

Liturgical Catechesis and the Formation of the Faithful

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Abstract

Liturgy and Catechesis impact on the life of the Church, especially the faith formation of the people of God. This is because in celebration, the Church displays her teaching office and in teaching, the Church demonstrates what her worship is. Liturgical catechesis, in its methodology, employs liturgical and catechetical tools. Liturgical catechesis uses the constituting elements of the liturgy, the content of the liturgical rite that is celebrated and the application of the liturgical catechetical principles of mystagogy, for the post-celebration mystagogy, for the overall formation of the faithful.

Keywords: Liturgy, Catechesis, Formation, Faith, Liturgical Catechesis, Mystagogy, Mission.

1. Introduction

The mission to make disciples and bring humanity into the fold of Christ is the preeminent duty of the Church. Liturgical Catechesis is one of the primordial means of fulfilling this mandate. Liturgical Catechesis does this in a variety of ways, thus accomplishing a progressive formation of the people of God for the mission they are mandated to carry on for Christ, the attainment of Christian maturity and readiness to witness for Christ in the world. The liturgy, from which liturgical catechesis is a branch, builds up and nourishes the Church and contains much for the edification of the faithful. Especially through its use of signs, symbols, words, prayer texts, scripture, actions, gestures, postures, sacraments, liturgical year, sacred art and furnishings, music, the liturgy demonstrates

that it has didactic and pedagogical functions. These functions and the fundamental content of the liturgy, when utilized in the proper way, promote the formation of the faithful. In this paper, after a brief consideration of liturgy and catechesis and their relationship and inter-relatedness, there will be an examination of the concept “liturgical catechesis” and its usefulness in the overall formation of the faithful.

2. Catechesis and Liturgy: A Brief Clarification of Conceptual Boundaries

The term, liturgical catechesis, is composed of two terms, liturgy and catechesis. The term Liturgy refers to the whole activity of Christ, who in union with his bride, the Church, gives glory, honour, praise, thanksgiving to the Father and brings sanctification and blessing upon mankind. As the public worship of the entire mystical body of Christ, head and members, it continues the work of salvation entrusted by Christ to His bride, the Church. It is the epiphany of Christ and of the Church and the re-enactment, representation and continuation of the Paschal Mystery of Christ. In its character, the liturgy is theocentric, Christocentric, missiological, didactic, revelatory and epiphanic.¹ It is the locus where the presence of Christ is manifested, the *culmen* (summit) *et fons* of all the activities of the Church.² Catechesis is “the whole of the efforts within the Church to make disciples, to help people to believe that Jesus is the Son of God, so that believing they might have life in His name, and to educate and instruct them in this life and thus build up the Body of Christ.”³ Catechesis is founded on

¹ Cf. Anthony O. Igbekele, “Understanding Sacred Liturgy in Nigeria”, in *Theory and Praxis of Sacred Liturgy in Nigeria*, A Festschrift in Honour of Most. Rev. Prof. Augustine Ndubueze Echema, ed. E.C. Anagwo, K. Anyanwu, (Umuahia: Sons Digital Press, 2021), 51-53; Anthony O. Igbekele, “The Theological Nature of the Liturgy”, in *Faithful Serve and Witness in the Church, Celebrating Four Great Men of Bodija*, ed. A. Jimoh, A. Igbekele *et al* (Ibadan: Kraft Books Limited, 2021), 292

² Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, “The Constitution on Sacred Liturgy: *Sacrosanctum Concilium*”, in Austin Flannery, *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post-Conciliar Documents*, (Mumbai: St. Pauls, Bandra, 2007), 25.

³ John Paul II, “Apostolic Exhortation, *Catechesi Tradendae*: On Catechesis in Our Time”, in

the final command of Christ to make disciples and teach all nations,⁴ thus manifesting the interconnectedness between Catechesis and mission and revealing Christ as the origin of Catechesis. The missionary command reveals the *munus* (office, function, role) of the Church as teacher and formator of the human person in the faith, in the words, actions, deeds and life of Christ.

2.1 Liturgy and Catechesis: An Uneasy Relationship

The formation of the faithful forms part and parcel of the mission of the Church, which is the salvation of souls. To achieve this, the Church makes use of various tools and means, principal among which is liturgical catechesis. Liturgical catechesis is a binomy that expresses two realities that are not contradistinct but mutually symbiotic. This is because both liturgy and catechesis have as their focus, the explanation of the faith and the celebration of that same faith. Both Liturgy and Catechesis make use of cultural tools. Liturgy lays claim to being the “moment” of salvation history in so far as the actions performed within and through it manifest the obedience to the command of Christ. By virtue of the will of Christ that there should be a continuation of the work of salvation accomplished by Him, the liturgy, in which the salvific actions are made present, and with the active presence of Christ, in a direct and efficacious way, fulfils this mandate. These notwithstanding, the frosty relationship and uneasy dialogue⁵ and the diversity of

http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_16101979_catechesi-tradendae.html, (Accessed 10th October 2019).

