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International Journal of Evangelization and Catechetics, Volume 1,
Number 1, Winter 2020, pp. 19-43 (Article)

Published by The Catholic University of America Press

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/jec.2020.0000>

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Liturgical Catechesis: A Method with Constitutive Elements

DIANA DUDOIT RAICHE

A contemporary understanding of the term liturgical catechesis has been developing since Vatican Council II and the term is now more recognizable.¹ The literature covers a wide spectrum, focusing on separate, discrete liturgical elements in various ways. The proliferation of such literature, based at least in part on an ever-increasing awareness of the term, *per se*, presents both an opportunity and a challenge. For example, some authors use liturgical catechesis as an amorphous catch all term; others focus on artifacts and actions apart from liturgical celebrations; some connect it with a mystagogy following ritual prayer or apply it to popular religion. While focusing on discrete topics related to liturgy may push back the boundaries of ignorance in one or more of these areas, such an approach also has the potential to fragment what is at its core a more integrated and unified concept of liturgical catechesis. The thesis of this article is that liturgical catechesis is not only a distinct form of catechesis, but it is also one with constitutive elements and an inherent method.

The importance of the term liturgical catechesis is underscored in the more recent catechetical directories: the *General Directory for Catechesis*

1. Thomas H. Morris, "Liturgical Catechesis Revisited," *Catechumenate: A Journal of Christian Initiation* 17, no. 3 (May 1995): 12–19; Victoria M. Tufano, "How Do We Do Liturgical Catechesis?" *Catechumenate: A Journal of Christian Initiation* 23, no. 5 (September 2001): 28–37; Jerry Galipeau, "Entering the Mystery of Salvation: The Potential for Liturgical Catechesis," *Catechumenate: A Journal of Christian Initiation* 30, no. 1 (January 2008): 2–11; Daniel Miller, "An Elegant Sufficiency: Symbol and Gesture in Christian Initiation," *Catechumenate: A Journal of Christian Initiation* 34, no. 6 (November 2002): 2–13; Robert Brancatelli, "Religiosidad Popular as a Form of Liturgical Catechesis," *Worship* 77, no. 3 (May 2003): 210–24; James C. Pauley, *Liturgical Catechesis in the 21st Century: A School of Discipleship* (Archdiocese of Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 2017).

(GDC)² and the *National Directory for Catechesis* (NDC).³ The GDC, promulgated for the world-wide Church and the NDC, promulgated as an inculturated document for the Church in the United States, both name previous documents to explicate a deeper understanding of liturgical catechesis: *Catechesi Tradendae*, no. 23; *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, no. 35; *Code of Canon Law*, no. 77; and the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 1075. However, the NDC gives a definition that synthesizes well the previous sources, describing a liturgical catechesis that

is most explicit in the form of the homily received during the celebration of the sacraments. As such, liturgical catechesis within the scope of a sacred action is an integral part of that action [SC no. 35]. Its function is “the immediate preparation for reception of the different sacraments, the celebration of sacraments and above all the participation of the faithful in the Eucharist, as a primary means of education in the faith” [GDC, no. 51]. Liturgical catechesis also includes reflection upon the ritual celebration.⁴

The source for NDC, GDC, no. 112, reminds catechists that “liturgical catechesis shall make constant reference to the great human experiences represented by the signs and symbols of liturgical actions originating in Jewish and Christian culture.” Further, the GDC, no. 207 characterizes liturgical catechesis as “among the forms of catechesis most apt to inculturate the faith” and calls it “a privileged means” of catechesis. The GDC also presents liturgical catechesis as an “eminent kind of catechesis” that “explains the contents of prayers, meaning of signs and gestures, [and] educates to active participation, contemplation and silence.”⁵

Notwithstanding official definitions there is still no small amount of confusion about liturgical catechesis in pastoral practice. Gilbert Ostdiek, professor of Word and Worship at the Catholic Theological Union in Chicago, advances that there are as many understandings of liturgical catechesis as there are perspectives on what constitutes it.⁶ In Ostdiek’s

2. Congregation for the Clergy, *General Directory for Catechesis* (Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference, 1997).

3. United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *National Directory for Catechesis* (Washington, DC: USCCB, 2005).

4. NDC, no. 17c.

5. GDC, no. 71. See also John Paul II, *Apostolic Exhortation (Catechesi Tradendae)*, 16 October 1979, no. 23, “Catechesis and Sacraments” in which the document speaks of eminent catechesis with reference to the restored catechumenate.

6. Gilbert Ostdiek, “Liturgical Catechesis,” in *The New Dictionary of Sacramental Worship*, ed. Peter E. Fink (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1990), 386. For

earlier work in liturgical catechesis, he describes two forms of liturgical catechesis: 1) liturgy itself as a form of catechesis and 2) preparation to participate in the liturgy as another form.⁷ He admits that the first is the most “important form of liturgical catechesis,”⁸ while the second is a “contemporary one” based on Thomas Groome’s work in religious education for adults.⁹ In the first he acknowledges the importance of the mystagogical catechesis of the early catechumenate; in the second he puts forth a method for attending to, reflecting on and applying the languages of liturgy: liturgical space, environment, time, feasts and seasons, action, objects, speech and song. Catherine Dooley, formerly professor of religious education and catechetics at The Catholic University of American and Dominican College in Chicago, connects liturgical catechesis with the Church’s ancient tradition of mystagogy, which relies on the symbolic actions and prayers experienced in the initiation rites of the fourth and fifth centuries. Her approach does not negate a catechesis about and for liturgy and promotes a liturgical catechesis that is drawn from the liturgy using insights from modern liturgical theology and pastoral liturgical studies.¹⁰

The liturgical movement leading up to Vatican Council II and the liturgical reform following the Council set the stage for a retrieval of not only a restored catechumenate, but also of the need for a liturgical catechesis in pastoral practice. Prior to Vatican Council II and based on his experience of the liturgical movement in Europe, Virgil Michel introduced innovative catechetical materials in the United States that incorporated an early form of liturgical catechesis, an important precursor to contemporary liturgical catechesis.¹¹

more recent works see “Liturgy as Catechesis for Life,” in *Liturgical Ministry* 7 (Spring, 1998): 76–82 and *Mystagogy of the Eucharist: A Resource for Faith Formation* (Collegeville, MN, Liturgical Press), 2015, which do not negate his previous description.

7. Gilbert Ost diek, *Catechesis for Liturgy* (Washington, DC: Pastoral Press, 1986), 9.

8. Ibid.

9. Ost diek, “Catechesis for Liturgy,” 15–16.

10. Catherine Dooley, “Liturgical Catechesis: Mystagogy, Marriage or Misnomer?” *Worship* 66, no. 5 (September 1992): 391.

