

## **JOURNEY TO BAPTISMAL LIVING**

### **AN ECUMENICAL GUIDE FOR WALKING WITH SPIRITUAL SEEKERS ver. 10**

#### **Foreword**

I remember well the day in the mid-1980s when Werner Shugart, a devout Presbyterian layman, excitedly came into my office with a slim paperback titled *Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry* (BEM), a document fifty years in the making, published by the World Council of Churches. Shug (as his friends called him) was a member of the Board of Directors of the ecumenical non-profit organization at which I (a conservative Lutheran) served as the executive director, and he was thrilled to share with me this ground-breaking work of ecumenical convergence. The BEM document includes both theological statements (in numbered paragraphs) emphasizing doctrinal convergence on each of the three topics named in the document's title and "Commentary" on select paragraphs articulating areas of disagreement that remained. The final sentence of the first "Commentary" states, "The need to recover baptismal unity is at the heart of the ecumenical task as it is central for the realization of genuine partnership within the Christian communities" (BEM, Commentary [6]).

Forty years later it has been my privilege to witness and to participate in the considerable progress made "to recover baptismal unity," by serving as part of an ecumenical working group to produce this document for Journey to Baptismal Living, "an organization of diverse people (clergy and lay) from diverse denominations ... connected through their commitment to the movement of faith through the sacrament of baptism to baptismal living as disciples of Christ" (<https://journeytobaptism.org/about-us/>). Three years in the making, "An Ecumenical Guide for Walking with Spiritual Seekers" is the product of countless first drafts, Zoom discussions, revisions, shared resources and expertise (and even recipes). Our charge in the beginning was "to adapt the catechumenal process appropriately both catechetically and liturgically [for] those already baptized"; yet the task quickly grew into creating a Guide for all seekers. This document takes up half of that challenge since it focuses on the catechetical side of the task; a second group worked on the liturgical adaptations.

Those who worked on the catechetical task include our convener Michael Marchal (RC and also board member of JBL); Richard Eslinger (UMC); James Hendricksen (ELCIC); Kyle Schiefelbein-Guerrero (ELCA); and Rhoda Schuler (LCMS); others who started on this journey (but were called away by other responsibilities) include Melissa Hartley (TEC); Nathan Jennings (TEC); and Juan Oliver (TEC). Others contributed by drafting sections of the document. Beverly Piro (ELCA) wrote the section on sponsors, and the sections on inquiry, exploration, and immediate preparation are based on the work of Dan Benedict (UMC). This ecumenical cooperation and convergence is indeed the work of the Spirit.

Although at times individuals suggested wording changes that reflected their own denominational “bias,” we could all say Amen! to this BEM statement: “Through baptism, Christians are brought into union with Christ, with each other and with the Church of every time and place. Our common baptism, which unites us to Christ in faith, is thus a basic bond of unity” (BEM, par. 6). Not only was baptism a source of *our* theological unity, but we also recognize the seismic shift of religious affiliation in North America, where today the fastest growing segment of the population is classified as the “nones.” Our shared commitment to Christ and his mission to “draw all people to” himself and the Triune God (John 12:32) impelled us to gather month after month, preparing this document designed for “seekers,” for those among whom the Spirit is at work. Our goal was to set forth guidelines for lay catechists and other leaders in parishes with an adult catechumenate process so that the work of the Spirit would not be hindered; so that engagement with scripture might bring forth the fruit of faith; so that the seekers would come to understand that their union with Christ and with this manifestation of the Church, the Body of Christ, in this time and place in the world is a precious gift that re-orient’s life toward true freedom.

We humbly offer this guide to those actively engaged in Christ’s call to his followers: to draw others into “baptismal living as disciples of Christ.”

Rhoda Schuler  
Advent 2022

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**The final goal at which this instruction aims is love,  
issuing from a pure heart, a clear conscience, and a sincere faith.**

**1 Timothy 1, 5 NJB**

## I. Introduction

In the origins of the catechumenal process in the ancient world, the challenge for the Christian community was to accompany unbaptized people coming to faith in Jesus through a deep personal conversion. For becoming Christian in pagan antiquity meant not just professing a creed but reorganizing one's life around a radically different set of values.

The catechumenal process is therefore about change and growth.

--in belief about the God revealed in Jesus in the Scriptures (mind = *information*)

--in belief in the God revealed in Jesus in the Scriptures (heart = *formation*)

--in living that belief in daily life as taught by Jesus (life = *reformation*)

--all leading to spiritual *transformation*.

In the past some North American churches emphasized the informational component within the process; others, the emotional. Authentic spiritual transformation, though, means that the whole person must be open to growth.

In our day, though, the seekers are no longer only the unbaptized. Now both unbaptized and baptized seekers approach a Christian community to inquire about how they might join, or renew, or deepen their relationship with that community, the situation is more complicated. Those in the community whose ministry it is to walk with seekers face the challenge of discerning where each person is in their individual quest. We cannot help them grow in their relationship with God in Christ and with the Church unless we know where each person is coming from.

Each seeker has a sense that the community of believers will help them meet a felt inner need: for meaning, for deeper spiritual connection, for acceptance, or for reconciliation. This guide is meant to assist a catechumenate team in beginning the process of discernment with each individual in order to provide the appropriate shape for their catechumenal process both in catechesis and in ritual. We must know their story in order to help them connect to God's story that we tell.

## II: Foundational Contemporary Background

1. We live in the remains of Christendom. The mini-ghettoes found in our grandparents' neighborhoods are gone. Some of the people who come to us have very minimal contact with Christianity. Others were "done" as infants; they were baptized but received no further Christian formation or education.

2. Many parts of North American Protestantism still view conversion as a sort of transformative, one-time-off decision. The ancient world's gift to us is a view of

conversion as a gradual—and ultimately lifelong—process marked by a series of progressively deeper commitments.

3. The goal of this process is not just some me-and-Jesus moment or mere membership in a church but rather the creation of involved disciples participating in the life of a Christian community.

4. The various bits of terminology used here are therefore not just labels but guidelines for creating for an individual a process that will be personally life-giving.

5. Although there are many similarities between the process under discussion here and a process for preparing for Confirmation, there are also discontinuities. Only for a few already baptized adult seekers would Confirmation be a ritual that they would celebrate.

6. Since God's covenant given in Baptism is irrevocable, our work with baptized seekers is founded upon helping them claim or deepen that existing covenant relationship.

To achieve that goal, we need to look at those who approach us in a couple of different ways.