⁴ Cf. John Paul II, “Apostolic Exhortation, *Catechesi Tradendae*, 25.

⁵ The opinions of various scholars on this problematic have been well noted by Domenico Sartore. Reviewing the itinerary of this relationship and the opinions and judgement of scholars, Sartore concluded that there “complaints about attitudes of mutual mistrust, due also to the lack of catechetical formation in ordained ministers and of liturgical formation in catechists.” Cf. Domenico Sartore, “Catechesis and Liturgy”, in *Handbook for Liturgical Studies II: Fundamental Liturgy*, ed. by A. J. Chupungco (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1998), 97. Catechesis has been accused of not giving “proper emphasis to the liturgy, to what it represents in the history of salvation, in the life of the Church, and in the concrete experience of individual believers.” Catechesis has been accused of concerning itself with “proclamation and with its translation into concrete living” and of not being sensitive toward the celebrative event. Liturgy is

sensitivity and mentality manifested by both disciplines, have been highlighted.⁶

We, however, posit that there is a symbiosis between catechesis and the liturgy. The two have the mystery of salvation as their object, and the Christ event as their content. Both are Christo-centric in all their activities; both have the mystery of Christ as their inspiration and guiding force. Catechesis is thus important to the liturgy. The deposits of the faith that Catechesis seeks to unravel and make available to the people is the same mystery of faith that is celebrated within the liturgical action. Both Catechesis and liturgy are founded on the command of Christ. Catechesis has a deep link with the totality of the liturgical and sacramental activity in the Church.⁷ This is because the fullness of transformation that Christ wants to achieve in the lives of individual believers is achieved through the sacraments, foremost among which is the Eucharist. The link between the liturgy and catechesis has been present since the early Church, especially when the catechumenate and preparation for the sacraments of initiation were believed to be coterminous.

The link between liturgy and catechesis is also seen in the area of the praxis-liturgica, that is, in the actual celebration of the liturgy of the Church.⁸ Thus, catechesis has a task to perform in liturgy. In fact, the liturgy can be described as catechesis in action. Catechesis in the liturgy is the whole process of using the moment of celebration and worship to carry on the catechetical mandate, to

seen as “exploited as a function of catechetical objectives or of objectives not otherwise respecting the nature of the liturgy itself...” Domenico Sartore, “Catechesis and Liturgy”, 98. It has also been alleged that the liturgy is incorrectly treated by catechisms. Experts in Catechesis also accused liturgist of absolutizing “the liturgy as if it were the exclusive place for the actuation of Christ’s salvific work, and they do not give sufficient importance to evangelization, to catechesis, to Christian life, or even to God’s sovereign freedom in the divine intervention of salvation.” Domenico Sartore, “Catechesis and Liturgy”, 99

⁶ Domenico Sartore, “Catechesis and Liturgy”, 99-100

⁷ Cf. John Paul II, “Apostolic Exhortation, *Catechesi Tradendae*, 23.

⁸ Cf. “Congregation for the Clergy, *General Directory for Catechesis*” 25, in http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cclergy/documents/rc_con_c_catheduc_doc_17041998_directory-for-catechesis_en.html (Accessed 10th October, 2019).

instruct and teach the people on the faith. In this regard, catechesis, within the ambient of the liturgy, should transform itself into mystagogy.⁹

2.2 The Methodological Approaches of Liturgy and Catechesis

Liturgy, as a discipline, has both revelation and sacred tradition as its point of departure. While doing this, it does not close itself to the dynamicity of the human person, change, progress and the evolution of the human person as affected by culture, milieu, experience, and the understanding of the demands of God. Liturgy, which is founded on the word of God,¹⁰ is studied under its “theological, historical, spiritual, pastoral and juridical aspects.”¹¹ Consequently, in its methodological approach, liturgy makes use of the historical method, that is the evolution of rites, texts and liturgical families;¹² the textual-critical-hermeneutical method;¹³ the theological method and foundation,¹⁴ which considers the liturgical data and its celebrative dimensions and the faith of the Church as mutually inclusive and complementary; the *lex orandi*

⁹ Cf. Domenico Sartore, “Catechesis and Liturgy”, 106.

¹⁰ See Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, “The Constitution on Sacred Liturgy” 24; Renato De Zan, “Bible and Liturgy”, in *Handbook for Liturgical Studies I: Introduction to the Liturgy*, ed. by A. J. Chupungco, (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1997), 34.

¹¹ Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, “The Constitution on Sacred Liturgy” 16, 27.

