956 • Liturgical Week, London, Ontario
1958 • Decree on Dialogue Mass (Pope Pius XII)
1963 • Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (Vatican II)
1964 • Standing for communion introduced
1965 • Formation of the Episcopal Commission for Liturgy (Archbishop James Hayes)
1964 • Standing for communion introduced
1965 • First English missal, with imprimatur by Archbishops M.C. O'Nei11 and George Flahiff
1966 • First director of the National Liturgy Office: Bernard Mahoney (who worked part-time out of Toronto)
1965 • Pope John XXIII including St. Joseph in the Roman canon
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1966 • First English missal, with imprimatur by Archbishops M.C. O'Nei11 and George Flahiff
1966 • First director of the National Liturgy Office: Bernard Mahoney (who worked part-time out of Toronto)
History of Liturgical Renewal in Canada

1969 • First full-time director of National Liturgy Office (Ottawa): L.L. Sullivan
• Western Liturgical Conference established (Edmonton)

1970 • Reception of communion in the hand introduced
• Auxiliaries ministers of communion

1971 • Lay members on liturgy commission (St. John, NB.)
• Liturgy conference at Kingston
• Permission for communion from the cup

1972 • Catholic Book of Worship I
• Approval of use of Apostles' Creed for eucharist

1973 • Directory for Masses with Children
• First bound Lectionary published
• First Canadian ritual for funerals (with wake services)
• New constitution for the National Council for Liturgy

1974 • English Sacramentary published
• “Green book” for RCIA
• Children’s liturgies and prayers
• Permanent diaconate

1980 • Sunday celebrations of the Word, Edmonton ritual
• Forums on RCIA by Christiane Brusselman
• Canadian bishops’ statement on inclusive language
• Western Liturgy Conference constitution
• Catholic Book of Worship II

1981 • “Regina red book”: Ritual for Lay Presiders
• Penance Celebrations (ritual text)
• A Book of Blessings


1983 • Summer School for Liturgical Musicians: Ontario Liturgical Conference
• Revised code of canon law published

1984 • Pope John Paul II’s visit to Canada
• Ontario conferences on RCIA begin

1987 • Summer Institute in Pastoral Liturgy (SIPL) established
• Ritual book for RCIA published
• Marian year books of prayer published

1988 • Lay editor for the NBL: Dr. J. Frank Henderson
• Diocesan synod at Nelson: Bishop Emmett Doyle

1989 • Canadian symposium on RCIA
• New ritual for baptism of children

1990 • Western Catechumenate Conference, Calgary
• Summer School for Liturgical Studies, Newman Theological College, Edmonton
• Order of Christian Funerals published: first revised translation of ritual books

1992 • Lectionary with NRSV translation published

1994 • First woman director of National Liturgy office
• Approval of female altar servers
• Catholic Book of Worship III

There is also evidence of a dark side to the process of renewal in the liturgy, and these are some that were identified.

1968 • Popular devotions lost with nothing to replace them

1970 • Changes introduced sometimes without adequate explanation

1974 • Vernacular created division in multicultural parishes
• People not prepared to explain the liturgy
• Liturgical renewal used as a reason to avoid the eucharist

1978 • Death of Pope Paul VI

1980 • Evidence of polarization around the issues of inclusive language and role of women

1982 • Green kit on role of women suppressed in some dioceses

1983 • Difference of approach to liturgy and catechesis

1984 • Using “themes” for Advent and Lent rather than focusing on the centrality of the paschal mystery

1988 • Lack of popular devotions leading to seeking extra-ordinary visions

1992 • Laity not taking ownership of the liturgy
• Parishes not moving forward in their renewal.

Subsequent directors of this office were: David Walsh, OMI (1978-80), Regis Halloran (1980-86), Murray Kroetsch (1986-90), John Hibbard (1990-94), and Donna Kelly, CND (1995-).
The Second Vatican Council and the Liturgy

The following is a summary of the reflections presented by Archbishop James M. Hayes to the participants of the national meeting of directors of diocesan liturgy offices and commissions held in November 1997 in Edmonton. He was among the bishops that gathered for Vatican II.

The liturgy was the first topic of discussion at the Second Vatican Council, but it was not a new topic. The liturgical movement had already had a profound influence. There was the scholarship of people such as Dom Gueranger, I. Schuster (later the cardinal of Milan), Lambert Beaudoin, Pius Parsch, Odo Cassel, Joseph Jungman and Gregory Dix. There were the Benedictines in Europe in the monasteries at Solesmes Maredesous, and Maria Laach, and in the U.S. the Benedictines at St. John’s, Collegeville, through the publication of Orate Fratres (later called Worship) who helped to give an understanding of what liturgical renewal meant. In Europe there were liturgical conferences held regularly, and in the U.S. there were yearly liturgical weeks that prepared people from the U.S. and Canada for what was coming.