### **III. First Lens: What is this seeker looking for?**

The unbaptized who come to us sometimes have had some Christian formation but have never experienced baptismal regeneration. In a sense, all baptized seekers are discerning whether or not to affirm their baptismal covenant within a given congregation. Therefore, we need to be careful about terminology especially because some denominations call those who wish to deepen their baptismal covenant “reaffirmers.”

Unbaptized seekers come to us for a variety of reasons, but the goal of their catechumenal process is the waters of the font and the new life in the Spirit given there.

Already baptized seekers come looking for one of three things to happen.

1. those seeking to be received— They have been raised and more or less formed as members of another Christian tradition and now wish to explore joining a new community and its tradition.

2. those wishing to return to participation in the same community that they were raised in. Special attention must be paid to the diversity of reasons why they stopped participating—without being judgmental.

a. Some felt called to explore other spiritual options.

b. Some left because they were hurt or scandalized by the church

c. Some are emotionally challenged and sometimes cannot participate in the usual way.

d. Some left because of apathy.

3. those seeking renewal –They have never stopped participating in the life of the community but now wish to explore ways of deepening their participation through their prayer, presence, gifts, service, and testimony.

#### **IV. Second Lens: How mature is this seeker's Christian faith?**

How formed and converted a seeker is varies greatly. How much in mind and heart and lifestyle have they been conformed to Christ? The catechumenal process with its four phases gives us a model for understanding where each individual is on their journey of faith.

1<sup>st</sup> phase: inquirers: They have really never made a personal faith commitment and know little about Jesus and have little or no relationship with him. They come with questions that need to be answered.

2<sup>nd</sup> phase: hearers/catechumens or affirmers. They have the beginnings of faith and want to explore the Way of Christian life and belief. They need to be accompanied and "instructed" about the meaning and consequences of a baptismal commitment.

3<sup>d</sup> phase: those in intense preparation. They have matured in the faith both in understanding and in practice. Now through repentance and deeper spiritual formation they need to be prepared for the encounter with Jesus in the sacrament of Baptism or in the Affirmation of their Baptism.

4<sup>th</sup> phase: mystagogy. Those who have experienced Baptism or Affirmation need to reflect upon those experiences as they embark (anew) upon the challenge of living Christ's life in the world.

#### **V. Combining these two lenses**

##### *Part 1: Overall Pattern of the Phases of the Catechumenal Process*

Introduction: The process of conversion, of being transformed into a new person in Christ, has four components and four phases that interconnect.

The components of conversion are information (head), formation, (heart), reformation (lifestyle), and transformation.

1. inquiry: process driven by seekers' questions  
     focused primarily on information  
     goal: answering questions and connecting them to Jesus  
     final threshold: desire to commit to following Christ and his Way (T1)
2. exploration (catechumenate proper): process guided by catechist team  
     focused on both information and formation  
     goal: exploring faith in Christ and its implications for life  
     final threshold: commitment to prepare for Baptism or Affirmation (T2)
3. immediate/intense preparation: process guided by team  
     not focused on information but on formation and reformation  
     goal: spiritual formation to prepare for celebration of Baptism or Affirmation (T3)  
     final threshold: celebration of Baptism or of Affirmation (& Reception)

4. mystagogy/reflection: claiming the process & discerning the future, accompanied by team

focused on transformation in the power of the Spirit

goal: life in community as a mature Christian

final threshold: affirmation of specific vocation(s) as a Christian (T4)

*Part 2: Different Ritual Paths for the Nonbaptized and the Baptized*

T1, 2, 3, 4 indicate the time to celebrate a threshold rite (T) before an individual moves on to the next step in the process. Although both the unbaptized and the baptized might be involved in the same catechumenal process, the rituals that mark the transitions from one phase to the next differ because those already baptized are already members of Christ's Body.

1. For the unbaptized: [The JBL Ecumenical Rites for the Baptized are available online at [journeytobaptism.org/Worship Resources](http://journeytobaptism.org/WorshipResources)]

T1 – Rite of Receiving a Hearer/Catechumen

T2 – Rite of Calling to Baptism (& Enrollment)

T3 – Baptism (and Eucharist?)

T4 – Rite of Affirmation of Vocation

2. For the already baptized [The JBL Ecumenical Rites for the Those Making Affirmation are available online at [Journeytobaptism.org/Worship Resources](http://Journeytobaptism.org/WorshipResources)]

T1 – Rite of Welcoming the Already Baptized to a Journey of Conversion

T2 – Rite for Calling the Already Baptized to Continuing Conversion

T3 – Affirmation or Reception

T4 – Rite of Affirmation of Vocation

3. For combined versions consult that section of the Ecumenical Rites.

In addition to the Rite of Affirmation of Vocation certain other rites might be celebrated with both groups as combined or shared rites. Consult the appropriate sections of the Ecumenical Rites

1. During immediate preparation

-- Presentation (Handing Over?) of the Creed

-- Rites of Healing & Deliverance

2. During mystagogy



- Order of Giving Witness to the Work of the Risen Christ
- Order of Invitation to the Discernment of Vocation

## VI: Discerning how to accompany a seeker: Part 1, the initial conversation

We propose two ways of discerning in collaboration with a seeker where they are in their development as a Christian. The first is an outline for how to conduct an opening conversation with an individual. The second is an outline for how to conduct a church tour for an individual seeker or a group of them in such a way as to help the team discern where each individual might be.

*The shape of an opening conversation – prompts for discussion*

*This conversation is not meant to be an intake interview. Any paperwork that might be necessary should somehow be filled out in advance. Instead, this conversation is meant to be a spiritual dialogue*

*Nor is it a checklist. The team member needs to know the outline well enough to be able to discern quickly which questions might be appropriate.*

*The place for the interview should have a friendly atmosphere.*

### *Part 1 – the past & present*

1. Tell me about your experience of religion or spirituality in your life-journey.
2. Tell me about your experience of church.
  - What was your family's connection?
  - How were you involved before? Youth group? Choir? Mission experiences? Social justice involvement?
- What is your current relationship with church? 3. Tell
- me about important people in your life, people who have shaped who you are.
4. Tell me about a vivid experience from your growing up that influenced who you are today. 5. Tell
- me about the role that the Bible has played in your life.
4. Tell me about who Jesus is to/for you.
5. Tell me about the role prayer plays in your life now.
  - How has that role changed over time?
  - Tell me about a time that prayer has played an important part in your life.