¹² Cf. Anscar J. Chupungco, “History of the Liturgy Until the Fourth Century”, in *Handbook for Liturgical Studies I: Introduction to the Liturgy*, ed. by A. J. Chupungco, (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1997), 95-98.

¹³ Cf. Renato De Zan, “Criticism and Interpretation of Liturgical Texts”, in *Handbook for Liturgical Studies I: Introduction to the Liturgy*, ed. by A. J. Chupungco, (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1997), 341-365; Renato De Zan, “Liturgical Textual Criticism”, in *Handbook for Liturgical Studies I: Introduction to the Liturgy*, 367-379.

¹⁴ Cf. Ambrosius Verheul, *Introduction to the Liturgy: Towards a Theology of Worship*, (London: Burn & Oates), 1968; Joseph Ratzinger, *The Feast of Faith: Approaches to a Theology of the Liturgy*, (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1986); D. Vogel (ed.), *Primary Sources of Liturgical Theology: A Reader*, (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 2000); Aidan Cavanagh, *On Liturgical Theology*, (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 2017);

which interfaces with the *lex credendi* and gives rise to the *lex agendi*.¹⁵ Both Liturgy and Catechesis, in their methodological approaches, make use of pedagogical tools.¹⁶

Catechesis and liturgy, are two distinct theological disciplines, in which none is subservient to the other. Both have the content of faith and the human response to it, as their points of departure and growth in Christian maturity and development of authentic Christian life as their points of arrival. Both lay claims to responding to the command of Christ to make disciples through teaching and sustain them through the word and sacraments. Catechesis and Liturgy also have the formation of the individual as their primary goal and responsibility and claim these responsibilities as coming from Christ Himself. From these, we see that both have areas of collaboration, cooperation, dialogue and encounter that should be strengthened for pastoral practice.

3. Liturgical Catechesis

Liturgical catechesis is the process whereby the liturgy, in its constituting elements, is used for the instruction of the people. In this regard, the actions, words, signs, symbols, gestures, texts, songs, words, art, language of the liturgy, are seen to have significations that possess pedagogical efficacy. Consequently, liturgy is seen to possess a catechetical character. The catechetical character of the liturgy, that is, liturgical catechesis or the liturgical-catechetical apostolate,¹⁷ was highlighted at the Second

¹⁵ Cf. Prosper Aquitanus, *Praetereitorum sedis apostolicae Episcoporum auctoritates: De gratia dei et libero voluntatis arbitrio* VIII, ed. by J. P. Migne (Paris: Francis Gallicis, 1861), 209-210; T. Berger, "Lex orandi-Lex credenda-Lex Agendi. Auf dem Weg zu einer okumenisch konsensfähigen Verhaeltnisbestimmung von Liturgie, Theologie und Ethik", *Liturgiewissenschaft* 27 (1985), 429; Kingley I. Nze, "The Dynamic Lex Agendi of the Liturgy: Towards a Dialectic of Communion", in *Theory and Praxis of Sacred Liturgy in Nigeria: A Festschrift in Honour of Most Rev. Prof. Augustine Ndubueze Echema*, ed. by E.C. Anagwo, K. Anyanwu, (Umuahia: Sons Digital Press, 2021), 77-80.

¹⁶ Pedagogy may here be described as a process of leading and guiding in the faith that gradually leads the one guided through experiences to the attainment of the universality of truths.

¹⁷ The terminology, "liturgical-catechetical apostolate" is a coinage of the author, which is meant to express that aspect of the work of making disciples and winning

Vatican Council. For instance, while SC 14 avers that the liturgy is “the first and indispensable source from which the faithful can draw the genuine Christian spirit”; SC 33 states clearly that the liturgy is a “rich font of instruction for the faithful;” and SC35, in stating the conciliar agenda for liturgical catechesis, avers that “instruction which is more explicitly liturgical should also be given in a variety of ways. If necessary, short directives to be spoken by the priest or competent minister should be provided within the rites themselves.” Liturgical catechesis can also be understood as catechesis within and through the liturgy. The value of giving a catechetical dimension to liturgical action, especially in the preparation for the sacraments and participation in the liturgical action, was also brought out in the post-Conciliar liturgical books,¹⁸ especially the post-Conciliar Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (henceforth RCIA), which, following the patristic model, has a program that is tripartite in its enunciation, formulation and praxis: evangelization, catechesis and mystagogy.¹⁹

3.1 The “Moment” of Liturgical Catechesis

The moment of liturgical catechesis is rich and diversified. Liturgical catechesis could take place in various ways, for instance, through the constituting elements of the liturgy, the liturgical celebration itself by utilizing the essential components of the liturgy to promote faith formation, the various preparations for the reception of the sacraments, and finally, after the celebration, in that larger liturgical catechesis for life.

souls through the liturgical and catechetical actions and dimensions in the life and mission of the Church.