11. See Mary Kathryn Oosdyke, “Acquiring a Sense of Liturgy in Contemporary Times,” *Religious Education* 84 (Summer 1989): 330. See also her dissertation, *The Christ Life Series in Religion (1934–35): Liturgy and Experience as Formative Influences in Religious Education* (Ph.D. dissertation, Boston College, 1987). See also see reviews of this series by Burton Confrey, “Training Children to Live the Liturgy,” *Orate Fratres* 5 (1930–31): 543–47; and Mary Estelle, “Through Christ Our Lord,” *Orate Fratres* 7 (1932–33): 307–12. The earlier reviews predate Oosdyke’s

Considering these multifaceted aspects of liturgical catechesis, as well as multiple definitions in pastoral, scholarly works and in official Church documents, two questions emerge. First, what constitutes liturgical catechesis? Second, what does it mean to engage in liturgical catechesis as a normative method that is essential in catechetical practice? This article acknowledges the historical foundation of liturgical catechesis rooted in the ancient form of mystagogical catechesis in the early catechumenate. It also admits that with the retrieval of the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* (RCIA), the mystagogical catechesis used by the Church Fathers is recognized as a model for contemporary liturgical catechesis. Further, it recognizes theological foundations for the evolution of a contemporary liturgical catechesis in the emergence of liturgical theology. Liturgical theology establishes liturgy not only as first theology, but also as primary for formation in faith and therefore a source for catechesis.¹² These two roots, mystagogy and liturgical theology, are especially important for establishing liturgical catechesis as a method.

Not only is this method inherent in the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*¹³ but it is also necessary for all other forms of catechesis, since the catechumenate is to be a model for all catechesis. The 1997 GDC states that the “exposition of the content of catechesis, must be applied in the various forms of catechesis, that is to say, in biblical and liturgical catechesis, in doctrinal summaries, in the interpretation of the conditions of human existence and so on.”¹⁴ Echoing GDC, nos. 59, 68 and 91, NDC, no. 35 D also advances the baptismal catechumenate as the inspiration for all catechesis and provides a model for “the whole of the Church’s catechetical efforts and especially emphasizes the necessity for life long catechesis.” It follows then that liturgical catechesis, as a method, needs to be better understood and practiced.

claim for the 1945 publication by Macmillan, which may indicate that the series was published as a prototype before Macmillan published it for broader distribution.

12. Catherine Dooley, “Lex Orandi, Lex Credendi: Implications for Catechesis,” in *Catechetical Scholars III: Perspectives in Evangelization and Catechesis*, ed. Diana Dudoit Raiche (Washington, DC: National Catholic Educational Association, 2005), 79–85.

13. See Diana Dudoit Raiche, “Liturgical Catechesis as an Essential Dimension of Initiatory Catechesis in the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* Adapted for Children” (PhD dissertation, The Catholic University of America, 2011).

14. See GDC, no. 188 quoting the 1971 *General Catechetical Directory*, no. 46.

Foundations for Liturgical Catechesis: Mystagogy and Liturgical Theology

Liturgy, the Church's ritual prayer, is the common denominator in mystagogy and liturgical theology, both of which are roots of liturgical catechesis. Addressing mystagogy first, Pope John Paul II's apostolic letter inaugurating the year of the Eucharist, *Mane Nobiscum Domine*, underscores liturgy's power to teach, form and transform. It calls for celebrating the liturgical signs well in order to bring about a deeper mystagogical understanding of their meaning.¹⁵ Such mystagogical understanding depends on good liturgical celebration, no doubt. However, it also depends on a person's being present during such good liturgical celebrations, for mystagogical understanding is grounded in an experience of the liturgy. Liturgical catechesis, then, requires well-trained catechists with a capacity to engage in a liturgical catechesis flowing from a liturgical experience.

Mystagogy, Mystagogical Catechesis, and Liturgical Catechesis

The catechetical directories as well as the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* acknowledge the value and importance of the Church Fathers' method of mystagogical catechesis, positioning mystagogy in relation to liturgical catechesis.¹⁶ The use of the word mystagogy dates from the beginning of the Byzantine period (330-1453) and in its broadest Christian sense means "explanation of liturgical rites." Enrico Mazza claims that it is on the basis of this broader meaning that mystagogy is applied to liturgical celebrations.¹⁷ Among the Greek Fathers mystagogy means "initiation into the mysteries," "performance of a sacred action" and "oral or written explanation of the mystery hidden in the scriptures and celebrated in the liturgy."¹⁸ Mazza contends that the methodology used in the mystagogical catecheses is a kind of liturgical theology as opposed to belonging to a solely catechetical or spiritual theology. Applied to the liturgical action or the "ontological content" of the sacrament, then, the

15. John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Mane Nobiscum Domine*, no. 17 (Trivandrum, Kerala, India: Carmel International Publishing House [St. Joseph's Press], 2005).

16. GDC, no. 89 and NDC, no. 35.

17. Enrico Mazza, *Mystagogy: A Theology of Liturgy in the Patristic Age*, trans. Matthew J. O'Connell (New York: Pueblo Publishing Company, 1989), 1.

18. Mazza, *Mystagogy*, 1.

mystagogical method is seen as capable of bringing to light and explaining the contents that are theological and true in the proper sense.¹⁹

While David Regan²⁰ acknowledges the ancient roots of mystagogy in a pre-Christian as well as an early Christian era and focuses on the revival of mystagogy in relation to the restored catechumenate and human experience, he also situates mystagogy within the pastoral agenda of Vatican Council II and the concern that the Council shows for attention to the relevance of human joys and sorrows in Christian experience. Historically, such concern for Christian experience is positioned between the remnants of the Modernist crisis with de-Christianization of the West on the one hand and the vestiges of the Enlightenment and a return to scripture and spirituality in a post-Vatican II era on the other. Regan further connects mystagogy with the Paschal Mystery, the center point of the Christian experience through liturgy. With that as his starting point, he avoids describing mystagogy as commentary on the rites of initiation, as in the past, but rather positions mystagogy as a means for connecting one's human experience of the central Mystery with spiritual lessons for living as a Christian in the world.²¹ He posits that mystagogy "introduces a unity into theology" and indeed that the "relation of mystagogy to catechetics makes the topic relevant to religious formation."²²

The Fathers of the Church, whose works provide us with some of the earliest depictions of Christian initiation, developed a method of commentary on the ritual that is considered an original Christian mystagogical catechesis. Cyril of Jerusalem's *Mystagogical Catecheses*, for example, are instructive for those who struggle to implement a contemporary liturgical catechesis in the current cultural context. In Cyril's homilies, one finds a suitable methodology for mystagogical catechesis that motivates a new Christian to want to live as a Christian in the company of other Christians. In the hands of a mystagogue such as Cyril, the careful, artful, concrete, and spiritual reflection on the ritual action just experienced using scripture and the sacramental theology of the time illuminates the mind and heart of the ancient neophyte. According to Walter Burghardt, the mystagogues in the ancient catechumenate

19. Ibid., 3.

20. Fr. David Regan, C.S.Sp., was born in Tipperary and taught philosophy and liturgy in Ireland before emigrating to Brazil in 1963 to teach post-graduates.