When the Second Vatican Council opened October 11, 1962, liturgy was chosen as the first topic for discussion. Pope John XXIII told those convened: “The content of the deposit of faith is one thing; the way it is handed on is another.” While theology is defined as “faith seeking understanding,” liturgy could be described as “faith seeking action,” calling out to people to express their faith in worship, in community, in mutual concern, support, etc. Liturgy and social action always go together.

On October 20 a conciliar commission was elected; the only Canadian among them was Joseph Albert Martin, bishop of Nicolet. From October 22 to November 13 the schema on the liturgy was discussed; fifteen general meetings, encompassing fifty hours of discussion, were devoted to it. There were 328 oral interventions and another 297 written ones. Two topics emerged from the outset: that national commissions were to determine the liturgical requirements of the different nations (this led to an emphasis on inculturation) and whether to use Latin or the vernacular. In short, the liturgy was to be made intelligible and adapted to culture. There was support from council fathers such as Archbishop Montini, the cardinals from Cologne and Munich in Germany, Cardinals Ritter and Meyer from the U.S., and Cardinal Leger and Bishop Martin from Canada. There were dissenting voices, such as Cardinal Spellman, who wanted the Mass in Latin but the breviary in English, and another who said that “participation is only a distraction.”

On November 4 Pope John XXIII told the bishops: “Our sacred obligation is not only to take care of this precious treasure, as if we had only to worry about the past, but we must also devote ourselves with joy and without fear to the work of giving this ancient and eternal doctrine a relevance corresponding to the needs of our era.”
On November 14 the discussion on the liturgy was concluded and a final vote on the schema was taken: 2162 in favour, 46 against.

The assessment of the document was this: “The constitution bridged gaps between doctrine and pastoral practice in language that could be understood.” “In this vote the creaking of an opening door has been heard in the whole Church.”

The council was to resume in April and May 1963, but because of the illness of Pope John XXIII, it did so in the fall of 1963. Meanwhile the commission continued to incorporate amendments based on suggestions and recommendations from bishops.

The vote on the final document took place on December 4, 1963, four hundred years after the Council of Trent had decided on December 4, 1563, not to discuss the liturgy but leave its reform to the Holy See since it was not a substantive issue; 2147 voted in favour, four against. The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy was then solemnly promulgated by Pope Paul VI and the Fathers of the council. The liturgy was now no longer a peripheral issue. The constitution was to go into effect on the First Sunday of Lent, February 16, 1964.

In January 1964 a motu proprio, Sacram Liturgiam, announced the establishment of a consilium for the implementation of the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy. Two Canadians were appointed to consilium: Bishop Emmett Carter of London and Bishop Martin.

The Canadian episcopate implemented the reform through several decrees, the first dated February 14, 1964, and a second issued on December 21 together with a pastoral letter on liturgical renewal. These together with the Constitution on the Liturgy and the motu proprio constituted the first publication on the renewal, Liturgical Renewal. The vernacular was introduced gradually, first for scripture readings, then for the introductory rites, etc.

The use of the vernacular became a very large part of the renewal of the liturgy. In 1963 English-speaking bishops from various countries began discussion on how to handle the translating. This led to the establishment of the International Commission on English in the Liturgy (ICEL) in 1964. The Canadian representative was M.C. O'Neill, archbishop of Regina, who thus became a founder.

It is important to remember how great a part Pope Paul VI played in the development of documents on the liturgy; he followed the liturgical renewal closely, especially the final official text of the missa normativa, the Latin text to be the basis for vernacular translations. “The translations have become part of the rites themselves; they have become the voice of the Church,” he said. He used all his experience and diplomatic skills to make sure the renewal had the support of key people in the curia. The sacramentary is very truly and literally the missal of Paul VI.
Beginnings of Liturgical Renewal in Canada

The following is a summary of the presentation given by Rev. L.L. Sullivan, who was appointed director of the National Liturgy Office in 1969, a position he held until 1978. He is a presbyter in the Archdiocese of Regina.

Work for the liturgical renewal in Canada was given its impetus by the appointment of Bernard Mahoney as the first director of a national liturgy office. He remained in his position at St. Augustine Seminary, Toronto, and did the work required from Toronto on a part-time basis. During this period the National Council for Liturgy was formed, a body of fifteen musicians and liturgists, who were to meet annually. At their first meeting two major decisions were made: to reduce the number of "holy days" from six to two and to approve the creation of a national hymnal.

In 1969 the liturgy office was established on a permanent basis in Ottawa, with Anita Dubuc as secretary and myself as director. Its major thrust was to give order to the chaos going on all across the American scene through a national bulletin (to be edited by Pat Byrne), the hymnal (the project to be taken over by John O'Donnell), and the books used for the celebration itself (the lectionary and the sacramentary). The French office on the other hand decided that all the ritual texts to be used were those published in France, no hymnal was to be produced, to work instead in close cooperation with those producing missalettes, and to publish scholarly work in a bulletin.