¹⁸ Cf. Domenico Sartore, “Catechesis and Liturgy”, 102.

¹⁹ “Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults”, in <https://www.liturgyoffice.org.uk/Resources/Rites/RCIA.pdf>, (Accessed 1st November, 2019).

3.2 The word of God and Liturgical Catechesis

The word contains the record of the mystery of salvation. The liturgy recalls or unfolds and celebrates the mystery of Christ.²⁰ Consequently, the word of God has a perennial role in the liturgy and life of the Church. The word of God is not just one of the elements that make up the liturgy; it is the actuating element.²¹ This is because the liturgy is founded on and is rich on the divine word of God.²² There is, thus, an indestructible bond between the word of God and the Liturgy,²³ such that in the liturgy, the word becomes living word, takes on actuality during the readings, the homily, the universal prayer, the various prayer texts, the signs and symbols, and the actions that constitute the liturgy. Consequently, “the liturgy...is the perfect actualization of the biblical texts, for it places the proclamation in the midst of the community of believers, gathered around Christ so as to draw near to God.”²⁴ Its character as the living word of God imposes the obligation to be conversant with “the Sacred Scriptures and be penetrated with their spirit”;²⁵ to hear the word, proclaim it with faith, hand it on through preaching.²⁶ This can only be done in a situation where there is an assiduous encounter with the word, so that it could be lived and

²⁰ Cf. “Congregation for Divine Worship: General Introduction to the Lectionary”, in <https://www.ewtn.com/catholicism/library/general-introduction-to-the-lectionary-second-edition-2189>, (Accessed 10th November 2021).

²¹ Cf. Renato De Zan, “Bible and Liturgy”, in *Handbook for Liturgical Studies 1: Introduction to the Liturgy*, ed. By A. J. Chupungco, (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1997), 33-34.

²² “Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, Dei Verbum”, in Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post-Conciliar Documents, ed. by Austin Flannery, (Mumbai: St. Pauls, Bandra, 2007), 674

²³ Cf. “Sacred Congregation for the Sacraments and Divine Worship, *General Introduction to the Lectionary*”, in <https://www.ewtn.com/catholicism/library/general-introduction-to-the-lectionary-second-edition-2189> (Accessed 28th June, 2021).

²⁴ “The Pontifical Biblical Commission, *The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church*” in https://catholic-resources.org/ChurchDocs/PBC_Interp-FullText.htm, (Accessed 10th November, 2019).

²⁵ Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, “Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, Dei Verbum”, 25.

²⁶ Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, “Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, Dei Verbum”, 1.

handed on. In the liturgy, God who auto-revealed himself through His Son and the Holy Spirit²⁷ and whose deeds are recorded in Scripture, speaks once again to his people and moves them to action. The revelation of God has to be handed on. Preaching is one preeminent way of achieving this.²⁸ The witness of life is another. The liturgy is the preeminent place where the Sacred Text and the Sacred Tradition, revealed and handed down, are encountered.

The liturgy is the place where the table of God's word and Christ's Body are received by the Church and offered to the faithful.²⁹ Both the word and the Body of the Lord constitute the bread of life.³⁰ God meets and speaks with his children, nourishes them, and uses the word as the "support and energy of the Church, the strength of faith for her sons, the food of the soul, the pure and everlasting source of spiritual life."³¹ The ministry of the word, pastoral preaching, catechetics, liturgical homily, flourish and are all nourished by the Scripture.³² The word, therefore, has an actuating power in liturgical catechesis. From these, we see the role of Scripture in liturgical catechesis. Liturgical catechesis, through the homily, is based on the word of God, derives its power from it and is nourished by it.³³

3.3 The Homily and Liturgical Catechesis

One of the preeminent places that reveals Christ is the word, since Christ is present in the word and speaks when the scripture is

²⁷ Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, "Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, Dei Verbum", 2.

²⁸ Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, "Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, Dei Verbum", 7.

²⁹ Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, "Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, Dei Verbum", 21.

³⁰ Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, "Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, Dei Verbum", 21.

³¹ Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, "Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, Dei Verbum", 21.

³² Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, "Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, Dei Verbum", 24.

³³ Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, "Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, Dei Verbum", 24.

read.³⁴ An important aspect of the ministry of the word is the homily. In it, faith is nourished. Through the priest, God speaks through the preacher to his people and instructs them.³⁵ The liturgical homily, in its character and content, is intended as a proclamation of “God’s wonderful works in the history of salvation, the mystery of Christ, ever made present and active within us, especially in the celebration of the liturgy.”³⁶ The homily is the place where the faithful are instructed in “the mysteries of the faith and the guiding principles of the Christian life are expounded from the sacred text.”³⁷ Liturgical homily must therefore be based on the word of God, be nourished and regulated by it. Liturgical homily is enriched through inward listening to God’s word and prayer. The homily, the reflection on the word of God, is a veritable locus for liturgical catechesis. The homily could also use the texts of the liturgy as its source, since the texts of the liturgy are drawn from the word of God. The homily, is therefore, the privileged place for telling the story of God’s encounter with humanity, the place of Jesus in that encounter, disclosing the history of salvation with its culmination in the Paschal Mystery, teaching doctrine and the faith of the Church, shaping conduct, imparting morals, galvanizing the faithful for authentic discipleship, teaching on the true nature of the Church and her mission in the world.