21. David Regan, *Experiencing the Mystery: Pastoral Possibilities for Christian Mystagogy* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1994), 27–34.

22. Ibid., 7.

understood the rites of initiation to be a source of insight because the liturgy itself was responsible for Christian understanding. The neophytes were capable of understanding what had occurred because they had been “transformed” through the liturgical experience:

Because they have been baptized, they are in a position to understand how baptism has made them counterparts of the suffering Christ. Because they have been anointed with the Spirit, they can grasp what the unction of the Spirit effects. Because they have fed on the flesh of Christ, they see what it means to be incorporated into Christ.²³

Based on this model, the homily is featured prominently as a central element in modern-day liturgical catechesis,²⁴ as well as in the Period of Post-baptismal Catechesis or Mystagogy in the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*.

Mystagogy and mystagogical catechesis are connected and yet need to be differentiated. Mystagogy means probing the mysteries while mystagogical catechesis is now used interchangeably with post-baptismal catechesis, a term which is sometimes applied to neophytes in the catechumenate and at other times connected with ongoing faith formation of the faithful. Mystagogy is clearly delineated as that “phase of liturgical catechesis that aims to incorporate the neophytes more deeply into the mystery of Christ through reflection on the Gospel message and the experience of the sacraments they have received.”²⁵ Mystagogy and the mystagogical catechesis that is based on it is then part of a larger context that constitutes contemporary liturgical catechesis. The key point is that both follow an experience of the liturgy. Post-baptismal catechesis is certainly necessary for the neophyte recently baptized and incorporated into the Church. Such catechesis is also an application of mystagogy for ongoing formation according to a “catechumenal style” of catechesis that does not slavishly mimic the catechumenate.²⁶

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC) incorporates the ancient foundation of mystagogy into liturgical catechesis in its definition:

23. Walter Burghardt, “Catechetics in the Early Church: Program and Psychology,” *The Living Light* 1, no. 3 (Autumn 1964): 107.

24. See SC, no. 35.3: “A more explicitly liturgical catechesis should also be given in a variety of ways.”

25. NDC, no. 35d, p. 117.

26. GDC, no. 29.

Liturgical catechesis aims to initiate people into the mystery of Christ (It is a “mystagogy.”) by proceeding from the visible to the invisible, from the sign to the thing signified, from the “sacraments” to the “mysteries.” Such catechesis is to be presented by local and regional catechisms. This Catechism, which aims to serve the whole Church in all the diversity of her rites and cultures, will present what is fundamental and common to the whole Church in the liturgy as mystery and as celebration (Section One) and then the seven sacraments and the sacramentals (Section Two).²⁷

Consistent with the approach used throughout the *Catechism* to retain traditional language, the above definition links language associated with sacraments to liturgical catechesis for a contemporary audience. It is noteworthy that the CCC is the first catechism to incorporate the term liturgical catechesis into its lexicon and indeed the first to place sacraments within the context of liturgy.²⁸ However, there is some caution in relying only on the catechism genre to situate liturgical catechesis in relation to the catechumenate. Some could too easily default to mere instruction on liturgy and sacraments without giving proper attention to participation in the liturgical celebration or reflection on what one experienced flowing from the liturgical celebration.

Liturgical Theology

A second and more contemporary foundation for contemporary liturgical catechesis is the emergence of liturgical theology after Vatican Council II. The axiom *lex orandi, lex credendi* (that is, as one prays, so one believes) is founded in a more ancient dictum: *ut legem credendi lex statuat supplicandi* (that is, the order of supplication determines the rule of faith).²⁹ In a post-Vatican II era, this fifth-century adage attributed to Prosper of Aquitaine became associated with liturgical theology, a theological discipline that emerged from the liturgical movement and

27. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 1075, (Washington, DC, United States Catholic Conference-Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1994).

28. Catherine Dooley, “Liturgical Catechesis According to the Catechism,” in *Introducing the Catechism of the Catholic Church: Traditional Themes and Contemporary Issues*, ed. Berard L. Marthaler (New York: Paulist Press, 1994), 97–98.

29. Dooley, “Lex Orandi, Lex Credendi,” 80. See also Paul de Clerk, “Lex orandi, lex credendi: The Original Sense and Historical Avatars of an Equivocal Adage,” trans. Thomas M. Winger, *Studia Liturgica* 24 (1994): 178–200; and Kevin Irwin, *Liturgical Theology: A Primer* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1990), 11–17.

ended the rupture between theological study and liturgical experience.³⁰ As Alexander Schmemmann says,

Therefore the task of liturgical theology consists in giving a theological basis to the explanation of worship and the whole liturgical tradition of the Church. This means, first, to find and define the concepts and categories which are capable of expressing as fully as possible the essential nature of the liturgical experience of the Church; second, to connect these ideas with that system of concepts which theology uses to expound the faith and doctrine of the Church; and third, to present the separate data of liturgical experience as a connected whole, as in the last analysis, the “rule of prayer” dwelling within the Church and determining her “rule of faith.”³¹

Acknowledging the historical and theological sources for liturgical theology, Kevin Irwin of The Catholic University of America calls attention to the fact that *lex orandi* was “totally absent from theological study or magisterial teaching from Trent to the present.”³² Irwin continues that notwithstanding the difficulties in establishing the “precise relationship between liturgy and theology,” the earliest liturgies enacted and embodied not just what the Church teaches but also proclaimed the scriptures for gathered communities of faith. He notes that what is at stake in the original use of *lex orandi* is the fact that the Church is gathered for prayer, for liturgy is the prayer of the Church. It is not necessarily the formulas of the specific prayers but the theology reflected in the prayers that constitutes the *lex credendi*.³³ Thus liturgy is a theological source to the degree that it is based on biblical revelation, as the Church understands it.³⁴ Therefore, liturgy is not only a source of theology, but it is also a foundational source for catechesis.³⁵

The importance of looking to liturgical theology as a foundation for liturgical catechesis cannot be underestimated. Irwin advances that it is just this kind of attention to the primacy of the liturgy that helped Cipriano Vagaggini, one among the Vatican II European scholars that

30. Alexander Schmemmann, *Introduction to Liturgical Theology*, trans. Ashleigh E. Moorhouse (Bangor, Maine: American Orthodox Press, 1966), 9–12.