### *Part 2 – the present & future*

1. Tell me about how you feel that God might be calling you today.

*If they have not been an active member or are from another Christian tradition:*

2. Tell me about what makes you interested in (re)connecting with this community.
  - Are you looking for a sense of meaning or purpose in your life? *head & heart*
  - Are there priorities and patterns in your life that you would like to change? *life*

*If they have been seeking for a long time:*

3. Tell me why you feel that this community might be the right place to grow spiritually at this point in your life.

*If a church did something to drive them away:*

4. Tell me why you hope that we are the community that can help you reconnect and put your faith into action.

*If they are emotionally challenged:*

5. Tell me about your struggle with stability and acceptance. How do you feel that we can support you in your journey?

## **VI: Discerning how to accompany a seeker: Part 2, a church tour**

### *Introduction*

In order to accompany already baptized seekers successfully on the journey of faith, we need to discern what stage of faith development they have reached. Are they still at inquiry or have they reached sincere exploration or even intense preparation? (Some seeking a deepening of faith might even be in the equivalent of mystagogy.)

The initial interview is designed to help sort out the answers to that question. Yet it is not the only approach. Since such seekers are probably already participating in the congregation's worship, they might be experiencing a certain anxiety about the difference in liturgical practice between where they have worshipped in the past and what might be their new church home. Making them feel comfortable in the worship space and with the gestures of worship can alleviate that anxiety, invite them more into the community, and educate them in some core beliefs of this new denomination.

A church building is theology incarnate. The overall arrangement of the different elements of font, table, pulpit, and seating expresses a vision both of what it means for us to be church and of what the church does when we gather. Windows, statues, musical instruments, etc. also tell about who we think we are and of what our proper way of relating to God might be.

### *Scheduling*

This church tour would probably best be conducted as soon as there is a small group of seekers—hopefully not too long after the initial interviews—not only for the sake of making the seekers feel more comfortable but because of the bonding experience that such a group activity can produce.

### *Preparations*

The person leading the tour should be a member of the catechumenate team, though not the clergy. The catechumenate team member(s) leading the tour should consult the clergy beforehand since their specialized knowledge is a valuable resource on the tour. Other knowledgeable people from the parish might also be invited, but the guides should not outnumber the participants. Practicing beforehand is also essential. Be aware also of any special accommodations that might be necessary.

It is important during this tour that the leaders should pay attention to who is already familiar with the names and functions of various objects and of how much “churchy” language different participants use, etc.

### *Pattern*

1. *Gather* the participants in the usual meeting room or possibly in the entryway of the church if it is large and comfortable enough for an initial conversation. Be aware of the need at some seasons or in some weather for storing coats, umbrellas, etc.

2. When things have quieted down, begin with a short *welcome and prayer*.

Welcome, everyone, in the name of Jesus, to this exploration of our church sanctuary. In the Gospel of Matthew Jesus said, “For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them.”

The earliest followers of Jesus took this promise to heart and gathered regularly “in Jesus’ name.” These words also inspired early Christians to set aside building for the specific purpose of gathering for worship, first in “house churches” and later in buildings constructed specifically for larger gatherings of Christians.

Although we know that God can be encountered in our homes, in nature, yes, even in pubs and malls and bowling alleys, church buildings are constructed to help us focus our thoughts, words, and prayers on what God has done for us in the person of Jesus Christ.

We hope to accomplish the following with this church tour:

- To increase your level of comfort in the worship space and with what goes on in our Sunday worship;
- To help you feel more connected with the worshipping community; and
- To point out ways in which our worship space reflects what we believe about God, Jesus Christ, and the people of God, the church.

Throughout the tour I/we will be inviting your input by asking questions about your experiences in worship. We’ll also have time after the tour to sit together and process the experience.

Before we enter the sanctuary, let us pray:

Living God, your presence in our world	
reaches across the boundaries of space and time;	yet
through your Son, who took on our flesh and lived among us,	
you are with us in this house of worship.	
Guide our steps so that we are drawn into your holy presence;	
guide our thoughts,	
so that we come to greater knowledge of your love and grace;	and
guide our words and questions,	so
that the prayers offered in this place	may
invite us into authentic conversation with you;	through Jesus
Christ, our savior and Lord.	

All: Amen.

3. Since churches differ in shape. it seems usually best in a rectangular building to *work from the back to the front* and in a more circular one *from the periphery to the center*.

Ask leading questions as the various elements in the space are encountered. Help them feel comfortable about asking their own questions. Tell stories and make it fun! (This component is not just about information but about formation.)

#### 4. Important objects that need encounter and explication

- a. overall layout: Ask them what the space reminds them of. Does it bring back any memories?  
What objects draw their attention in the space? Why do they?
- b. the font: Why is it where it is? What does that say to them about what happens there? Be aware of other objects connected to the font, e.g., the Paschal Candle.
- c. the table/altar: What terminology are they used to? What are they comfortable with? And why?
- d. the ambo/lectern/pulpit: Is it in the place that they were used to? Where is it located here and why?
- e. seating: Where is the choir? Where are the ministers? Where are the congregation? What does this space make clear about different roles in worship? What have they been used to?
- f. Talk about the auxiliary components of the space
  - cross/crucifix: What is the difference? Why does this denomination prefer this type?
  - flag(s), banners, candles
  - Name any statues for them, and tell the story of why they are there.
  - Name any people and stories in the windows and why they are there.
  - Ask what other questions they have about the room, and point out other significant objects that they might have missed.

#### 5. Return to where everyone gathered, and unpack the experience with them by asking such questions as:

- What did you learn?
- What were you already familiar with?
- What surprised you?
- What impressed you?
- In worship what draws you into prayer? -- And
- what distracts you?

#### 6. If this is also a regular catechetical session, proceed to *lectio divina* with the next Sunday's Gospel in the usual way.

7. If this is not a regular session, join in an appropriate common prayer before dismissal.

### *Discernment*

When the participants have left or relatively soon after this gathering, the catechumenate team needs to process what they noticed about the participants.

#### 1. information

- a. Who was already familiar with the names and functions of things? And who wasn't? And who had different names? What stories did the participants tell?
- b. How much theological understanding was shown by the different participants? What were their reactions to the team's explanations?

#### 2. formation

- a. How connected were they with the layout of the place and with the patterns of worship? How comfortable did they feel with worshipping in this space and in those patterns?
- b. Was anything new and engaging for them? Was anything uncomfortable? What stories did they tell?
- c. How different were their reactions and comments?