A decision was soon made to publish our own books; we saw that unless we are to become part of the American scene in both catechetics and liturgy, we had better get out our own texts. An early project was the lectionary, a huge work, edited by Pat Byrne. It was the first Sunday lectionary in the world to use "sense lines," and a study edition was also produced. Texts for funerals and anointing of the sick followed, and eventually the sacramentary was produced. The marriage ritual came much later. The end result was that every liturgical book had to be done.

The Canadian liturgy office insisted on certain elements in the work of ICEL: the use of the Grail psalter, that all sung texts be produced in sung form, and that the final text of all liturgical works be produced in a style ready for printing. One ritual book that used the material as provided was the ritual for anointing of the sick.

The office was always well funded (the priests were not over-paid!) and there were many fine parts to the work, especially the interaction with U.S. and British offices, and with the National Office of Religious Education. A tribute must given to Cardinal Giacomo Lercaro, the director of the Consilium in Rome, Annibale Bugnini, its secretary, and to Gaston Fontaine, a leader in the liturgical movement in French Canada. A tribute is in order also to several bishops, M.C. O'Neil, Emmett Carter, and James Hayes.

One story must told here. Bishop Carter intended to entertain Bugnini for a barbecue, so Carter called the liturgy office to see if there were any special requests he could make of Bugnini as they visited in the garden. Ask him for permission to use the Apostles' Creed in the Eucharist, I said. Some time later a telephone call came to say that permission was granted, and hence the presence of this creed in the Canadian sacramentary.

A tribute is to be given also to the "conciliar mood" of all the Canadian bishops. For example, in 1970 they were asked to vote on four issues: the use of unleavened bread, allowing "home-made" collects, communion from the cup for all, and to minimally a stole for vesture. All passed easily except for the issue of the stole.
Beginnings of Liturgical Renewal in Canada

Three regions for liturgical conferences, the West, Ontario, and Atlantic Canada, were a natural division and fell into place quickly. Life was busy but uncomplicated. Reaction against reform was localized in the “una voce crowd” and a few others. There was full cooperation from the bishops, cooperation which was born out their own experience of the council. The weakness was in diocesan offices, but even here the situation gradually improved.

Preparing Canada’s Basic Liturgical Resources: The Editorial Work of the Office

Rev. Patrick Byrne served as editorial assistant in the National Liturgy Office from October 25, 1971, to January 26, 1988. During that time he was responsible for some 210 different publications, including 80 issues of the National Bulletin on Liturgy. Over the years he also served as a consultor for ICEL, a board member and president of the Canadian Liturgical Society, a member of the Consultation on Common Texts, a member of the English Language Liturgical Consultation, a board member of The Liturgical Conference, an ecumenical partner of the national Doctrine and Worship Committee of the Anglican Church of Canada, and an editorial consultant for liturgical publications of the Presbyterian Church. He has also taught courses at summer school at Notre Dame and at the University of St. Paul. He is a long-time member of the North American Academy of Liturgy and Societas Liturgica.

While I was pastor in the little parish of Honey Harbour, Ontario, in May and June 1971, Bishop Francis Marrocco of the Diocese of Peterborough told me that I could apply for a new opening as editorial assistant at the National Liturgical Office of the Canadian Catholic Conference in Ottawa. A year earlier I had begun to edit the Liturgical Calendar for 1971 at the request of Len Sullivan, then the director of the office. It was my privilege to serve as editorial assistant in the NLO from 1971 to 1988. When I look back, they were blessed years indeed, blessed but extremely busy.

During this period, beginning only a few years after the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy had been promulgated in December 1963, our Church was working to translate theory into practice, rigid patterns into more balanced ways, and Latin texts into English.

When I joined the office in October 1971, there were four major liturgical publications under way: the liturgical calendar, the loose-leaf missal (including both lectionary and sacramentary texts), the National Bulletin on Liturgy, and Catholic Book of Worship I.

A new vision of liturgical books was slowly coming into our lives. The books of the future were to provide a greater variety of texts and options, rites and prayers. Gone were the days of one or two liturgical books and few pocket editions.

In this brief session I will try to share with you some of the excitement we felt as we helped to provide the books used in the liturgies of the Canadian Catholic Church.

Goals of the Canadian bishops

We know that Vatican II set out to renew the Catholic Church first of all by renewing the liturgy. The bishops of Canada
Preparing Canada's Basic Liturgical Resources

chose to promote liturgical renewal in Canada strongly, and in many practical ways. They set up a national liturgy office and founded a national bulletin on liturgy in each of the two sectors, English and French. In the English-speaking sector our bishops also established the National Council for Liturgy.