31. Schmemmann, *Introduction to Liturgical Theology*, 14.

32. Irwin, *Liturgical Theology: A Primer*, 13.

33. Irwin, *Liturgical Theology: A Primer*, 14.

34. *Ibid.*, 11–12.

35. Dooley, “Lex Orandi, Lex Credendi,” 80.

contributed to a contemporary understanding of liturgical theology, to avoid the charge of anachronism in relation to his understanding of patristic liturgical theology because his focus is fixed on the main purpose of the liturgy: “to enact the mystery of faith.”³⁶ Bringing that mystery of faith forward into contemporary context, Vagaggini sees “faith is a point of departure” and the liturgy as a source for theology that enacts the “mystery of faith” and leads one to contemplate God.³⁷

Such an understanding recapitulates CT, no. 5; GDC, no 78; and NDC, no. 19, namely, that catechesis is an ecclesial act that aims to bring about initial conversion in Jesus Christ, develop that initial faith, nourish the Christian life, and continually unfold the mystery of Christ until the believer willingly becomes his disciple. This explanation of catechesis aligns with the notion that catechesis derives content from a theology of liturgy whereby one reflects on and gains greater understanding through instruction on what it means to enact Christ’s paschal mystery in the present. As Irwin says, it is through both theology and liturgy that the mystery of God is “acknowledged and experienced.”³⁸

With this thrust of approaching the theology *of* the liturgy and theology drawn *from* the liturgy, Irwin advances that a third law can be added to the equation of *lex orandi, lex credendi: lex agendi* or the law of acting. He contends that it is just as important to examine the actual experience of the liturgical celebrations, the liturgical “performance” of the ritual including the music as a source for theology as it is to rely on books that describe a celebration.³⁹ For example, every movement and liturgical choice in ritual prayer communicates something about God, the Trinity, Christ, the Church, the sacraments, and how we relate to the divine and each other.

One pastoral application of this way of approaching liturgical theology would be, as Irwin says, “to evaluate how well contemporary liturgical catechesis reflects and emphasizes the theological meaning of what occurs in liturgy.”⁴⁰ It is the very theology of what is happening in the ritual that requires a catechesis called liturgical catechesis, which is itself drawn from the liturgical *performance* in the technical sense. The goal of this liturgical, communal experience of God is for everyone in the

36. Irwin, *Liturgical Theology: A Primer*, 22, citing Cipriano Vagaggini, *Theological Dimensions of the Liturgy* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1976), 512–14.

37. Irwin, *Liturgical Theology: A Primer*, 22.

38. Irwin, *Liturgical Theology: A Primer*, 68.

39. *Ibid.*

40. *Ibid.*, 64.

community to be progressively and continually transformed into the image and likeness of God.⁴¹

The Sacramental Principle

Catherine Dooley calls attention to the sacramental principle at work in such liturgical actions and choices. The principle of sacramentality, one of the central theological characteristics in Catholicism, embraces all creation as having potential to communicate God's presence and to become an instrument of God's saving activity.⁴² Thus the Third Council of Baltimore defines a sacrament as "an outward sign instituted by Christ to give grace."⁴³ Admittedly, the definition delimits grace as a commodity, which is a problematic notion. Nevertheless, the sacramental principle inherent in the definition works in conjunction with two other principles: the principle of mediation in which God works through secondary agents for divine ends, and the principle of communion, whereby the end of all of God's activity is the union of humanity.⁴⁴ For its part, the CCC addresses the sacramental principle under the subheading, Signs of the Human World:

In human life, signs and symbols occupy an important place. As a being at once body and spirit, man expresses and perceives spiritual realities through physical sign and symbols. As a social being, man needs signs and symbols to communicate with others, through language, gestures, and actions. The same holds true for his relationship with God.⁴⁵

These signs and symbols form the landscape of the Catholic sacramental imagination, which is accustomed to acculturating inanimate objects as mediators between God and us. They are capable of communicating

41. Irwin, *Liturgical Theology: A Primer*, 66.

42. Dooley, "Lex Orandi, Lex Credendi," 81. See also Kevin Irwin, "A Sacramental Word—Sacramentality as the Primary Language for Sacraments," *Worship* 76, no. 3 (May 2002): 197–211; and Louis-Marie Chauvet, "Mediation," in *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Experience*, trans. Patrick Maddigan and Madeleine Beaumont (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1995), 84–109.

43. Francis J. Connell et al., *The New Confraternity Edition Revised Baltimore Catechism and Mass*, no. 3 (Boston: Benziger Brothers, 1952), 178.

44. Mark Francis, "Principle of Sacramentality," in *HarperCollins Encyclopedia of Catholicism*, ed. Richard McBrien (New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 1995), 1148.

45. CCC, no. 1146.

meaning that we can apprehend. Liturgical catechesis works in concert with a Catholic sacramental imagination, which is critical in forming Catholic identity.

Living out the implications of the liturgy through God's grace is part of Catholic sacramental and liturgical spirituality. One's experience of the liturgy comes through the five senses in discursive, non-discursive, and intuitive ways. It is a divine liturgy with its own language in signs and symbols apprehended in non-analytical, creative and symbolic ways. Heaven touches earth with Mystery through the human experience in liturgical celebrations. In and through what happens during a liturgical celebration, an interior experience occurs in those who are receptive to God's grace. Irwin notes that such experience has power to advance "Christian conversion, understood as a response to the challenge of the gospel, ratified in cult and reflected in life."⁴⁶ In theological language, this indwelling of God within the human person that so radically changes us is the work of God's uncreated grace.⁴⁷ Such conversion leads to manifestations of being transformed in Christ-like perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors.