#### 3. reformation

- a. Who seemed engaged and even excited about what was shared during the tour? And who didn't?
- b. Who especially seemed to need help in developing a prayerful participation in the worship life of this congregation?

## **VI: Discerning how to accompany a seeker: Part 3, developing a personal formation plan for a seeker**

Introduction: After the initial interview (and the church tour) it is important to discern as a team where each individual seeker seems to be in their faith development as they enter the catechumenal process. Since spiritual transformation requires an integrated development of mind, heart, and life style, looking at each seeker through each of those three components should indicate where they are on their journey of faith: inquiry, exploration, immediate preparation, or even mystagogy.

### *1. information*

- a. What depth of knowledge does this individual seem to have about
  - the Bible, especially the story and teaching of Jesus,
  - church history and the Creed,
  - the teachings of our denomination?
- b. What does this individual need to learn about these topics?
  - How will we help them to deepen their knowledge of God and the faith?
  - Does the Sunday lectionary need some supplement for this individual?

The role of the catechumenate team and sponsors here is to be “teachers.”

### *2. formation*

- a. How deep and consistent is their prayer life?
  - What does their daily prayer practice look like? Individual? Family or household?
  - Do they consistently attend and become involved in Sunday worship?
  - Are they involved in any other form of communal prayer?
- b. What would lead this individual to grow in their relationship with Jesus through prayer? Individual? Communal?

The role of the team and sponsors here is like that of a spiritual companion or director.

### *3. reformation*

- a. How well does their daily life reveal the values of the Gospel, for example, the Beatitudes
  - in their personal relationships,
  - in their work life,
  - in their involvement in social justice, outreach. or evangelization ministries?
- b. What would lead this individual to see their faith as expressed in baptismal living?

The role of the team and sponsors here is to be role models.



## **VI: Discerning how to accompany a seeker: Part 4: A Note About Baptism or Rebaptism in Unusual Circumstances**

Occasionally one may encounter a seeker who is uncertain of their baptismal status or wishes to be rebaptized. Most Christian denominations do not normally practice rebaptism, so such an encounter may be an excellent opportunity to discuss the significance and understanding of Baptism as practiced by your denomination. Nevertheless, there may be times when rebaptism might be considered in cases where there are doubts about the validity of the Baptism, either for theological or ecclesiastical considerations. It may be prudent to seek the counsel of denominational officials in these cases as they may present numerous concerns. In all such cases, the requests should be handled with pastoral care and sensitivity.

Such uncertainty could arise from various situations, especially [in cases where](#) the candidate is uncertain if they were ever baptized. In this case, the candidate, whenever possible, should be encouraged to consult friends or family who may have knowledge of the Baptism. Parishes or congregations may be contacted to see if they have a record of the Baptism. It is helpful to provide a date range along with other relevant family information to the parish(es) or congregation(s) consulted.

Lack of a baptismal record is not sufficient evidence to conclude that there was no baptism. Records may be missing or incomplete for many reasons, including the closure of the congregation or its merger with another, fire, or other causes of documents being damaged or destroyed. There is also the possibility that the records may have been archived in a Synodical, State, or Provincial archive and may be accessed there. Unfortunately, some of these searches may require an in-person visit which may not be practical or possible. Finally, there is always the possibility that records were not kept accurately and therefore do not exist.

In all cases, the situation must be handled with care and pastoral sensitivity since there is potential for it to be a cause of uncertainty, anxiety or hurt feelings.

In cases of uncertainty, many denominations, e.g., the Episcopal Church or the Roman Catholic Church, have opted for a form of Conditional Baptism, using this (or similar) form: "If you are not already baptized, N, I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen." In such cases consideration should be given to a small ceremony to avoid the confusion that might arise from a more public service. Truly private baptisms, though, are to be avoided.

## **VII: Leading a session for those in Inquiry**

*Introduction:* The first phase of the catechumenal process begins within the hearts and minds of those who feel drawn to the message of Jesus as it is lived in a congregation. They are seeking, but seekers often begin without being able to put into words what it is that they are seeking. Consequently, this initial phase should not necessarily involve formal catechesis or even evangelism.

Often what they are seeking is connection. Do I belong here? How do my longings and story connect to God's story? Do I desire to explore the Christian faith with the guidance and support of the members of this congregation? Although there are exceptions, initial conversion is often tentative, a gradual opening up of mind and heart and life to the call of Jesus. As the parable of the Sower and the Seed tells us, growth comes, but there are many possible distractions.

Every seeker experiences growth in a different and non-linear way. And so, after the initial conversation and the mutual discernment that a given seeker should become involved in the catechumenal process, for them to join a larger group is not necessarily the next step, especially if that group has been meeting for a while. It is helpful if there is at least a small group of inquirers, but sometimes inquiry needs to be more one-on-one with a member of the team—an open-ended, informal, hospitable time.

The focus of this phase is on sharing life-stories, trying to form real questions, and pointing them towards real answers—all the while establishing mutual trust. Although there is no formal rite for becoming an inquirer, seekers need to be introduced in some way to the congregation so that they can begin to enter into the life and connections of this group of Christian believers. Such an introduction should be sensitive to the local context.

### General Pattern for an Inquiry Session

#### *Preliminaries:*

1. It is built around story-telling: theirs, ours, and those from Scripture.
2. The catechist(s) need not to be anxious but rather discerning, supportive and open to questions.
3. They especially need to avoid creating the impression that there is a timeline!
4. The outcome of this phase is decided by the Spirit; if someone does not desire to move on but to explore other options or even leaves, that choice is not a failure.
5. Before each session the catechist(s) need to prepare the background for that Sunday's appointed selection of Scripture, especially the Gospel.

#### *A Typical Session – One-on-one or small group*

1. Welcome

- If there is a newcomer, begin with introductions.
- Make a comment about confidentiality.
- Check in about how life is going.
- Offer an opening prayer.

## 2. Informal *Lectio Divina*

- Begin by asking them if they have any further questions, observations, or insights they would like to share or discuss from the previous gathering.
- Provide a framework for the Gospel for the next Sunday. (*information*)
- Have someone read it aloud, and then leave space for silence.
- Ask them to share what word or phrase spoke to them.
- What reaction did that word or phrase raise up? Why? (*formation*)
- Ask if it challenges or comforts them in some way. (*reformation*)
- Ask someone to reread the passage.
- Share spontaneous prayer—and possibly the anchor prayer. Cf. XIII.