It soon became evident that liturgical renewal needed to have good English versions of the new liturgical books which were then in various stages of development in Rome. Our bishops chose to prepare, adapt, and issue respectable liturgical books for English-speaking Canada, rather than depending on other countries to sell us their books adapted to their own situations rather than ours.

Our bishops were part of the initial group of ten English-speaking nations that formed the International Committee on English in the Liturgy in 1963. This episcopal commission, known as "ICEL," was an international co-operative to bring together the bishops, liturgists, experts in language and music, and some poets, in order to take the Roman rites issued in Latin and bring them into English acceptable for worship in our parishes and other communities around the English-speaking world.

The Roman process

Managing liturgical renewal in one language at the national level has been a demanding task. Doing so at the international level in hundreds of languages and cultures is exceptionally difficult.

The Roman process of preparing new liturgical rites and texts has been complicated and time-consuming, but eventually most helpful. This process has involved a number of steps:

a) International committees: For each rite, Rome set up an international committee of recognized experts in this area of liturgy. After a period of historical study and international consultation with other experts in academic and pastoral matters, sometimes after limited experimentation in certain pastoral centres, and approval from the Consilium for the Implementation of the Constitution on the Liturgy, renewed texts would be issued in Latin as an editio typica (the approved rite). They were considered "permanent," as in the 1969 calendar, order of readings for Mass, funeral rites, and the rite of marriage. Occasionally, texts were only for temporary use, as in the 1974 eucharistic prayers for Masses with children and Masses of reconciliation.

b) Translation into English: Through its worldwide group of experts in many areas of liturgy, ICEL prepared a draft translation of each new rite and circulated it and its Latin original to more than 900 English-speaking bishops for further consultation, correction, and development by them and their experts.

c) Temporary editions: Sometimes the bishops of a country would decide that some rite was needed right now and would vote to permit use of an interim translation. One example of this is the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, issued in Latin in 1972, in a temporary format in English in 1974, and in the bound edition in 1987.

Our first "permanent" books

a) Some temporary editions: Before Vatican II the Roman Church had a one-year lectionary and sacramentary, bound in one book known as a missal or Mass book. When the May 1969 Order of Readings for Mass presented a three-year Sunday lectionary, a two-year weekday lectionary, and a one-year lectionary for saints to go into effect at the beginning of Advent 1969, the Canadian bishops' Publications Service had to move quickly to provide the new texts in a three-ring loose-leaf format for both the English and French sectors. Len Sullivan and David Walsh organized this work in English and carried it on until the first bound lectionary was issued at Pentecost 1973 and the sacramentary in the fall of 1974.

As well, some temporary texts, such as the experimental funeral rite (Bulletin 14), the revised rites of baptism of children (Bulletin 29), and the rite of marriage...
Preparing Canada's Basic Liturgical Resources

(Bulletin 30) were published in the red-covered issues of the bulletin.

b) “Permanent” books: When we began to move from loose-leaf to hard cover books in 1973, we called them “permanent” books. We had a vision of having a text that would remain in place for a number of years and be adapted or enlarged only occasionally, something like the Latin issues of the Missale Romanum in the 1950s.

Gradually, however, we began to recognize the need for further adaption and development. Each major text would need revision within a generation or less. We began this process in the 1980s and provided new books for the initiation of adults and of children, confirmation, marriage, pastoral care of the sick and dying, lectionaries, and funeral rites.

Developing a full library of liturgical books

As we began our work of producing liturgical books, we—the bishops' conference, the Episcopal Commission for Liturgy, the national office, Publications Service, and the National Council for Liturgy—were too busy doing the next book to have a broader vision. We were moving forward, but we knew not whither at first; visibility was limited on the road ahead.

Gradually, however, as book after liturgical book came out from Rome, we became aware that our task was to develop and produce a full library of liturgical books—in tune with the worldwide Church but adapted as required for our pastoral needs—for use in English-speaking Canada. As well, we soon came to see the further need for auxiliary material in the National Bulletin on Liturgy and in other resources; these would help Canadians to celebrate the Church's renewed liturgy as well as possible in our varied parishes and communities across this land.

Looking back, I would now say that our vision kept developing and expanding to meet new and growing needs. The wise and pastoral bishops of English-speaking Canada, working through their liturgy office, led our Church in embracing the liturgical developments, the renewed theology, vision and approach that they reflected. It was indeed exciting to be close to the front lines of liturgical development in our Church!

In the case of two books, the bishops chose not to publish Canadian editions for practical reasons: the Liturgy of the Hours (1976) was done by the Catholic Book Publishing for all countries and ICEL itself published the Pontifical in 1987.

Early in the 1970s we began to feel the need to improve somewhat on the Roman books. Their attempts at funeral rites and the care of the sick and dying were not adequate for the pastoral needs of our parishes; the 1972 edition of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults was too dense, and needed to be expanded and developed for practical understanding and use.