Liturgical Catechesis and Liturgical Instruction

Since instruction plays such a prominent role in sacramental catechesis, it is necessary to ask, what is the place of instruction for liturgy in relation to liturgical catechesis? Is such instruction a counterpoint or complement to a liturgical catechesis method associated with mystagogy and liturgical theology? In attempting to address these questions, the catechetical directories are instructive. The GDC defines liturgical catechesis as preparing for the sacraments by "promoting deeper understanding and experience of the liturgy."⁴⁸ The NDC explicates the CCC's definition of liturgical catechesis by linking it with *Catechesi Tradendae*, a document noted for its emphasis on systematic catechesis. Paragraph 23 of this document is worth considering:

[C]atechesis always has reference to the sacraments. On the one hand, the catechesis that prepares for the sacraments is an eminent

46. Irwin, *Liturgical Theology: A Primer*, 72.

47. John O'Donnell, "Faith," in *The New Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Joseph A. Komonchak, Mary Collins, Dermot Lane (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1987), 383.

48. GDC, no. 71.

kind, and every form of catechesis necessarily leads to the sacrament of life. On the other hand, authentic practice of the sacraments is bound to have a catechetical aspect.⁴⁹

Fostering a deeper sense of the meaning of liturgy and the sacraments while also promoting a more informed knowledge of the faith and more vital experience of the liturgy, the NDC continues to quote *Catechesi Tradendae*, no. 23:

In other words, the sacramental life is impoverished and very soon turns to hollow ritualism if it is not based on serious knowledge of the meaning of the sacraments and catechesis becomes intellectualized if it fails to come alive in sacramental practice.⁵⁰

Instruction, sacramental practice, and reflection on the liturgy are recurring, interlocking aspects of liturgical catechesis that inform its method. As demonstrated earlier, this combination is present in the catechesis that preceded and followed initiation rites in the ancient catechuminate.

Such attention to the role of instruction concerning the liturgy is not new. The most recent experience of such instruction relates to the implementation of the Third Translation of the Roman Missal (Advent, 2012). The 1953 Apostolic Constitution *Christus Dominus* issued new laws for Eucharistic fast and the need for proper instruction of the faithful regarding these laws.⁵¹ Following this Apostolic Constitution, *Eucharisticum Mysterium*, prepared by the Congregation of Rites in 1967, provides instruction about liturgy that is associated with liturgical catechesis. The General Introduction of this Instruction states its purpose:

The particular purpose of these rules is not only to emphasize the general principles of how to instruct the people in the Eucharist, but also to make more readily intelligible the signs by which the Eucharist is celebrated as the memorial of the Lord and worshipped as a permanent sacrament in the church. For although this sacrament has the supreme and unique feature, that the author of holiness is Himself present in it, nevertheless, in common with the other sacraments, it is the symbol of a reality and the visible form

49. John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation, *Catechesi Tradendae*, no. 23 (16 October 1979).

50. NDC, no. 34.

51. John C. Ford, *Commentary on the Apostolic Constitution Christus Dominus and on the Instruction of the Holy Office on the Discipline to Be Observed Concerning the Eucharistic Fast* (New York: P. J. Kennedy & Sons, 1953), 118.

of an invisible grace [reference to Council of Trent and Summa Theol. III]. Consequently the more intelligible the signs by which it is celebrated and worshipped, the more firmly and effectively it will enter into the minds and lives of the faithful [reference to Constitution on the Liturgy *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (SC)].⁵²

SC supports this notion of instruction in numerous paragraphs. It encourages priests to provide liturgical catechesis *during* the celebration of the Eucharist, as appropriate, to instruct the faithful.⁵³

A more explicitly liturgical catechesis should be given in a variety of ways. Within the rites themselves provision is to be made for brief comments, when needed, by the priest or a qualified minister; they should occur only at the more suitable moments and use a set formula or something similar.⁵⁴

SC also advances the notion of instruction by pointing out to pastors their duty to provide instruction *on* the liturgy. This has implications relative to liturgical catechesis flowing from the liturgy.

With zeal and patience pastors must promote the liturgical instruction of the faithful and also their active participation in the liturgy both internally and externally, taking into account their age and condition, their way of life and their stage of religious development.⁵⁵

The liturgical instruction toward “active participation in the liturgy both internally and externally” is important for catechumens, candidates, and the faithful in all age groups. Without proper liturgical instruction, liturgical participation, and understanding the language of liturgy even fully initiated faithful may find themselves as strangers in a foreign liturgical

52. Congregation of Rites, Instruction *Eucharisticum Mysterium*, 25 May 1967, no. 5. See also Vatican Council II, *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*), 4 December 1963.

53. See statistics on trends among Catholics from Pew Research on Catholics at https://www.google.com/search?q=Pew+Research+on+Catholics&rlz=1C1SQJL_enUS864US864&oq=Pew+Research+on+Catholics&aqs=chrome.0.69i59.9514j1j7&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8 and see also William D’Antonio and Mary Gautier, *American Catholics Today: New Realities of Their Faith and Their Church* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007), 55. This study found that 70% of Catholics were still attending Sunday Mass in 1965, making instruction at Mass possible for a majority of Catholics.

54. SC, no. 35.3.

55. SC, no. 19.

land with which they have limited familiarity or experience. Participation in the liturgies of the Church is not a reward for knowing enough about them but is a kind of instruction that needs follow-up reflection. In this way liturgical catechesis contributes to a process of formation required for full, conscious, active participation in these sacraments called for in SC, no. 14.

SC distinguishes the act of worship in liturgy's instructive role:

Although the liturgy is above all things the worship of the divine majesty, it likewise contains rich instruction for the faithful. For in the liturgy God is speaking to his people and Christ is still proclaiming his gospel. And the people are responding to God by both song and prayer.⁵⁶

The inherent ability of liturgy to instruct the faithful coexists with the need to instruct catechetical and liturgical leaders about liturgical catechesis. Intentional reflection on sacraments and ritual prayer depends on one's participation in a liturgical rite. Such reflection is intended to expand an understanding of Christian doctrines, probe their meaning for Christian living, and interpret liturgical symbols, actions, and prayers, etc., thereby, equipping participants for further contemplation of the sacred. Such instruction deepens and expands a growing mastery of the Catholic liturgical lexicon.

An examination of liturgical catechesis from these three perspectives—mystagogy, liturgical theology, and instruction—demonstrates how the three interrelated elements are important to liturgical catechesis as a methodology. While it is true that preparation for liturgy is a necessity in liturgical catechesis, so also are mystagogy and reflection on the sacred mysteries. In a contemporary context, liturgical catechesis both prepares for liturgy and unpacks the theological and spiritual dimensions of the rite in light of the ritual performance and one's experience of the rite.