3.4 Liturgical Catechesis Through the Constituting Elements of the Liturgy

Liturgical catechesis can validly utilize the liturgical prayer texts, which express deep faith and demonstrate the truth of the maxim, *lex orandi statuatur lex credendi*. As mastication of the faith of the praying Church, such that what the Church prays is what the

³⁴ “He is present in His word, since it is He Himself who speaks when the holy scriptures are read in the Church.” Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, “The Constitution on Sacred Liturgy”, 7.

³⁵ Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, “The Constitution on Sacred Liturgy”, 33.

³⁶ Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, “The Constitution on Sacred Liturgy”, 35.

³⁷ Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, “The Constitution on Sacred Liturgy”, 52.

Church believes, the essential aspects of our faith in the Trinity, the word of God, the moral life, life with others, citizenship of the earthly city, deep longing for the world to come, and other important themes on faith, all come to play in the prayer texts of the Church. When fully understood, the liturgical prayer texts will reveal themselves as condensation of points of faith and doctrine, of the word of God, and the demands these have on the Christian life. The prayer texts are, therefore, good for liturgical catechesis.

Liturgical catechesis uses signs and symbols that the liturgy is replete with: assembly, minister, time, space, materials drawn from nature, rites and rituals and texts.³⁸ Liturgical signs and symbols have didactic-pedagogical functions with reference to the faith formation of the faithful. Signs and symbols used in the liturgy perform 'sacramental' functions since they signify and point to realities that are beyond them and effect what they signify.³⁹ Signs derive their being from Christ, the primordial sign, who, at the Incarnation, became the definitive sign of God's presence among us. Liturgical signs are taken from created nature and therefore belong to the sacramentality of creation in which things created by God are seen as good and useful for the praise and worship of God. God's actions are mediated to us through signs that are perceptible to our senses.

Liturgical catechesis uses the actions of the liturgy. Liturgy is full of actions. The first and primordial of these are the actions of God in the history of salvation, which form the content of what is celebrated in the liturgy; the actions of Jesus Christ, the perfect revelation of the Father and the giver of the fullness of divine worship; the actions of the Holy Spirit from creation to redemption and salvation, in the life of the Church and to the end of time.

³⁸ Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, "The Constitution on Sacred Liturgy", 28.

³⁹ "Liturgical signs form a language that prolongs the words of the liturgy or lends them a greater intensity: the evocative power of signs makes it easier to understand the message, and on the other hand it gives more powerful expression to interior feelings and attitudes." Cf. A. G. Martimort, "Liturgical Signs", in *The Church at Prayer: An Introduction to the Liturgy*, New Edition, ed. by I.H. Dalmais, P.M. Gy, P. Jounel, A. G. Martimort, and M. J. O'Connell, (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1987), 174.

Following these are the actions that are proper and constitutive of the liturgy, which are carried on by the Church in obedience to the command of Christ, some of which are prayer, contemplation, concern for the human person, silence etc. Liturgical catechesis also takes place through the gestures and postures that are used in the liturgy. Some of these are kneeling, standing, lifting up of the head and movement. The gestures and postures are not arbitrary, conventional but authorized and sanctioned by the Church. This is because they follow certain criteria that make them bearers of pedagogical possibilities. Postures and gestures are also for the most part inspired by scripture. Their use within the liturgical celebration, therefore, link them with these scriptural motifs and remind the people about the fundamental importance of the word of God and its indestructible bond with the liturgy.

Liturgical catechesis can be profitably carried out through the Eucharist and the other sacraments. The Eucharist, being the sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ, is a prime place for formation of the faithful, especially during the course of its celebration. The individual parts of the Eucharist, are also sources for liturgical catechesis, for instance, the entrance rites, the liturgy of the word that concludes with the Universal Prayer, the Liturgy of the Eucharist, the Liturgy of the Dismissal. The implications of these for growth in the faith, the nourishment of faith, are incalculable. The other sacraments, being anamnesis of what the Lord did and imitation of his actions, celebrated in obedience to his command and based on scripture, continue the work of salvation accomplished by Him. The liturgical Year, that organization of the celebration of the mysteries of salvation within the course of an annual cycle, with its individual parts, is a place for liturgical catechesis. The individual events of the liturgical year commemorate specific moments of salvation, make them present for the celebrating assembly and perform didactic-pedagogical functions.