### The Transition from Inquiring to Exploring – The Discernment of Readiness

Deciding to commit to becoming a participant in the more structured second stage of the process, the exploration/the catechumenate proper, needs to involve *mutual discernment* between an individual participant and the catechist(s) (and sponsor if there is one.). If a personal formation plan was completed, it should also be consulted.

Inquiry, the first phase, which focuses primarily upon basic information and developing relationships, ends when an individual seeker can articulate an answer to these questions

- What am I seeking?
- Do I feel a call to follow Jesus as his disciple?
- What am I seeking from this community of faith?

Their answers should include some indication of

- the first stirrings of a change of heart (repentance) and faith
- a yearning to grow into a deeper understanding of Jesus and his message
- a longing to belong to a community of faithful followers of Jesus

[N.B. The inquirer is not asked to profess a belief in Jesus as Lord and Savior but as the Teacher in whose ways they wish to walk.]

### Dismissals

In the ancient world and in some denominations today, those who are unbaptized are dismissed from the service after the homily to go and share more about the Word. For many this practice is still an unsettled question since they admit the unbaptized to the Table. The Roman Catholic *OCIA* expects it to happen; the Episcopal and Anglican communions provide for it as a possibility. Lutheran resources in both Canada and the United States and most United Methodist congregations do not.

### Ritual

The ritual paths of the unbaptized and the baptized diverge at this point. With the unbaptized the community celebrates the Rite of Receiving Hearers/Catechumens; with the already baptized the community celebrates the Rite of Welcoming the Already Baptized to a Journey of Affirmation. Because the call of God in Baptism is irrevocable, these two rites should not be combined in the same service though they might be celebrated at different times in the same service. The Ecumenical Rites include a discussion of the possibilities.

### **VIII: Leading a session for those in the catechumenal/exploration period**

*Introduction:* The second phase of the catechumenal process begins once an unbaptized individual has celebrated with the community the Rite of Welcoming a Hearer/Catechumen or an affirmer the Rite of Welcome to a Journey of Affirmation. It is focused on helping a participant grow in the knowledge and love of Jesus and in beginning or continuing to live according to the values of the Gospel.

Since they have accepted him as their Teacher and are trying to walk in his Way, they are true disciples (students/learners) of Jesus. As with all believers: being a disciple is a lifelong process of self-discovery through the interaction between the Word of God and each Christian's life in a community of Spirit-filled believers.

This period is indefinite in length since the spiritual growth of each individual is different. St. Augustine of Hippo, for example, spend years as a catechumen until he finally experienced the call to Baptism.

#### Components of this phase:

1. Hearing the Word and responding to it in worship, scripture reflection, communal and private prayer, engagement in congregational activities—especially service to others.
2. Discerning the depth and perseverance of each participant's desire to explore and experience life as a Christian disciple.
3. Discerning a growing sense of repentance, a deepening desire for a mature faith in Jesus, a love of others revealed in action.
4. Embodying a hospitable welcome by the whole community into its life. The participants have been received as hearers or welcomed to a journey of conversion; now they need to experience the variety of ways of living out Christ's call.

#### Practices of this time of formal exploration:

This second phase differs from Inquiry, the first phase, in that it is no longer primarily driven by the questions of the participants but is guided by the team and sponsors within the framework of the Sunday lectionary. Instruction in this period is not a linear, analytical approach, but an experience-and-reflection loop. (Do not ask them to memorize the catechism!)

1<sup>st</sup> Practice: Investigation, reflection, and discussion on the Word of God and the traditions of the denomination. (*information*)

2<sup>nd</sup> Practice: Worship and prayer, both communal and personal. (*formation*)

3<sup>d</sup> Practice: Active love and service of others. (*reformation*)

The Spirit can use these practices to begin or continue the *transformation* of each participant—as well as the sponsors and the team.

#### Catechesis:

### *General Pattern for a Catechumenate Session*

*Preliminaries:* “Catechesis” is derived from Greek and means “to sound in the ear,” placing story-telling at the center. This approach is a sensory immersion in the story of Jesus—his life, death, and resurrection.

1. It is built around story-telling: theirs, ours, those from Scripture, and that of a presenter whose expertise or life experience exemplifies that week’s Scripture.
2. The catechist(s) need to be discerning and supportive, not anxious and foreclosing.
3. They especially need to avoid creating the impression that there is a timeline!
4. The outcome of this phase is decided by the Spirit; if someone does not desire to move on or even leaves, that is not a failure.
5. Before each session the catechist(s) need to prepare the background for that week’s selection of Scripture and recruit an appropriate presenter who can share not just facts but also their own spiritual life.

### *First Session after the celebration of either Receiving Hearers/Catechumens or Welcoming the Already Baptized to a Journey of Conversion*

It is important for everyone involved to process the experience of a rite (i.e., mystagogical reflection). In this way the experience can affect the participants more deeply and be integrated more fully into their lives. Those received or welcomed are the primary focus, but it is important to ask the sponsors and even the team to process the experience from their perspective. The first session after a rite should therefore have a different beginning, using the following prompts or others as appropriate.

- What was striking or powerful for you in word or gesture?
- What was most challenging for you?
- Was there anything puzzling?
- Did you feel welcomed? Did you feel you now belonged in a different way?

It can be effective if one or more of the participants ends this portion with prayer.

### *A Typical Catechumenate Session*

#### 1. Welcome

- If there is a newcomer, begin with introductions.
- Make a comment about confidentiality.
- Check in about how life is going.
- Offer an opening prayer.

#### 2. Informal *Lectio Divina*

- Begin by asking them if they have any further questions, observations, or insights they would like to share or discuss from the previous gathering.
- Provide a framework for the Gospel for the next Sunday, pointing out especially the continuity and structure in the lectionary from Sunday to Sunday. (*information*)
- Have someone read at the Gospel aloud, and then leave space for silence.
- Ask them to share what word or phrase spoke to them.
- What reaction did that word or phrase raise up? (*formation*)
- Ask if it challenges or comforts or inspires them in some way.  
Is Jesus calling them to change or grow? (*reformation*)
- Dialogue with the presenter
- Ask someone to reread the passage.
- Share spontaneous prayer—and possibly the anchor prayer. Cf. XIII.
- Announcements and reminders, especially of ways to become involved.

*The Transition from Exploring to Immediate Preparation: The Discernment of Readiness*

There needs to be *mutual discernment* among each individual, their sponsor, and the team about the perseverance and growth that have taken place over the last months (or years) and about the kind of commitment that is involved in immediate preparation for Baptism or Affirmation.