As well, they kept promising, from 1972 on, that they would provide us with a book of blessings; our Bulletin 49 in 1975 was a first attempt to approach this need in Canada. In 1980 the bishops on the Episcopal Commission for Liturgy urged the office to provide a practical text—a Book of Blessings—for use in our Canadian communities. Our book appeared in 1981, three and a half years before the Roman tome, De Benedictionibus, was issued in Latin. When the large Roman book finally appeared, with all its blessings in the same basic format, our Episcopal Commission for Liturgy said "no" to a Canadian edition. "We prefer to keep and use A Book of Blessings," they said.

Some unique Canadian publications

During the 1970s and 1980s the national office produced a goodly number of liturgical publications and aids for use in our Canadian parishes and communities. We list some of them here, without the fanfares they deserve when compared to what some much larger episcopal conferences have provided for their people.

Among our unique Canadian publications we may mention these:
Preparing Canada's Basic Liturgical Resources

- Guidelines for Pastoral Liturgy, our annual liturgical calendar
- National Bulletin on Liturgy
- Catholic Book of Worship, editions I, II, and III
- Readers' editions of Sunday and weekday lectionaries, with pronunciation guides for proper names in Sunday texts
- Worship aids for the Holy Year of 1975
- Sunday Mass Book
- Penance Celebrations
- Family prayer book in preparation for the papal visit, 1984
- Sacramentaries for the papal visit, 1984, 1987
- Canadian Studies in Liturgy
- Two prayer booklets for the Marian Year, 1986-87
- Passion Narratives for Holy Week

Think for a moment about our Canadian hymnbook. It is now thirty years since CBW I was conceived by the National Council for Liturgy and twenty-five years since the book was published in 1972. No other English-speaking episcopal conference in the world, so far as I know has produced a national hymnal. We have provided our people with three.

Some notable features of our CBW as it developed over the past quarter century:
- A growing Canadian content
- An increased number of Sunday psalms for singing
- Pastoral forms of morning and evening prayer in CBW II and III.

We can be proud to say that all these publications have been produced by the Canadian Church to help our people to give greater honour and glory to God in the renewed liturgy.

National Bulletin on Liturgy

Some time in 1964, less than a year after the Second Vatican Council approved the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, Canada's bishops published the immediate ancestor of the bulletin. Entitled Liturgical Renewal, it appeared in both English and French. Its 166 pages gathered documents issued by Rome and the Canadian bishops in 1963 and 1964 and offered detailed guidelines for celebrating Mass with greater participation by the people.

In April 1965, the first three issues of the Bulletin of the National Commission on Liturgy appeared. We celebrated this anniversary in "Twenty Good Years" in 1985 and in "Thirty Good Years" a few years ago. The title of the bulletin became National Bulletin on Liturgy in Bulletin 5, September 1965, and has remained so ever since.

The red-covered issues of the bulletin, nos. 1-31, were issued in four volumes between April 1965 and December 1970. The first issues were edited by Bernard Mahoney, first director (part-time) of the office. In the fall of 1969, Len Sullivan became the office director and looked after bulletins 27-31. No bulletins were issued in 1971.

On the last Monday in October 1971, I arrived at the national office as the newly appointed editorial assistant. Some time in the next few months, I was informed that we had 3,535 paid subscriptions for volume five, Bulletins 32-36. Would I please produce these issues! These became the ones with green covers.

In sixteen years, I had the privilege of editing eighty issues of the Bulletin, 4,782 pages in all, while working on some 130 other publications. Each bulletin cost me about 200 hours in work, spread out over a period of eighteen to twenty-four months. The larger books took up to a year to produce in the days before we had computers. As far as I am concerned, however, it has been worth all our time and effort to be able to serve the Church in Canada and the English-speaking nations.

Frank Henderson continued the work from 1988 to 1996 and edited thirty-six brown-covered issues (nos. 112-47) in nine years. Zita Maier has succeeded him and is editing the blue-covered bulletins since no. 148; we are now in volume 30.
Co-ordinating all our liturgical resources
In 1970 the Ordo, previously published only in Latin, was moved into English and French in Canada. I served as editor of the English-language liturgical calendar from 1971 to 1975. We moved in 1972 to the Roman calendar as revised in 1969. In 1973 we changed our liturgical calendar from a grungy little booklet to the present size and format, improved the quality if its English, added photos, and renamed it Guidelines for Pastoral Liturgy: Liturgical Calendar 1973-1974.

In those days the calendar was printed by Therrien Frères in Montreal. Jean-Paul Fréchette, the manager in the 1970s, told me that his first job for the firm, in 1937—the year I started Grade 1—was to typeset the Ordo in Latin.