Like the symbiotic relationship between liturgy and catechesis that has been restored in a post-Vatican II era, these multivalent aspects of liturgical catechesis enjoy a relationship that is mirrored in the tripartite structure of the liturgical year as a continuous cycle of preparation, celebration, and reflection. We prepare during Advent, celebrate throughout the Christmas season, and reflect in Ordinary Time. We prepare during Lent, celebrate throughout the Easter Season, and reflect in a second, longer span of Ordinary Time. Just as it is difficult to maintain the sea-

56. SC, no. 33.

sonal aspects of Christmas and Easter that extend over several weeks, it is a challenge for assemblies to grasp the reflective character of Ordinary Time following Christmas and Easter seasons. This is truly a time to understand, apprehend and incorporate into the ordinary events of life the great lessons flowing from the Paschal Mystery Sunday-by-Sunday. The *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* not only embodies this restored symbiotic relationship between liturgy and catechesis, but it also advances liturgical catechesis as a method that is made to order for the conversion intended in the catechumenal process, which is the inspiration and model for all catechesis.

Constitutive Elements in Liturgical Catechesis

Liturgical catechesis operates between two poles: the liturgy itself and reflection on one's experience of the liturgy. The bridge that joins the liturgy and reflection upon it is one's experience of the liturgical celebration. Of course, the liturgy needs to be well planned and executed. This is a necessary condition for liturgical catechesis, whether one wishes to focus on mystagogical, reflective, or theological aspects. Liturgical catechesis first introduces the liturgical lexicon and then facilitates bringing about an understanding of that vocabulary in the light of one's liturgical experience, illuminating "not only what one sees, but more deeply what one experiences with all the senses."⁵⁷

The constitutive elements in a liturgical catechesis methodology are provided for us in SC: scripture, ritual actions and prayers, liturgical year, liturgical signs and symbols, symbolic actions, ritual gestures, music, silence and application of these to Christian living and relationships. These elements contribute to a "process of formation and a true school of faith."⁵⁸ Liturgical catechesis facilitates formation for "full, conscious, and active participation" in the liturgical celebrations called for in the very nature of the liturgy.⁵⁹ According to Dooley, "in contemporary liturgical catechesis preparation for the sacramental celebration begins with the liturgical texts and scriptural readings, the symbols and symbolic actions of the celebration."⁶⁰ Being present at the liturgies

57. Peter E. Fink, "The Church as Sacrament and the Sacramental Life of the Church," in *Vatican II: The Unfinished Agenda*, ed. L. Richard Harrington and J. O'Malley (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1987), 76.

58. GDC, no. 91 and NDC, no. 35d.

59. SC, no. 14.

60. Dooley, "Liturgical Catechesis: Mystagogy, Marriage or Misnomer?" 393.

of the church to experience these elements is necessary for liturgical catechesis to fulfill its essential function normatively as an “eminent form of catechesis.”⁶¹

Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy: Sacrosanctum Concilium (SC)

SC provides authoritative statements that identify the constitutive elements of the liturgy that are critical for liturgical catechesis. They are constitutive elements because the nature of the liturgy and the catechesis that precedes and flows from the liturgy help to put a person in touch and in communion with Jesus Christ. According to SC,

[T]he visible signs used by the liturgy to signify invisible divine realities have been chosen by Christ or the Church. Thus not only when things are read “that were written for our instruction” (Rom 15:4), but also when the Church prays or sings or acts, the faith of those taking part is nourished and their minds are raised to God, so that they may offer him their worship as intelligent beings and receive his grace more abundantly.⁶²

It is noteworthy that catechumenal rituals gradually present these liturgical elements in a manner that supports the conversion process and the gradual journey toward and in faith. An authentic formation through the catechumenate shows that there is a direct relationship between experience of the rites proper to the catechumenate during the process of formation and ongoing participation in liturgy Sunday after Sunday after full initiation.⁶³ Each liturgical celebration deserves and requires liturgical catechesis not only to attend to the second catechetical task (knowledge of the liturgy and the sacraments), but also to the other five catechetical tasks: knowledge of the faith, moral formation in Jesus Christ, formation for prayer with Christ, formation for community and

61. GDC, no. 71.

62. SC, no. 33.

63. United States Catholic Conference, *Journey to the Fullness of Life: A Report on the Implementation of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults in the United States*, October 2000, 55. According to this report, 64% of the newly initiated attend Mass on a weekly basis. The CARA study on sacraments shows that 23% of the faithful attend Mass weekly. See Mark M. Gray and Paul M. Perl, *Sacraments Today: Belief and Practice among U.S. Catholics*, CARA Report, April, 2008, <http://cara.georgetown.edu/sacraments.html>.

appropriating Christ's mission, and finally, formation to equip the faithful to be present to and give witness in society.⁶⁴

Regarding the second catechetical task devoted to liturgy and sacraments, the term *sacramental catechesis* is typically used to denote a catechesis that prepares for the initial celebration of the sacraments and provides enrichment following their reception.⁶⁵ The catechesis following reception of sacraments is not specified, and in pastoral practice has been interpreted typically as a continuation of the instructional catechesis that preceded the reception of the sacraments rather than an intentional reflection on the meaning of the liturgies experienced. Just as the six tasks of catechesis "constitute a unified whole,"⁶⁶ and cannot be neatly separated, so too is liturgical catechesis a comprehensive, holistic, tripartite method with constitutive elements not easily divorced from one another. A comprehensive liturgical catechesis, appreciated and implemented in all its constitutive elements through instruction, participation in the rites, and reflection on the mysteries celebrated or mystagogy challenges a narrower interpretation of mystagogy as the only form of liturgical catechesis and as mere instructional follow-up catechesis.

Word of God as Constitutive Element

Catechesis is essentially a ministry of the word. Therefore, sacred scripture needs a prominent place in any catechetical endeavor and methodology. The nature of the Word of God, as a window into the mystery of faith and an essential liturgical element, is addressed in SC article 24:

Sacred Scripture is of the greatest importance in the celebration of the liturgy. For it is from the Scripture that the readings are given and explained in the homily and the psalms are sung; the prayers, collects, and liturgical songs are scriptural in the inspiration; it is from the Scriptures that actions and signs derive their meaning.⁶⁷

Immersion in scripture is necessary for all age groups. Understanding sacred scripture can be accomplished through the homily; however, an

64. NDC, no. 20 references fourteen post Vatican II documents in addition to scripture references from the gospels to synthesize a clearly articulated version of these six tasks of catechesis.

65. NDC, no. 20.2.

66. NDC, no. 20.6.

67. NDC, no. 24.

intentional instruction on sacred scripture may also augment the word proclaimed at liturgy. Such instruction does not have to be reserved only to adults. Catechesis as a ministry of the word requires that sacred scripture be intentional and prominent at all levels of faith formation. Frequent, recurring celebrations of the word are an important element in the Christian formation throughout the catechumenate. Both those seeking initiation in the church and those already initiated need a liturgical catechesis on the word proclaimed at liturgy to deepen and mature faith.

