

Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults
The RCIA Process

--by Vickie Shepherd

The Mystagogy-Part II
Savoring The Paschal Meal
The RCIA Process

*'O God you are my portion and my cup;
In your presence there is fullness of joy,
And in your right hand
Are pleasures forever more.'*
Psalm 16

Mystagogy - such a curious word, it means to reflect on the mysteries of God. I consider mystagogy the most misunderstood of all the periods in this process, yet the richest in all its rewards. Each one of you has experienced a metamorphosis on the night of the vigil mass, being transformed into a new child of God you have been set free from your cocoon of darkness and have emerged into the light of Christ. The Holy Spirit unites you in communion with all our Christian brothers and sisters and especially with our Catholic family as we rejoice in your rebirth. Rebirth? Yes - you have been born again in the waters of baptism and in the fire of the Spirit in confirmation. Your life in the Spirit has been awakened, no longer is He pleased to slumber in the depths of our human blindness to Him. You have experienced Jesus through three sacramental signs during the Easter Vigil mass - they were through the living water in baptism, oil and the charisms of the Holy Spirit, and finally through the Eucharist. Let's explore the mysteries of the Eucharist a bit.

A Taste of the Kingdom

*"Blessed be the name of Jesus.
Blessed be His most sacred heart.
Blessed be His most precious blood.
Blessed be Jesus in the most holy sacrament of the altar."
(Reposition/Benediction)*

Eucharist: it means thanksgiving. While I was listening to the Catholic radio network in my area, the priest speaking was talking about the Eucharist. He stated that when we go to mass, we are there to show our thanks to God publicly. In the old Jewish tradition (probably before Jesus time), the people of that faith were to bring a sacrifice of their first fruits once a year. This was a mandatory law in their church, to publicly give thanks to God our creator. We come together at mass weekly to with others who have come to join us in worship and thanksgiving. We are publicly giving God our thanks. What was your experience as you approached the altar and received Jesus in the sacrament of the Eucharist? Mystagogy is the “experience” of God as sacrament.

As Catholics we believe that this bread and wine which God has provided for us is transformed through our faith and by the power of the Holy Spirit, into the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. The word sacrament is a form of the Greek word for mysteries, and there are mysteries surrounding our sacraments. Our professed belief in these most sacred symbols of our faith, help us to live out our union with Jesus, who is ever present in the sacraments. We not only experience the tangible symbolism of the sacraments through the water, oil, bread, and wine; but we also encounter a human quality which brings us into God’s all encompassing embrace -His loving touch. Our senses are overwhelmed as they taste and see the goodness of the Lord. There is an aromatic scent in the chrism of confirmation as it caresses your forehead, and it seems to permeate the air around us.

A Sweet Taste

When we come together at mass to worship and give thanks - we do so in communion with each person present in the Catholic Church, this is a part of the sacramental life we share as part of the body of Christ. We have known Jesus intimately; He has come to us through the paschal meal we consumed amorously in faith.

The mass is similar to a family reunion, we gather, eat our meal for sustenance, and leave to return to our lives and relish the time we did spend together as a family. When we attend mass, it is to gather as a family in Christ. We form his body, and each part performs a charism that has been given to us for a certain purpose. When we leave this gathering of family, we go forth into the world and share what God has gifted us with, and bring others who have strayed from his family back to Him. The paschal meal was our sustenance for this spiritual journey; we shall savor the sweetness, which is Jesus.

Another Jewish tradition is the presentation of a newborn during the first weeks of life in the Temple. The child is presented to God; the Torah is removed from its tabernacle and laid out on the altar. As the Rabbi prays the scriptures, he takes the baby’s finger and touches it to the Torah on the name that is Yahweh. Then the child’s finger is put into some honey and touched to his tongue. This is performed so that when the child speaks the name of Yahweh, the name “shall be

sweetness as it leaves his lips”.

May you always find the name of God sweetness on your lips as you praise and give thanks to Him. You have known the never-ending love of Jesus through the mysteries He has chosen to reveal to you through the sacraments, this past Easter. Let us go forth to proclaim to the nations that Jesus Christ is Lord! Let us go forth to love and serve him - always.

There is so much more to be shared, symbolism and our connections between the Jewish and Catholic traditions and practices. This is not the end of your road, it is the fork and you have a choice - to take the road that is traveled and worn or take the road less traveled. This is just the beginning of a life that has changed because God has touched it. Follow the path He has forged for you.

Peace be with you my brothers and sisters in Christ!

©Copyright 2000 Vickie Shepherd all rights reserved.
No portion of this article or web page may
be used without written permission from the author.