The pressure of producing the bulletin and other publications led me to seek help for the 1976 calendar. Rev. John Knight, then director for liturgy in St. Catharines Diocese and now auxiliary bishop in Toronto, continued the calendar and its constant updating until 1988. When he was sent to Rome, I did the 1989 edition, and then Regis Halloran took over. Today, the office continues the same high standards for our national liturgical calendar.

Each year, the Guidelines for Pastoral Liturgy incorporates references to appropriate celebrations, rites, bulletin articles, and references to the ample pastoral notes at the front of the current volume. When one studies the liturgical calendars produced in other countries—and I have known and worked with the editors of a number of these volumes—we can be happy that our national calendar co-ordinates feasts, special events, collections, and settles possible liturgical clashes (such as November 2 and 9 this year). In Canada we have tried to smooth out the hassle and make life as easy and prayerful as possible for the liturgical celebrations in each parish.

Our National Bulletin on Liturgy also provides resources to co-ordinate our liturgical needs. Models of liturgical services in harmony with the Roman liturgy—such as penance celebrations, various blessings, and other rites—have been printed in the bulletin and sometimes included in later liturgical books. Examples include A Book of Blessings and Penance Celebrations, which developed out of texts printed in the bulletin over the years.

Working with ICEL
Canada was involved in the organization of ICEL in 1963. Among the Canadians in the early years were Archbishop M.C. O'Neill of Regina and Bishop Emmett Carter, auxiliary bishop of London; Rev. Stephen Somerville of Toronto was appointed as the Canadian representative on the advisory committee. I became involved with ICEL in the summer of 1967 when I helped Stephen—whom I had known since first-year university in 1949—with the texts of the gospel acclamations. In 1968, three years before I went to Ottawa, I was asked to become a consultant with ICEL. I did some editing on their early texts, wrote their popular Holy Week rubrics, and served on subcommittees working on the funeral rite, care of the sick, and the pontifical. For many years I was in Washington or elsewhere at least five times a year for these meetings.

Among the bishops who have served on the episcopal board of ICEL are Cardinal Carter, Archbishops O'Neill and Hayes, Bishops James Doyle, Raymond Lahey and James Mahoney. Bishop John Knight has just been appointed to this position, in October 1997. Some other Canadians I remember as members of ICEL committees or projects include Frank Henderson, Sr. Eileen Schuller, Sr. Veronica O'Reilly, and Rev. David Stanley.

Canadians involved in the work of our national office—Frank Henderson, Eileen Schuller, and I—contributed three of the nineteen chapters in Shaping English Liturgy: A Festschrift, issued in 1990 by ICEL in honour of Archbishop Denis Hurley.

Our liturgy office has also co-operated with ICEL through the Consultation on Common texts and in the development and working of the English Language Liturgical Consultation.
Preparing Canada’s Basic Liturgical Resources

Our office and our publication service have always had good relationships with ICEL. We co-operated in preparing, reviewing, and sometimes in testing texts. In many areas we consulted back and forth and, I honestly think, contributed to better results.

Special occasions
Some of our liturgical publications were issued in response to special occasions in the life of our Canadian Church.

a) Visits of Pope John Paul II: When the dates for the pope’s 1984 visit were announced in the spring of 1983, the two national liturgy offices and Publications Service sprang into action. We had to prepare two sacramentaries giving the exact texts for each celebration. One was done for the celebrations mainly in French and one for those mainly in English; as well, each book contained brief texts in other languages. Every line in each celebration had to be developed by the local area, in co-ordination with the NLO and approved by Rome. Some of the drafts went back and forth between Canada and the Vatican two or three times. In the English sector, this work was directed by Regis Halloran.

Then the texts had to be typeset in Ottawa, laid out as clearly and beautifully as possible, printed in black and red, and well bound. I am happy to report that the books were printed in Lindsay, where I am now stationed; Deyell Printers did a lot of good work for the conference in the 1970s and 1980s.

When the pope returned to Canada to complete his visit to Fort Simpson in 1987, the previously text prepared for his use was slightly revised and printed. This work was directed by Murray Kroetsch.

I have been told that our Canadian books have been promoted by Rome as excellent models for other countries to follow for papal visits.

b) Marian Year (1987-88): This year of devotion, a period which would have strong connections with liturgy, came literally “out of the blue.” No one in the worldwide Church had any advance notice: the pope simply announced on New Year’s Day in 1987 that he was declaring the period between Pentecost Sunday 1987 and August 15, 1988, as a “Marian year.”

After a few conference calls the next day, we in Canada went into action and produced in three or four months quality material which would normally have required us a year. The two co-ordinated publications prepared by our office, Marian Year 1987-1988 and Marian Year Prayers, provided both guidance and helpful texts for liturgical celebrations in parishes and other communities and an extensive list of resources already contained in other liturgical books. As well, appropriate texts for celebrating the beginning and ending of the year were included.