Sacred Art and Furnishings are within the realm of what can be seen and perceived with the eyes and the senses. By virtue of their aesthetic appeal and their ability to convey the mysteries of salvation in pictorial fashion, Sacred Art and Furnishings perform great roles in liturgical catechesis. The scriptural passages, scenes

and teachings have always found a home in Sacred Art and Furnishings, especially during the period when literacy was not generally diffused. Being images that appeal to the senses, the lessons obtained through Sacred Art and Furnishings imprint themselves on the memory. Sacred Music is an important component of the liturgy. Songs raise the heart and mind to God. Music performs a didactic and ministerial function within the liturgy. Based on its sweet and melodious nature, it is a powerful transmitter of God's word, the faith of the Church and the content of the Sacred Deposit. Through Sacred Music, liturgical catechesis can validly be carried out to enhance the faith formation of the faithful. The Liturgy of the Hours (henceforth LH), founded on the word of God and the tradition of a Church that knows how to pray, is a veritable source for liturgical catechesis, especially through the scriptural texts, songs, patristic and hagiographical texts, signs and symbols used for its liturgical celebration.

Liturgical catechesis can also validly take place after the celebration of the liturgy. This is important when one considers the fact that the moment of celebration should translate into living of life, post celebration. Liturgical catechesis, seen in this way, translates the liturgy-faith relationship experienced within the celebration into liturgy-real life concerns and informed, matured interventions after the celebration.

3.5 Liturgical-Sacramental Catechesis

The Sacraments of Christian Initiation, the gateway to all the other sacraments, require adequate and sustained preparation, since the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults has the reception of the sacraments at the Paschal Vigil as their goal, end and focus. The preparation is therefore focused on the Paschal Mystery, especially as the sacraments of Christian Initiation that the catechumens would receive on the Paschal Vigil are intrinsically and intimately connected to, are founded on, receive their nourishment from, and find their actualization in the Paschal Mystery of the Passion, Death and Resurrection of the Lord. There should be catechesis for the reception of the Sacrament of Reconciliation and Penance, the Anointing of the Sick, Holy Orders and Matrimony. This catechesis

includes teaching on the meaning of the sacraments, their scriptural basis, institution, theology, pastoral, celebrative, liturgy to life and life to liturgy dialectical aspects. Sacramental catechesis as a preparation for the reception of the sacraments must not be limited only to the period of intellectual formation for the reception of the sacraments, that is, the so-called catechetical instruction. It should be an ongoing formation. This should be catechesis within and through the liturgy, that is, catechesis when the liturgical rites are being celebrated, the significance of the rites, actions, rites, words, gestures, signs, symbols.

4. A Re-Proposal of the Patristic-Mystagogical Model

I will here re-propose the mystagogical model or method as a veritable tool for post initiation liturgical-catechetical formation. What then is Mystagogy? Mystagogy could be described as the whole process that seeks “to give a theological explanation not only of the sacramental fact, but of each rite making up the liturgical celebration.”⁴⁰ It “signifies catechetical instruction on the sacraments, with special reference to the sacraments of Christian initiation and to the deeper spiritual meaning of the liturgical rites.”⁴¹ It could be interpreted to mean “to teach a doctrine” and “to initiate into the mysteries”, “performance of a sacred action”, “oral or written explanation” and *mystagogia* was “always connected with *mysterion*, *mystikos*, and *mystes*”.⁴² Apart from these different interpretations, the Greek Fathers gave different senses in which the word could be understood: “oral or written explanation of the mystery hidden in the Scriptures and celebrated in the liturgy”; “explanation of the spiritual sense of the Scriptures”; “explanation of the figures contained in the Old Testament and fulfilled in the New, or of the eschatological realities announced by the Church.”⁴³ Mystagogy, therefore has to do with explanation. The content of this explanation is the

⁴⁰ Enrico Mazza, *Mystagogy: A Theology of Liturgy in the Patristic Age*, trans. by Matthew J. O’Connell, (New York: Pueblo Publishing Company, 1989), ix.

⁴¹ Enrico Mazza, *Mystagogy: A Theology of Liturgy in the Patristic Age*, 1.

⁴² Enrico Mazza, *Mystagogy: A Theology of Liturgy in the Patristic Age*, 1.

⁴³ Enrico Mazza, *Mystagogy: A Theology of Liturgy in the Patristic Age*, 2.

sacramental fact and the rites of the liturgical celebration. E Mazza has held that biblical typology was the methodological framework prevalent in mystagogy.⁴⁴ In the patristic age, the mystagogical catechesis were given in liturgical contexts. They were delivered to provide explanations to the neophytes on the meaning and significance of the mysteries they had come to participate in during the Easter Vigil.

