

Faith Fact



The Mystagogia

Now that we have celebrated the Sacred Triduum, our lives are returning to their normal paces. Well, not exactly. With the Easter celebration of the Paschal Mysteries, hopefully there has been a transformation in all of our lives. This metanoia period or period of ongoing conversion should exemplify our lives as something radically transformed through Christ Jesus.

Traditionally, this period is called the mystagogia, a deepening of our understandings in the mysteries of our faith. For the newly initiated into the faith, this period is the final stage for the Rite of Christian Initiation for adults (RCIA). For we veteran believers, this period provides a time for “shaking-up” and reaffirming our life in the Holy Spirit. While all of us can always benefit from a renewal of our spirituality, this period after Easter is the “high octane” celebration of an extended Easter season.

The early Church understood that post Easter many of the mysteries of faith that had been entrusted to the newly initiated needed time to “sink in” and mature. Mystagogia is the seeping in period, in which all believers are able to take time and more deeply contemplate the Church’s life and sacraments, which we so joyously celebrated in the past weeks. This period is similar to a retreat, a time in which we can take a break and understand the events that have happened in our liturgical celebrations. It is also a great time to renew our spiritual goals that frequently take a back seat to our other domestic activities.

Perhaps the most significant activity in which to “shake up” our faith is to actively participate in daily Eucharist. Of course, that is always the first thing that people want to do to get the faith moving. However, there is a strong sense of intelligence in this activity. In Eucharist, we participate in the mysteries of Jesus’ Paschal Mystery.

The Eucharist allows us to share on an ontological and eschatological basis our faith experiences. The entire “communion” of the Church is on this pilgrimage towards sacramental fulfillment with Christ Jesus. It is sharing nourishment for the journey through our partaking of the Eucharist, and this period allows us, the “living stones” of the Church to settle strongly into our foundations of our beliefs. Living stones are so indicative of the interpersonal relationships that join us to each other and to Jesus in the Church. Together, interlocking stones build up the Body of the Church and provide health and strong foundations to our brothers and sisters in faith. What a great image...living, growing stones. It not only implies our belief in new life, but also indicates the interconnectivity of all of our lives to each other and to the Church.

Eucharistic participation is the “Miracle-Grow” that nourishes and feeds us on the journey. Indeed, a new understanding of the Eucharistic sacrament links most closely with a developed understanding of the Word of God. In the post-Easter period, Scriptures are alive with the activities of the Holy Spirit in the lives of the Apostles and the entire Church.

Listening to the inspired Word of God allows us to cultivate a dynamic appreciation of the Living Word, which speaks to all of us. Namely, the Word made Flesh, Jesus Christ presents all of us with the opportunity to deeply hear and understand our roles in the life of the Church. The powerful Word perhaps reflects our deep nourishment from the Sacraments, and provides all of us with a spirit of evangelical fervor as we share the charisms of the Holy Spirit.

The mystagogia period requires us as believers to not only reflect on the Paschal Mystery, but to actively incorporate this mystery into our daily lives. What better manner than renewed appreciation of Word, Sacrament and evangelization. Sharing of our common faith is most effective when we worship and visibly share our theological beliefs with everyone around us.

Perhaps a reason we as Catholics have an issue with Islam’s external expressions of faith is because we are uncomfortable expressing our own faith in such an open and public manner. Mystagogia is the time to let out the faith, share Jesus in our words, sacraments and deeds. It is during this time that we so uniquely identify the Church’s missionary activity. The period after Easter provides an exceptional opportunity for theological applications of our spiritual beliefs. The period of deeper understanding of the “Mysteries” allows us to confidently proclaim our convictions of faith, and share our resurrected joy, “The Lord is Risen, Alleluia, Alleluia!”.

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