This phase of formal instruction and formation ends when the individual seeker can give a positive answer to the following questions:

- Do I feel called by Christ to follow him not only as my Teacher but also as Savior and Lord?
- Do I feel called to become an active member, fully participating in the life of this Church?
- Am I able to commit myself wholeheartedly to the intense process of preparation for Baptism or Affirmation?

Since immediate preparation is not about information but formation and reformation, it is important to listen for some indication of a deep yearning

- for inner healing and deliverance,
- and for faith to grow into a fruitful life within the believing community.

Although it is good to form a cohort for immediate preparation, there should be no expectation that every participant will move on at the same time. The Spirit is always in charge and at work.

### Dismissals

In the ancient world and in some denominations today, those who are unbaptized are dismissed from the service after the homily to go and share more about the Word. For many this practice is still an unsettled question since they admit the unbaptized to the Table. The Roman Catholic *OCIA* expects it to happen; the Episcopal and Anglican communions provide for it as a possibility. Lutheran resources in both Canada and the United States and most United Methodist congregations do not.

### Ritual

The ritual paths of the unbaptized and the baptized once again diverge. With the unbaptized the community celebrates the Rite of Calling to Baptism; with the already baptized the community celebrates the Rite of Calling the Already Baptized to Continuing Conversion. Because the call of God in Baptism is irrevocable, these two rites should not be combined in the same service though they might be celebrated at different times in the same service. The Ecumenical Rites include a discussion of the possibilities.



## **IX: Leading a session for those in immediate preparation**

Scripturally based preparation in mind, heart, and life  
for Baptism and for Affirmation of Baptism

Introduction: When a hearer shows the readiness and desire for Baptism or a person on a journey of affirmation yearns for Affirmation, it is time to begin the third phase of the catechumenal process, immediate preparation. The tradition we have inherited from the earliest days of Christianity in the West is that the focus should shift from “instruction” to a strong focus on spiritual formation through an imaginative engagement with the Word of God. The Cycle A lectionary Gospel selections preserve for us the passages which our forebears thought would best ground such an imaginative encounter.

In these passages we proclaim stories of transforming encounters with Jesus: the devil, Nicodemus, the Samaritan woman at the well, the man born blind, and Lazarus and his sisters. By moving through these stories step-by-step during catechesis and worship, the participants—and the whole community—are led to know more deeply what a living relationship with Jesus is like.

The last three stories are especially important because they deal with different barriers to that relationship. The Samaritan woman thirsts for forgiveness and reconciliation, the man born blind for healing, and Lazarus and his sisters for deliverance through a deeper faith. The three Sundays when these Gospels are proclaimed are also the traditional ones for celebrating with the participants successive rites of healing and deliverance.

The Year B and C Gospels can also be used as long as the focus remains on the characters and images unique to each story. The general principles outlined here could also be used for a period of immediate preparation in Advent or some other period of the year.

### General Pattern for Imaginative Contemplation of the Gospel Reading

#### *Preparation by catechists:*

1. Prepare to explain the context for this particular reading within the flow of this Gospel.
2. If the reading is long, divide it up beforehand into manageable episodes.
3. Decide beforehand from your knowledge of the group which of the following questions might stimulate the best discussion and sharing.

#### *a. Informational Questions*

- Who are the main characters in this story/episode?
- What do we need to know about their backstory?
- What does their society/"church" think about them?
- What so far has motivated them?
- What are they yearning for?

--Why do you relate to them?

b. *Formational* Questions

--How is encountering Jesus different?

--Why are they drawn to him?

--How do they want to change?

--What does Jesus ask of them?

--Why might you connect with their story?

c. *Reformational* Questions

--What do they do differently because they have met Jesus?

--How does their relationship with God change because of this encounter?

--What good news do they wish to proclaim?

--What good news do they wish to proclaim?

*First Session after the celebration of either Calling to Baptism or Calling the Already Baptized to Continuing Conversion*

It is important for everyone involved to process the experience of a rite (i.e., mystagogical reflection). In this way the experience can affect the participants more deeply and be integrated more fully into their lives. Those received or welcomed are the primary focus, but it is important to ask the sponsors and even the team to process the experience from their perspective. The first session after a rite should therefore have a different beginning, using the following prompts or others as appropriate.

--What was striking or powerful for you in word or gesture?

--What was most challenging for you?

--Was there anything puzzling?

--Did you feel welcomed? Did you feel you now belonged in a different way?

It can be effective if one or more of the participants end this portion with prayer.

*Pattern for a typical session:*

1. After welcome, catch-up, and prayer, introduce the background for this Sunday's passage.
2. Have someone read the gospel (or the first episode) aloud.
3. Share silence for a while.
4. Ask them to speak about what words meant the most to them.
5. Using the questions selected from the list above or whatever else seems appropriate, lead them more deeply into the passage.

6. If you have broken the passage up into episodes, continue the pattern of reading, silence, and reflection as needed.

(For the final portion of the discussion and sharing, prompts appropriate for each Lenten Sunday's Gospel selection are given below.)

7. Wrap-up questions

--How has this story helped connect you with Jesus?

--(question from the list below)

--What do you need to ponder and pray for in this coming week?

8. Concluding announcements and prayer—possibly the anchor prayer. Cf. XIII..

*Lectionary based wrap up reflection questions for Lenten Imaginative Contemplation*

Cycle A

1<sup>st</sup> Sunday: How have you been tempted?

2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday: In what ways are you yearning to be reborn?

3<sup>d</sup> Sunday: What are you thirsting for in your heart and life?

4<sup>th</sup> Sunday: What have you been blind to? What have you been blinded by?

5<sup>th</sup> Sunday: Where do you feel trapped, bound up, or even dead inside?

Cycle B

1<sup>st</sup> Sunday: How have you been tempted?

2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday: What cross are you hesitating to take up?

3<sup>d</sup> Sunday: How have you betrayed your relationship with Jesus by putting other "gods" into your life?

4<sup>th</sup> Sunday: Jesus was lifted up on the cross to reveal and heal the harm of our destructive words and ways. What is Jesus revealing and healing in you?

5<sup>th</sup> Sunday: What do you need to die to in your life so that you can receive new life in Jesus?

Cycle C

1<sup>st</sup> Sunday: How have you been tempted?

2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday: What makes you hesitate to join Jesus on his journey to Jerusalem?

3<sup>d</sup> Sunday: What needs to be "pruned" from your life so that you can bear fruit?

4<sup>th</sup> Sunday: Where in your life story do you need to hear and receive God's compassion?