The mystagogical method was a favourite theological-liturgical-catechetical-formative methodology used in the early Church, especially in Patristic liturgical catechesis. We refer to it as catechetical even though the Fathers themselves saw the further grounding of the neophytes in the faith as their primary focus and consideration. We can therefore say that mystagogy was not intended by the Fathers as classroom or scholastic exegesis or high-sounding theological ruminations on the truths of faith. For the Fathers, the intention was to convey the deepest meanings and implications of the sacraments of Initiation received during the Easter Vigil to the neophytes. This was why the preferred context of these “mystagogies” were during homilies and sometimes, but not often, in commentaries. The locus for these homilies were therefore the Cathedrals. The “mystagogue” or the person responsible for imparting the mystagogical teaching was the bishop. The context was therefore predominantly liturgical. The content of the teaching were the liturgical mysteries the neophytes participated in for the first time during the Easter Vigil. In mystagogy, both liturgical and catechetical exigencies of celebrating and handing on the faith, of the continued hermeneutics of the faith within the post-baptismal context, met and encountered in an admirable way. Mystagogy, as used by the Fathers, assisted in making the faith and the mysteries celebrated more intelligible, and helped in domesticating the faith and the liturgical mysteries in the life of the persons who participated in them so that they could become what they celebrated and could express in their lives the deepest and most profound implications of what they had celebrated and come to believe in and make them the source and end of their daily lives.

⁴⁴ Enrico Mazza, *Mystagogy: A Theology of Liturgy in the Patristic Age*, xii.

Post initiation mystagogy refers to post initiation faith formation. Formation, by its character, is a life-long commitment of time, resources, energy, intellect and life. Formation involves learning, moulding, configuration, assimilation, execution, performance and implementation. It presupposes an attitude of openness to other possibilities, acknowledgement that one does not know everything, which leads to submission to the acquired knowledge and expertise of another. Mystagogy, which is both the “final period of the initiation of adults”⁴⁵ and a “process and catechetical method”,⁴⁶ has to do with deeper instruction, explanation and interpretation of the spiritual meaning of the mysteries of the liturgical rites, especially the sacraments, to the neophytes. “The purpose of the mystagogy is to enable the newly baptized to draw from their sacramental experience a new sense of the faith, the Church, and the world.”⁴⁷ Mystagogy is, therefore, both a pastoral practice⁴⁸ and a theological reflection on the liturgy for the living of practical post baptismal life. In its etymology, it means “to teach a doctrine... and... to initiate into the mysteries.”⁴⁹ It could therefore mean two things: “performance of a sacred action” and “oral or written explanation” of the mystery hidden in the scriptures and celebrated in the liturgy.”⁵⁰ It seeks to “give a theological explanation not only

⁴⁵ “Rite of Christian Initiation of Adult” *International Commission on English in the Liturgy and the Bishops’ Committee on the Liturgy*, (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 1988), 37.

⁴⁶ Guadalupe Ramirez, “Mystagogy and On-going Adult Faith Formation: A Treatise, Catholic University of America” Washington DC 2013, in <https://cuislandora.wrlc.org/islandora/object/etd%3A346/datastream/PDF/view>, (Accessed 16th April 2021).

⁴⁷ “Mystagogy” in <https://www.encyclopedia.com/religion/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/mystagogy>, (Accessed 15th March 2021).

⁴⁸ Cf. David Regan, “A ‘New’ Pastoral Practice: Mystagogy”, *The Furrow* 44,7/8 (1993), 416-422, in <https://www.jstor.org/stable/27662467>, (Accessed 26th April 2021).

⁴⁹ Enrico Mazza, *Mystagogy: A Theology of Liturgy in the Patristic Age*, 1.

⁵⁰ René Bornert, *Les commentaires byzantins de la divine liturgie du VIIe au XVe siècle*, Archives de l’Orient chretien in Enrico Mazza, *Mystagogy: A Theology of Liturgy in the Patristic Age*, trans. by Matthew J. O’Connell, (New York: Pueblo Publishing Company, 1989), ix. 1.

of the sacramental fact, but of each rite making up the liturgical celebration.”⁵¹

Liturgical Mystagogy, which has four essential elements, “community, liturgy, catechesis, and mission,”⁵² is about leading the people into these mysteries, that is, guiding them to a deeper and mystical understanding of external signs, rites, rituals, ceremonies, words, texts, gestures, prayers, actions, in sum, the *totus liturgicus*. Liturgical mystagogy,⁵³ aimed at adult formation⁵⁴, is therefore, aimed more at building the people, over and above structures. In liturgical mystagogy, when the people, who are the enduring structures of the Church, its strength and guiding force, have been built, the same people in their turn build structures for the Church. With liturgical mystagogy, no resources are considered too great to be spent for the formation of the real Church of God, that is, the people. The exposition of the inner value of the mysteries celebrated and of the theological depth of the sacraments and the liturgical celebration of the faith of the Church, are possible through the post initiation liturgical mystagogy. By its nature, the liturgical mystagogy of the Fathers of the Church was never in any way speculative. This fact is exemplified in the locus for the delivery, which was always the church or in a liturgical assembly and the genre is almost always homiletic. Consequently, the Fathers in their pastoral solicitude for the flock, were interested in furthering the growth of the life of faith of the new believers. A re-proposition of liturgical mystagogy as an effective tool for post-initiation faith formation and deepening of Christian life, is

