“YOU ARE WITNESSES OF THESE THINGS”

PASTORAL FORMATION IN MYSTAGOGIA

"BUT YOU WILL RECEIVE POWER WHEN THE HOLY SPIRIT COMES UPON YOU, AND YOU WILL BE MY WITNESSES IN JERUSALEM, THROUGHOUT JUDEA AND SAMARIA, AND TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH." —ACTS 1:8

SYMBOLON
ADULT FORMATION AND RCIA
INTRODUCTION

• Pastoral formation in this period centers around assisting the neophytes in becoming witnesses and instruments of charity in the world:

“The neophytes are, as the term ‘mystagogy’ suggests, introduced into a fuller and more effective understanding of the mysteries through the Gospel message they have learned and above all through their experience of the sacraments they have received... Out of this experience, which belongs to Christians and increases as it is lived, they derive a new perception of the faith, of the Church, and of the world.” —RCIA 245

• Neophyte in Greek literally means “newly planted” and refers to the new faith that has been received through Baptism, but also to the newly planted seed of faith to be nurtured and nourished during the period of Mystagogia so that it can be brought to maturity and fruitfulness.

• Three major areas of pastoral formation can be identified:

→ The call to holiness and ongoing conversion
→ The call to active participation in the Christian community
→ The call to be instruments of charity and living witnesses to the world

• The entire Christian community as well as godparents, parish priests, and the RCIA team are to give help and support to the neophytes as they grow in the new faith that they have received.

• The godparents and sponsors play a particularly important role in this period.
II. THE CALL TO HOLINESS AND ONGOING CONVERSION

• Thus, this period is all about strengthening the faith of the neophytes and helping them to grow in holiness and their communion with Christ and the Church.

• The godparents and sponsors in particular are to walk with their neophytes, encourage them in the midst of these temptations and challenges, and encourage them in their ongoing journey of faith.

• This pastoral principle guides both the catechetical formation and the liturgical formation that takes place during this period:
  
  → Catechetical: Deeper understanding and appreciation of the paschal mystery and how it is lived out in their baptismal call through ongoing catechetical and theological formation.
  
  → Liturgical: Frequent Confession, reception of the Eucharist, and a growing understanding of Christian prayer and spirituality.

III. THE CALL TO ACTIVE PARTICIPATION IN THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

• Another major pastoral priority in the period of Mystagogia is to assist the neophytes in assimilating into the life of the parish and becoming active participants in the Christian community.

• The godparents and sponsors must assist them by:
  
  → Introducing their neophytes to other parishioners
  
  → Introducing them to the various ministries and service opportunities in the parish
  
  → Accompanying them to Sunday Mass and other parish services and/or events
  
  → Educating them on the life and culture of the parish
  
  → Helping them transition into parish life without the supportive environment of RCIA
  
  → Assisting their neophytes, along with the RCIA team, in their vocational discernment and their discernment of charisms
VI. THE CALL TO BE INSTRUMENTS OF CHARITY AND WITNESS TO THE WORLD

WORKS OF CHARITY AND MERCY

• During the period of Mystagogia, the neophytes should be encouraged to participate in acts of charity and service to the parish and the wider community as a part of their post-baptismal formation to participate in their sharing in the kingly mission of Christ and the calling of Matthew 25.

EVANGELIZATION AND WITNESS

• The neophytes should also receive formation and guidance in their mission of sharing in the prophetic mission of Christ and in proclaiming the Gospel in word and deed through evangelization and witness.
PARISH DISCUSSION AND ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

1. What are we doing well?

2. What needs to be improved?

3. Questions or action items for further implementation?