A third book came out in Canada that year, Mary in the Liturgy, the third in our Canadian Studies in Liturgy series. The original was prepared in the most convoluted Italian by the Congregation for Sacred Worship. Our office asked Rev. Michael I. Kieffer, CR, to develop a reasonable translation of the text. Since the time this document was published however, it seems that not many have paid much attention to it. The wealth of its contents still deserves a fresh visit by liturgists, especially in the light of devotional developments as we approach the millennium.

c) Holy Year 1975: As a young man of nineteen, I entered the seminary in 1950, which was a holy year. While I remember reading about some special celebrations such as the declaration of the Assumption of Mary, those were the days before television in Canada.

When another holy year was declared for 1975, our office prepared copies of some Roman texts as translated by ICEL. I have no memories of anything spectacular produced or celebrated in that period.

d) Millennium 2000: In the fall of 1996, at the annual meeting of the Ontario Liturgical Conference, our national office showed me a copy in Italian of suggested texts for the millennium. They asked me to prepare a text to cover the needs of all
Preparing Canada's Basic Liturgical Resources

trying to co-ordinate liturgical principles, celebrations, and other events, in tune with the liturgy constitution and later liturgical documents. This came out some months ago, and further material will be covered in future issues of the bulletin.

Ecumenical co-operation

One of the goals of the Vatican Council, listed in the first paragraph of the constitution, was to promote a growing unity among all Christians. The decree on ecumenism, issued a year later, described ecumenism as a response to Jesus' prayer. The goal of ecumenical work is that we Christians will once again be able to celebrate eucharist together around one altar. The document states that the work of ecumenism is the duty of every Catholic. For the past nineteen years, Pope John Paul II has continued to emphasize ecumenism, especially as we come closer to the beginning of the third Christian millennium in the year 2000.

Liturgy and ecumenism can and should work together in renewing the Church of God on earth. Our liturgy office recognizes this and has co-operated with our own ecumenical desk and with the worship offices of other churches at the national international levels in several ways.

- Encouraging prayer for a growing unity among Christians: Our liturgical calendar promotes the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. For a number of years I was part of the group that developed the annual booklet; after the meetings were over, it was my task to present the final polished text in English. Our office composed some prayers for unity and included them in some of our publications.
- Working with national and international organizations: Members of the office staff or of the National Council for Liturgy worked with a wide variety of organizations which brought together the men and women who contributed much to the development of liturgical studies, documents, prayer texts, service books, hymnals, and other aids to good worship in a number of churches.
- Other publications: As our representative on the Consultation on Common Texts, Frank Henderson prepared ecumenical texts for baptism and marriage and worked on the Common Lectionary and the Revised Common Lectionary, as well as a revision of a form of the liturgy of the hours for use in ecumenical gatherings. I succeeded Frank in 1987 and continued working on these texts.

Ecumenical concerns have been discussed in several issues of the bulletin. We have encouraged those who are interested in liturgy to study the World Council of Churches document, Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry. Issued in 1982, this study points out how much we have in common and encourages all Christians to reflect on their own liturgies in the light of our common tradition since the time of the apostles and on the ways various churches have kept, changed or dropped these beliefs and practices.

Our National Liturgy Office has co-operated with many other groups and individuals to promote the unity of Christians, the unity prayed for and desired by Jesus.

Conclusion

Let me conclude with these notes:

a) Some reflections: During the past six months as I prepared this talk, I have been reflecting on this editorial work. Looking back, I am beginning to see the wonderful plan of God's love for the Church in our time, calling us to take an active and joyful part in renewing God's people by renewing our worship. The guiding hand of God has been leading us forward. Just look at the tremendous variety of gifts and talents that the Holy Spirit has poured out on the Church in English-speaking Canada: singing, playing musical instruments, composing, writing, editing, leading, teaching, organizing, gathering, encouraging, and having a positive vision of church—to mention only a few of these gifts.

In Canada we have been blessed with pastoral bishops who welcomed and grasped the vision offered to us by the Second Vatican Council, and who have led us for
the past thirty-five years—almost two generations—into a fuller sharing in our renewed and renewing worship of God.

I invite you to remember these words from the liturgy Constitution (no. 43) in 1963:

Zeal for the promotion and restoration of the liturgy is rightly held to be a sign of the providential dispositions of God in our time, a movement of the Holy Spirit in (the) Church. Today it is a distinguishing mark of the Church's life, indeed of the whole tenor of contemporary religious thought and life.

b) We have all been prepared for the work of renewal: When I look back over the many wonderful women and men who have contributed their skills, talents, gifts, enthusiasm, and dedication to the work of liturgical renewal in Canada during the past thirty-five years, I want to give thanks to God for the work of the Spirit of Jesus in our midst. Chapter 12 of First Corinthians is still alive!