⁵¹ Enrico Mazza, *Mystagogy: A Theology of Liturgy in the Patristic Age*, ix.

⁵² Guadalupe Ramirez, “Mystagogy and On-going Adult Faith Formation: A Treatise, Catholic University of America”.

⁵³ A mystagogue is one who carries out mystagogy and is “someone who instructs others before initiation into religious mysteries or before participation in the sacraments”; “a person whose teachings are said to be founded on mystical revelations.” “Mystagogue” in <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/mystagogy>, (Accessed 25th April 2021).

⁵⁴ Cf. Guadalupe Ramirez, “Mystagogy and On-going Adult Faith Formation: A Treatise, Catholic University of America”, Washington, DC 2013, in <https://cuislandora.wrlc.org/islandora/object/etd%3A346/datastream/PDF/view>, (Accessed 16th April.2021).

relevant because of its credential as not speculative-oriented but pastoral-focused.

5. Agents of Liturgical-Catechetical Formation

5.1 The Entire Church

Catechetical apostolate should be encouraged and supported in all the sphere and levels of ecclesial life. This is important because both of these ecclesial realities touch on the deepest core of the Church and her mission in the world. Everyone in the Church should therefore see the challenge to pass on the faith as one that is personal and that must be taken with the seriousness of a mission entrusted by the Lord Himself. We should be clear in our minds and impress it on people that the Catholic church is the true Church. We should confront the problematic of fatigue with the Catholic Church, especially with the contemporary problems of the Church.

5.2 The Family

Families should be interested in the rites and the faith of the Church. In a special way, families should explore the liturgical-catechetical dimension of passing on the faith. There should be formation and education for the understanding of the rites. Family should interest themselves in the Catechism, especially the Catechism of the Catholic Church, that authoritative compendium of the teaching of the Church.

5.3 The Priests

Priests should be interested in catechesis. Priests should not only be interested but should be in the avant-garde of teaching Catechesis in Parishes and other ecclesial spheres. It must be made abundantly clear and abundantly understood that the priest is first and foremost a Catechist. The work of the Catechist must never be seen to be *infra-dignitatem*, that is, below the dignity of the priest. Rather, it should be seen to be *supra-dignitatem*, a function that not only is in consonance with the fundamental essence of the priest as teacher of the faith, but a *munus* that enhances and

promotes the priest's overall essence and mode of being. In this regard, the priests should be concerned to answer some of these basic questions that will help them to come to terms with their primordial mandate and function to pass on the faith: can there be common curriculum for instruction? Can the priest hold weekly meeting with the Parish catechists to discuss the faith? Can there be good remuneration for our catechists to encourage young ones joining the vocation as catechists? Priests should also be helped and encouraged to go for ongoing formation in catechetical-liturgical matters as this will enhance their overall efficiency and effectiveness in the promotion of liturgical catechesis.

6. Conclusion

Liturgical catechesis is very important for the life of the contemporary Church, especially when considered against the background of the various negative and confused orientations and ideologies in the global world. Thus, liturgical catechesis could be seen as a veritable tool for enlightenment and orientation towards the formation of authentic Christian values. Priests, religious, and lay experts, who have great roles to play in this endeavour, must work in collaboration so that the missionary mandate of Christ, which consists in the spread of God's kingdom on earth and the salvation of souls, might be achieved. To assist them in this task, these agents of liturgical catechesis should be authentic witnesses to the faith they profess and teach. In the words of Pope Francis, "Catechists are people who keep the memory of God alive; they keep it alive in themselves and they are able to revive it in others."⁵⁵ Liturgical catechesis should, therefore, lead to an authentic understanding of the mystery of Christ that is celebrated in the liturgical rites of the Church⁵⁶ and a deepening of the post baptismal faith.

⁵⁵ Francis, "Homily of Holy Father Francis, Holy Mass on the Occasion of the 'Day for Catechists' During the Year of Faith", in https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/homilies/2013/documents/papa-francesco_20130929_giornata-catechisti.html, (Accessed 30th June 2021).

⁵⁶ Cf. John Paul II, "Apostolic Exhortation, *Catechesi Tradendae*: On Catechesis in Our Time", 5.