Ritual and Prayers as Constitutive Elements

While directed specifically toward the Eucharist in relation to the already baptized, article 48 of SC is also relevant to those in formation for initiation sacraments. This article gives support for engaging in a more conscious, robust liturgical catechesis:

The Church, therefore, earnestly desires that Christ's faithful, when present at this mystery of faith, should not be there as strangers or silent spectators; on the contrary, through a good understanding of the rites and prayers they should take part in the sacred service conscious of what they are doing, with devotion and full involvement. They should be instructed by God's word and be nourished at the table of the Lord's body; they should give thanks to God; by offering the immaculate Victim, not only through the hand of the priest, but also with him, they should learn to offer themselves as well; through Christ the Mediator, they should be formed day by day into an ever more perfect unity with God and with each other, so that finally God may be all in all.⁶⁸

In addition to its insistence that the faithful take "part in the sacred service conscious of what they are doing," article 48 identifies the entire ritual itself along with the various rites and prayers as key liturgical elements which are constitutive for liturgical catechesis.

Community and Sense of Church as Constitutive Elements

SC, no. 27 is especially worth noting in relation to some current practices. In the catechumenal process, for example, if the rites belonging to the catechumenate are celebrated at all with a child catechumen, these are not celebrated within the Sunday assembly. Some opt for a

68. SC, no. 48.

liturgical celebration with classmates or family for reasons of social comfort. However well-intentioned this practice may be, in fact, it robs the child and the family of an authentic ecclesial experience that is bigger than one small group. The same could be said of youth or adult cohorts that only experience liturgy tailored exclusively to them. If celebrating liturgy separately is the primary experience of the rites of the church, the practice only serves to isolate those in faith formation and their families from the larger worshipping community. As SC puts it:

Whenever rites, according to their specific nature, make provision for communal celebration involving the presence and active participation of the faithful, it is to be stressed that this way of celebrating them is to be preferred, as far as possible, to a celebration that is individual and, so to speak, private.⁶⁹

Furthermore, “liturgical services are not private functions, but are celebrations belonging to the Church, which is the ‘sacrament of unity.’ . . .”⁷⁰

The normative celebration of the Eucharistic liturgy is the parish Sunday Mass through which Christ enables people “to move beyond particular circles to celebrate in common the sacrament of unity.”⁷¹ Sunday liturgy has little effect as praxis unless a gathered community is present to participate in the worship experience and then take the resulting personal transformation out into the marketplace for the life of the world.

Signs and Symbols as Constitutive Elements

SC continues to establish a firm foundation for words and objects as signs and symbols in liturgical catechesis in article 59:

The purpose of the sacraments is to make people holy, to build up the Body of Christ, and finally, to give worship to God; but being signs they also have a teaching function. They not only presuppose faith, but by words and objects they also nourish, strengthen, and express it; that is why they are called “sacraments of faith.” They do indeed impart grace, but, in addition, the very act of celebrating them disposes the faithful most effectively to receive this grace in a fruitful manner, to worship God rightly, and to practice charity. It is therefore of highest importance that the faithful should readily

69. SC, no. 27

70. Ibid., no. 26.

71. NDC, no. 36.3b quoting John Paul II, *On Keeping the Lord's Day Holy (Dies Domini)*. Vatican City, 1998), no. 36.

understand the sacramental signs and should with great eagerness frequent those sacraments that were instituted to nourish the Christian life.⁷²

What is said regarding the faithful is also appropriate for those who seek formation in faith and full initiation through the catechumenate. Those seeking the sacraments of initiation need instruction in sacramental signs (i.e., fire, water, oil, bread & wine, cross, lectionary, priest as celebrant, and assembly), experience of these in ritual celebration, and an intentional reflection on the meaning of signs and symbols of faith following the liturgical experience.

The *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* directs catechetical and liturgical leaders to celebrate the major rites as well as the minor rites, (the prayers of exorcism, anointing, blessing and the presentations), as constitutive of the catechumenate. These rituals may accompany liturgies of the word that frequently recur throughout formation.⁷³ Each of the rites appropriate to the catechumenate as well as eucharistic liturgy and sacramental rites (Penance, Anointing of the Sick, etc.) needs an appropriate liturgical catechesis to ensure appropriate and complete formation. Such liturgical catechesis could be made available for everyone after celebrating any of the sacraments of the church. This is, however, still a challenge in pastoral practice.

Liturgical Year as Constitutive Element

SC is attentive to the role of the liturgical year in relation to liturgical catechesis noting in no. 109 that

Lent . . . disposes the faithful, as they more diligently listen to the word of God and devote themselves to prayer, to celebrate the paschal mystery. The baptismal and penitential aspects of Lent are to be given greater prominence in both the liturgy and liturgical catechesis.⁷⁴

In conjunction with this article, several elements are highlighted: baptismal features proper to liturgy, penitential elements, and paschal fast.

72. SC, no. 59.

73. See International Commission on English in the Liturgy (ICEL) and NCCB Bishops' Committee on the Liturgy, *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* (RCIA), (Chicago: IL: Liturgy Training Publications, 1988), nos. 81–84.

74. SC, no. 109.

The liturgical year is a prominent factor in the multi-year formation process when the catechumenate is implemented, as intended, over a sufficient length of time.⁷⁵ It is noteworthy that the journey of the catechumens is also the journey of the faith community in Lent, which can become a long retreat for the parish. The focus of the Period of Purification and Enlightenment in the RCIA, which normally coincides with the Lenten season, focuses on penitential aspects of formation through the scrutinies for adults as well as penitential rite for children.⁷⁶ All the rites proper to this period, including the presentations of the Creed and the Our Father, are a rich source of enlightenment through liturgical catechesis not only for those in formation through the catechumenate, but for all the faithful.

Music, Gesture, Silence as Constitutive Elements

Sacred music, too, is of considerable importance, deserving ten articles in SC. No. 112 states,

The musical tradition of the universal Church is a treasure of inestimable value, greater than that of any other art. The main reason for this preeminence is that, as sacred song closely bound to the text, it forms a necessary or integral part of the solemn liturgy.⁷⁷

Not only singing but also participation in acclamations, responses, psalmody, antiphons, actions, gestures and bearing are necessary along with “reverent silence” at the proper times.⁷⁸ For example, such active participation that engages physical expressions concretely in word, song, gesture and silence helps to etch liturgical lessons within a young person⁷⁹ as well as within all the faithful. Such physical expressions are more

75. See RCIA, no. 253 in relation to children of catechetical age in the catechumenate: “Accordingly, as with adults, their initiation is to be extended over several years if need be, before they receive the sacraments. Also as with adults, their initiation is marked by several steps, the liturgical rites of acceptance into the order of catechumens, the optional rite of election, penitential rites or scrutinies and the celebration of the sacraments of initiation; corresponding to the periods of adult initiation are the periods of the children’s catechetical formation that lead up to and follow the steps of their initiation.”