5<sup>th</sup> Sunday: Judas was a hypocrite. What masks of your own selfishness are you afraid to take off?

*An Option: Visualizing the Text*

One way of enriching immediate preparation is to schedule during Lent a retreat day where the pressure of time is less. During such a time it would be possible to enrich the experience of imaginative contemplation by giving the participants to react to the Gospel texts not just in words but by *creative expression*. The challenge for the team is to have appropriate supplies prepared.

The biblical text is the Gospel reading for the “current” Sunday (that is, if the group gathers on Sunday, they will use the text from that day). The same reading is used throughout the following week, Monday through Saturday, on whatever day the group meets.

- The Gospel text is read two times.
  - o First reading and reflection.
    - o The catechist gives the first prompt, “Listen for a word, phrase, or image that captures your attention,” pauses for a brief time of silence, and then reads the text slowly.
    - o Second reading and reflection.
      - o The catechist gives the second prompt, “Reflect again on that word, phrase, or image that captures your attention in light of the entire passage, thinking about how it might take shape in some visual or aural representation,” followed by silence, before the text is read slowly a second time by someone else at the table.
  
- Pairs or small groups (no more than 4) of individuals form into teams as directed by the catechist.
- Each team collaborates creatively to visualize the story in some way. They may choose to
  - o Act it out
    - § In a very literal way; or
    - § By setting it in a new context
  - o Draw it out, using
    - § A cartoon format or
    - § Artistic rendering
  - o Write a song. Could be a simple, memorable refrain, or a metered hymn employing imagery conveying the text. Perhaps ...
    - § To the tune of a familiar hymn or
    - § To the tune of a secular, popular song
  - o Write a poem or haiku (or even a limerick).

· Once the groups have completed their visualization each in turn conveys the piece to the entire group in a manner appropriate to the genre they chose: acting it out; discussing the drawing; singing it; reading it.

(With thanks to FormingLutherans.org who provided this option.)

### *Partnership of Catechesis and Worship*

In the Ecumenical Rites Journey to Baptismal Living has provided for versions of a Rite of Healing & Deliverance for the 3<sup>d</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, and 5<sup>th</sup> Sundays in Lent for all three cycles. These are meant to interconnect with the previous catechetical session for participants in the catechumenal process as well as call the entire community to a deeper repentance. Versions exist for those seeking Baptism, those seeking Affirmation, and for a combined group

There is also a rite for the Presentation/Handing On of the Profession of Faith. It is probably not appropriate to use this rite with the already baptized.

### Dismissals

In the ancient world and in many denominations today, those who are unbaptized are dismissed from the service after the homily to go and share more about the Word. For many this practice is still an unsettled question. The Roman Catholic *OCIA* expects it to happen; the Episcopal and Anglican communions provide for it as a possibility. Lutheran resources in both Canada and the United States and most United Methodist congregations do not.

## **X: Leading a session for those in mystagogy**

On the JBL website the section on Mystagogy in the Ecumenical Rites presents an integrated catechetical and liturgical approach to that period

Cf. [journeytobaptism.org/Worship Resources/Ecumenical Rites](http://journeytobaptism.org/WorshipResources/EcumenicalRites).

## **XI: A word about sponsors**

A person new to the Christian faith or in the process of renewing or restoring faith does so within a community of others like themselves. A sponsor from the community joins the seeker's journey as a fellow companion on the journey and also serves to facilitate integration into the community.

The three-fold role of a sponsor is to **accompany, nurture, and support** the seeker throughout the catechumenate process.

The sponsor commits to sharing the formation process with the seeker as it unfolds. The sponsor engages in scripture study or spiritual exercises and accompanies the seeker in public rituals. The sponsor invites the seeker to engage in the life of the parish community by introductions to other community members, invitations to participate in events or special outreach or fellowship events and the like.

The sponsor is not expected to be a teacher or a theologian to instruct the seeker. Rather a sponsor's role is to share one's own expressions of faithful living, including experiences ranging from times of doubt or despair to those of deep assurance of God's presence in one's life.

### **Sponsors *accompany* by . . .**

- Attending all elements of the catechumenal process with the seeker.
- Standing with the seeker during public rituals.
- Welcoming the seeker to congregational life.
- Sitting with the seeker during worship when possible and, if necessary, guiding them through the liturgy.
- Extending personal invitations to church events.
- Introducing the seeker to other members of the community.
- Extending companionship and hospitality so that the seeker is integrated into the community.

### **Sponsors *nurture* by . . .**

- Participating in the catechumenal process along with the seeker as one who is also on a continuing faith journey and not an "expert" or "more advanced" Christian.

- Actively listening to the seeker's questions, observations and insights and assuring them that are important.
- Respecting confidentiality.
- Openly sharing their own personal faith experiences.
- Honoring the seeker's questions. Referring theological and scriptural questions to clergy or lay professionals for advice or continued conversation.

### **Sponsors *support by . . .***

- Praying for the seeker every day.
- Calling, texting or emailing on a random day just to say you are thinking of them.
- Offering to sit with their children on Sunday.
- Offering a ride to a community event.
- Telling their story about how they joined the faith community.
- Making enough "potluck" for two so that the seeker doesn't have to.
- Meeting for coffee or tea and casual conversation.
- Making the seeker feel welcome in every way possible.

### **Sponsors *give of time and self***

- This is one of the most precious gifts you can give.
- The responsibility of being a sponsor cannot be minimized. It requires time and commitment. Remember that as one gives, one also receives.
- Sponsors frequently report that this time of intentional faith formation becomes a great benefit to their own faith journey.

Selecting a sponsor for a seeker should be undertaken with prayer and discernment. Sometimes a logical match presents itself, such as an existing connection with a member of the faith community. Most often, however, the person recruiting a sponsor needs to take into consideration the interests and personalities of the seeker and the potential sponsor. The pairing of opposite sexes is discouraged. Pairing those in similar life stages, for example, Gen X with Gen X or the pairing of recent retirees is common. Also consider pairing an older sponsor with a younger seeker. A family with young children may live far from parents and would welcome the support of mature mentors. To be sure, not all sponsor/seeker matches become lasting friendships. One prays that a deep connection of faith and life enriches the catechumenal journey.

Finally, congregational support of the sponsor is as important as their support of the seeker. The sponsor recruiter or a member of the catechumenate team should check in with each sponsor on a regular basis. Areas to explore include how the process is going for the sponsor and how they perceive the process is going for the seeker; are there any particular questions or concerns that need to be addressed; what have been the challenges and the blessings far; and how can the team offer support? Along with all members of the catechumenate process, sponsors should be lifted in prayer by the community on a regular basis.