I invite you to look into your own life and the lives of those who have kept the liturgical movement moving ahead in both fat and lean years. Recognize the ways in which our loving God has touched us and prepared us for our role in the Church's renewal. From the womb God has prepared each of us—like Jeremiah and John the Baptist and Jesus—to continue the work of the kingdom in our time and place. Thanks be to God for such wonderful love for the Church and for each of us!

c) Remember the pioneers: Over the years many people have contributed to the work of renewal in the Church's liturgy. Now is the time for us to begin to recall and record the work of the pioneers. If the people involved in liturgy in each diocese and religious congregation start now to gather notes and memories of what happened and when, these could be shared later with others.

Let me mention two pioneers among the many who have influenced my work over the years:

- John B. O'Donnell: John was a member of the National Council for Liturgy when it began to prepare Catholic Book of Worship I as the first national hymnal for Canada. He supervised the organization and preparation of both CBW I and CBW II. He was the diocesan director for liturgy in London for years and a longtime member of the national council. Now retired, he is serving as a pastor in Fort Smith in the North West Territories. We are indeed privileged to have Msgr. O'Donnell among us this week.

- Claire Dubé: Claire started working for Publications Service in July 1967, became its director in September 1971, and retired for reasons of health at the end of May 1997. She worked with both the English and the French sectors in Canada and internationally with ICEL and its French equivalent, Commission internationale francophone pour les traductions de la liturgie (CIFTL). With her encouragement and planning and co-operation, our Canadian bishops' conference has been able to produce in English and French hundreds of fine texts and aids for better liturgy from sea to sea (and from sea to see).

Claire is now dying from incurable cancer, and she has accepted this. I invite you to pray for her and to ask the Lord Jesus to give her strength and courage now, and when her time comes, to welcome her into everlasting peace and joy.

If there is a publication service in heaven, I am sure she will quickly take charge—and make a very good impression. I am looking forward to reading the heavenly Bulletin on Liturgy.

d) In conclusion:

- Too often we Canadians lack self-confidence. We tend to imitate the fads and the faults of bigger and more powerful countries.

- In the field of liturgy we can and should hold our heads high with justifiable pride. Although English-speaking Canadian Catholics are only 4.66 percent of the English-speaking Catholic world, our bishops' conference has far outscored all the rest in providing good liturgical books, stable resources like
the bulletin, and other helpful books or booklets for special occasions or needs.

- When I look back at the sixteen exciting years I spent as editorial assistant at the National Liturgy Office, I can now see how the Lord Jesus was guiding the Church in English-speaking Canada to meet, understand, embrace, and celebrate the renewed liturgies in harmony with the universal Church. Under the direction of the bishops who took part in Vatican II and their successors, we in Canada were able to enter into the first stages of renewal.

The editorial work of the office in the 1970s and 1980s has provided Canada's basic liturgical resources. These have given us a solid foundation for the work that continues now, and will continue, God willing, for many years to come.

Editorial note: Summaries of other presentations will carried in the coming issues of the bulletin.

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SUMMER SCHOOL FOR MUSICIANS
AUGUST 6-9, 1998

In order to reach a broader base of liturgical musicians, a decision was taken several years ago by the Ontario Liturgical Conference that the Summer School of Music would alternate between Toronto and another diocese in Ontario. The OLC is pleased to announce that the summer school will be hosted by the diocese of Thunder Bay.

For further information please contact:
Mr. Jim Suffak
Diocese of Thunder Bay
Phone: (807) 684-3492
Fax: (807) 345-5693

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1 Editorial note: It was announced as this bulletin was being prepared that Claire Dubé died on January 17. She lived in Aylmer, Quebec.
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SUMMER SCHOOL IN LITURGICAL STUDIES
Newman Theological College, Edmonton

Session I: July 6—17, 1998

Morning
- Introduction to Liturgy
  (Rev. Stephen Malkiewicz)
- Liturgical Prayer
  (Rev. Bill Corcoran)
- Ritual and Symbol in Pastoral Practice
  (Kim Wanner)

Evening
- Eucharist
  (Rev. Stephen Malkiewicz)
- Preparing for Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist with Children
  (Rev. Leo Hofmann)
- The Christian Initiation of Children
  (Rev. Bill Corcoran)

Session II: July 20—31, 1998

Morning
- The Liturgical Year and the Lectionary
  (Kim Wanner)
- The Word of God in the Lectionary, Year A
  (Rev. Lawrence Frizzell)
- Reconciliation
  (Rev. Jan Michael Joncas)

Evening
- The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults
  (Most Rev. Gerald Wiesner)
- Liturgies with Children and Youth
  (Marilyn Sweet)
- Liturgical Music for Sacramental Celebrations
  (Rev. Jan Michael Joncas)
- Pastoral Adaptation of the Byzantine Liturgy
  (Most Rev. Lawrence Huculak)

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