76. Ibid., nos. 141–161 and 291–302.

77. SC, no. 112.

78. Ibid., no 30.

79. Congregation for Divine Worship. *Directory for Masses with Children*, nos. 30, 33, 37 (Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference, 1973).

caught than taught in the company of the faithful, presuming the faithful know how to participate and why.

SC aims to clarify the role of liturgy and to bring about in people a greater understanding of the Paschal Mystery so that faith may be nurtured, and the Church may be realized. For liturgy expresses and creates the Church and the Church at worship manifests and constitutes the Church.⁸⁰ In this latter regard, the ritual action not just of the faithful but of the performance of the liturgy is an especially important source for liturgical catechesis, as these concrete, physical actions imprint images of Church and what the Church believes through the eyes, ears, minds, bodies and hearts. The entire ritual experience landscapes the religious imagination that one needs in order to come to and then grow in faith.

Focus on Method in Liturgical Catechesis

An assembly gathered in faith is necessary to make the Church present and to make Christ present in the world. According to the CCC the assembly so gathered should prepare itself to encounter its Lord and to become “a people well disposed.”⁸¹ Understanding the tripartite movement in liturgical catechesis (preparation, celebration, and reflection) and the constitutive elements of liturgical catechesis is a basis for understanding that, taken together, these constitute a method in liturgical catechesis that aids in actualizing full, conscious, active participation in the liturgy.

Inductive Method and Deductive Methods

Liturgical catechesis functions with an inductive and a deductive methodology, both of which are necessary and fundamental processes in catechesis. One is not superior to the other. Both the GDC and the NDC treat these two methods as interrelated. The GDC explains that “the inductive method does not exclude the deductive method. Indeed it requires the deductive method which explains and describes facts by proceeding from their causes.”⁸² The NDC expands the GDC description of the inductive method by advancing that with the help of the Holy Spirit, the inductive approach proceeds from a person’s “sensible, visible experience” and leads to more general conclusions and

80. See Margaret Mary Kelleher, “Liturgy: An Ecclesial Act of Meaning,” *Worship* 59, no. 6 (November 1985): 482–97.

81. CCC, no. 1098.

82. GDC, no. 150.

principles.⁸³ The inductive method corresponds to an “existential” approach, beginning with specifics of human experience and examining them in light of the word of God in an ascending direction. The liturgical catechesis within the context of a sacred action is itself an integral part of that action.⁸⁴ Thus, one’s experience of life meets an experience of the liturgy that incorporates biblical events through the scripture, through ritual and liturgical actions, through events in the life of the Church, through the liturgical year and particular feasts, and through the witnessing community at worship and in the public square.

In concert with this inductive method, the deductive method begins with truths of the faith that are applied to concrete experiences, as may occur during a homily, for SC, no 35 advances that liturgical catechesis is most explicit in the form of the homily given during sacramental celebrations. The deductive method corresponds to the “kerygmatic” approach by beginning with a proclamation of the faith through sacred scripture, creed or rite, and then applying it to human experience. Thus, liturgy communicates God’s revelation and advances truth claims based on scripture and tradition and the teaching authority of the Church, for liturgy is supposed to celebrate in an authentic manner what is true. These beginning points move from the general to the particular in a descending direction.⁸⁵ Both directories clarify that “the deductive synthesis, however, has full value, only when the inductive process is completed.”⁸⁶ The deductive method alone is an insufficient method of formation.

Because liturgical experience is the link between the two poles in liturgical catechesis, the liturgy itself and reflection on the liturgy, liturgical catechesis is experiential and inductive, which complements and completes the deductive method associated with the homily and prior instruction. Therefore, not only does liturgical catechesis require both the inductive (ascending) and deductive (descending) approaches when giving instruction or preparing for liturgy, but the very act of experiencing the liturgy incorporates these correlative approaches that are brought full circle in a reflection on the liturgical experience in a mystagogical fashion. This tripartite movement—prepare, celebrate and reflect—constitutes a comprehensive and holistic method in liturgical catechesis that is at once inductive and deductive.

83. NDC, no. 29.

84. GDC, no. 151 and NDC., no. 17c.

85. GDC, no. 151 and NDC, no. 29.

86. GDC, no. 150 quoting the 1971 *General Catechetical Directory*, no. 72.

Conclusion—Liturgical Catechesis as Method

Vatican Council II not only restored the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* and mystagogy, but it also restored to consciousness the inseparable relationship between liturgy and catechesis with its attention to liturgical theology. This inseparable relationship is the place to begin when examining liturgical catechesis in a contemporary context. The church recognizes liturgical catechesis as a legitimate form of catechesis that is rooted in the Patristic period in the ancient catechumenate and mystagogical catecheses.

Because the liturgy or *lex orandi* communicates first theology through the prayer of the Church, it also communicates the *lex credendi* or what the Church believes based on that theology. Flowing from that foundation in liturgical theology, liturgical catechesis is a prime method for liturgical and catechetical formation. It identifies, clarifies, probes, and applies to contemporary settings the doctrines of the Church that are revealed throughout the liturgical year through liturgy and especially the rites appropriate to the catechumenate.

Liturgical catechesis has constitutive elements. *Sacrosanctum Concilium* identifies the constitutive elements for liturgical catechesis because these are the elements that constitute liturgy, the source for liturgical catechesis. Liturgical catechesis has the capacity to focus on how core teachings of the Church are to be lived out through its constitutive elements: scripture, ritual actions and prayers, community and sense of the church, liturgical signs and symbols, the liturgical year, together with music, gestures and silence.

Understanding a contemporary liturgical catechesis as method that is at once inductive and deductive recovers an integrated tripartite pattern of preparation, celebration, and reflection, conjoining instruction prior to the rites and reflection on them following participation in ritual experiences. This experience of the Church at prayer is as essential as are the constitutive elements for liturgical catechesis identified in *Sacrosanctum Concilium*. Liturgical catechesis is not only a distinct and essential form of catechesis, but it is also an inherent method with specific constitutive elements.

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