## **XII: Building a catechumenate team**

Seekers who approach a Christian community, trying to discern their connection with Jesus and the Church, need many different kinds of support since conversion is a holistic process of transformation. They need information about the person of Jesus and the truths of Christianity, as well as formation into relationships with Jesus and with the members of the community, and re-formation of their lives so that their choices and actions reflect Gospel values.

That is why they need to be welcomed and then involved in the worship life of the community as well as in its educational and outreach programs.

### *Basic requirements for a team*

1. It needs to be composed of both laity and clergy, modelling collaboration both in the catechetical and in the liturgical components of the catechumenal process.
2. The first phase, inquiry, which is driven primarily by the seeker's questions, needs someone with empathy along with good listening and storytelling skills, someone welcoming and hospitable
  - who can create a safe space as they guide seekers
  - to ponder whether or not they wish to walk the Way of Jesus with this particular community.

These efforts should all be directed towards helping the inquirers make a tentative commitment in the presence of the worshipping community.

3. The second phase, the catechumenate proper, which is driven more by the unfolding of the Jesus story found in the Sunday lectionary, needs someone who is still a good listener and welcoming but who can also convey the faith without teaching in an academic way,
  - someone also able to encourage and inspire the hearers/catechumens both to reflect upon their experiences of worship, especially in the rites in which they are involved and to become connected with outreach activities.



These efforts should all be directed towards helping the hearers/catechumens discern whether they are being called to a final, lifelong, public commitment in Baptism to the God revealed in Jesus.

4. The third phase, immediate preparation, which is driven not by more information but by formation through imaginative encounter with the person of Jesus, needs someone with some of the skills of a spiritual director:

a person with good reflection skills

who can encourage people to encounter the stories in the Sunday lectionary with empathy and imagination and a spirit of repentance as their relationship with Jesus grows,

someone comfortable with leading intimate prayer experiences among the sponsors and baptismal candidates.

These efforts should be directed towards preparing the baptismal candidates for an encounter with Jesus through water and the Spirit.

5. The fourth phase, mystagogy, requires a skill set much like that needed in intense preparation, along with the ability to help the newly-baptized

both to reflect upon their experience of being baptized and to discern what that experience and their life as full members of the Christian community means for their vocations in daily life.

These efforts should all be directed at helping the newly-baptized integrate their new life in the Spirit into their daily lives.

#### *Additional possible roles*

1. Hospitality: sharing food and drink together builds community. The possibilities range from a full meal to coffee, tea, or soft drinks with some cookies. Arranging this crucial component can be the task of a hospitality coordinator.

2. Music: much of the prayer that the participants in the process and their sponsors share in during catechetical sessions would be enhanced by music, especially as a rehearsal for public worship. Arranging for this component can be the task of a music coordinator.

3. Sponsor coordinator: especially if a catechumenal process takes root in a community, the need to recruit and train a diversity of sponsors becomes a major task. Someone familiar with a large number of people in the community with a gift of discernment about possible relationships could take on this role.

4. Writer: someone who can stay on top of providing information in the bulletin or on the website about participants and the meaning of upcoming rites could take on this task.

### **XIII. Anchor Prayers**

*An anchor prayer is like a theme running through a piece of music, unifying the experience for the participants. It is not meant to replace spontaneous prayer in a catechetical session but to conclude it.*

*Each of the following prayers has been chosen as appropriate for that stage of the catechumenal process. Others may be more appropriate for a given group.*

*They might be reproduced and given to the participants.*

#### **Patient Trust -- inquiry**

Above all, trust in the slow work of God.

We are quite naturally impatient in everything to reach the end without delay.

We should like to skip the intermediate stages.

We are impatient of being on the way to something unknown, something new.

And yet it is the law of all progress  
that it is made by passing through some stages of instability—  
and that it may take a very long time.

And so I think it is with you;  
your ideas mature gradually—let them grow,  
let them shape themselves, without undue haste.  
Don't try to force them on,  
as though you could be today what time  
(that is to say, grace and circumstances acting on your own good will)  
will make of you tomorrow.

Only God could say what this new spirit  
gradually forming within you will be.  
Give Our Lord the benefit of believing  
that his hand is leading you,  
and accept the anxiety of feeling yourself  
in suspense and incomplete.

Pierre Teilhard de Chardin

**Prayer of Trust and Confidence – catechumenate/exploration**

My Lord God, I have no idea where I am going.  
I do not see the road ahead of me.  
I cannot know for certain where it will end.  
Nor do I really know myself,  
And the fact that I think that I am following your will,  
Does not mean that I am actually doing so.

But I believe that the desire to please you  
Does in fact please you.  
And I hope that I never do anything  
Apart from that desire.  
And I know that if I do this, you will lead me  
By the right road though I may know nothing about it.

Therefore will I trust you always,  
Though I may seem to be lost  
And in the shadow of death.  
I will not fear, for you are ever with me,  
And will never leave me to face my perils alone.

Thomas Merton

## **The Lesson of Sin – intense preparation**

All shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of thing shall be well.  
For if we never fell,  
we should not know how feeble and how wretched we are of our self,  
and also we should not fully know that marvelous love of our Maker.

The fullness of Joy is to behold God in everything.  
God is all that is good, and the goodness that everything has is God's.  
If there be anywhere on earth [where] a lover of God is always kept safe from falling,  
I know nothing of it, for it was not shown me.  
But this was shown: that in falling and rising again  
we are always kept in the same precious love.

Between God and the soul there is no between.  
God did not say, You will never have a rough passage, you will never be overstrained,  
you will never feel uncomfortable, but God did say:  
You will never be overcome.

Julian of Norwich

**The Breastplate – Part 7   mystagogy**

Christ with me,  
Christ before me,  
Christ behind me,  
Christ in me,  
Christ beneath me,  
Christ above me,  
Christ on my right,  
Christ on my left,  
Christ when I lie down,  
Christ when I sit down,  
Christ when I arise,  
Christ in the heart of everyone who thinks of me,  
Christ in the mouth of everyone who speaks of me,  
Christ in every eye that sees me,  
Christ in every ear that hears me.

I arise today  
Through a mighty strength, the invocation of the Trinity,  
Through belief in the Threeness,  
Through confession of the Oneness  
of the Creator of creation.

St. Patrick

## XIV: Additional Resources

### GENERAL RESOURCES

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