

Eurocat-Bureau 2019: About Mystagogy, part 2:

Mystagogy in Practice – Recommended Contents

Important topics for in-depth mystagogy:

1. Liturgy

- **Focus on understanding the Eucharist**
- Speech about the Bread of Life (Joh 6: 22-71): „I am the bread of life“, in connection with Exodus (Ex 12: 1-14) and the people of God being fed with manna and quails (Ex 15: 22-16: 36) with bread and fish at the multiplication of bread (Mt 14: 13-21).
- Wine as a sign of abundance: report of the spies (Num 13) and the miracle at the Marriage of Cana (Joh 2: 1-12): The kingdom of God is abundance for all those having part in it.
- Connection between covenant theology (1 Cor 11: 25 and Ex 24: 8) and Passover (see Seder celebration and Jesus speaking of Elijah “Elijah’s cup”) in the Last Supper (Mt 26: 27-28)
- Interpretation of the Passion of Jesus according to the Epistle to the Hebrews in the context of the ritual on the Yom Kippur (Lev 16 and Joh 20): Christ himself, through his blood, entered into the most holy place, thus obtaining eternal redemption for us (Hebr 9: 11-15a).
Mary Magdalene looks into the tomb and witnesses exactly what would have been seen within the holy of holies inside the temple: two angels, and between them a linen cloth with traces of blood (Joh 20: 11-12).
- Form and substance: The substance of the Body and Blood of Christ is experienced in reception. It may be helpful for understanding to realize that time is an integral part of creation; for God, however, there is only presence: present, therefore is what happened at the Last Supper; Christ presents himself in bread and wine, entrusts himself to us, transforms us more and more in his image.
- Other forms of religious service (Way of the Cross, May devotions, Taizé prayers, pilgrimages, processions, and local traditions) have to be explained in order for participation to make sense.

Other important topics are:

- Liturgical year and order of liturgical readings
- Church interior and iconography
- Metaphorical language of the church and Scriptures
- Differences in church activities and practice of faith, and customs at Christmas and Easter
- Celebrating Holy Week and Easter Vigil, especially the readings of Easter Vigil, relating to history of salvation

2. **In-depth sacramental theology:**

Only the basics of sacramental theology can be taught before baptism, in-depth mystagogy after baptism is not only vital as far as the Eucharist is concerned.

- The significance of confirmation and life with and in the Holy Spirit needs to be elaborated on.
- The Sacrament of Reconciliation should only be dealt with after baptism as a means of regaining the grace of baptism.
- Anointment of the Sick
- Matrimony and teaching on marriage (monogamy can be found as one of God's demands throughout the Scriptures: the history of salvation is always continued with a son of the first wife – except for a situation when there is no son like in Salomos case; and with him apostasy starts!) In this respect, it might help to take a closer look at Genesis 1-4.
- The Sacrament of Orders can best be explained by its inner connection with structure and mission of the church.

3. **Why do we need the church?**

- Salt of the earth and light for the nations (Sermon on the Mount)
- History of the church (Acts) and structure of the church (financing)
- Differences from other confessions and ecumenism
- **Focus on Communio:**
 - Forming relations, commitment in the community: table fellowship must have consequences on the interactions of community members.
 - Commitment in church and community are an integral aspect of being a Christian. However, this does not always work out. Those already having been prepared for baptism in their community, have better prospects.
 - Ideally, they have already been accepted into a group that also accompanied them during Catechumenate. It might be the church

choir or the parish soccer team, a Charity or family group, in cases of teenagers maybe a group preparing for Confirmation.

- Godparents who are really willing to give individual support, also in social matters, are very helpful and grant a lot of insight into everyday Christian life.
- It is not important to fill blank spaces within the community, but to allow commitment according to talents and interests and offer places of encounter.
- It is not always necessary to offer joint activities; even a cordial greeting of peace or a short conversation can help people to develop a sense of belonging. People should never be bound, but be enabled to develop their own interests and abilities and act accordingly.
- The diaconal aspect is vital: if you are helped, you are also motivated to help others, e.g. in caring for the sick by visiting them, as a church taxi for fragile people, as a support of money collections or social markets for those in need.
- Hearing about the God experience of newly baptized persons (f. ex. In groups preparing for Confirmation...) is a mystagogical introduction into the present community for all those who lack that experience.
- Giving support in catechesis for newly interested people also deepens faith and helps giving testimony in everyday life.
- This is mainly about the inner dependency of the adoption as God's children and the people of God. That means responsibility and participation.
- Small Christian communities (Bible-sharing, family groups...) may help in this respect, but they do not form on their own, and access to these groups has to be made possible first of all.

Further topics also to be treated:

- Church and community of the saints: What does that have to do with me?
- Death and fulfillment: the death of a Christian as a transition has to be consciously experienced; funeral rites are to be explained.

4. **Mystagogy concerning the creed:**

- A clear understanding of believing in one God in three persons, and Jesus being true man and true God at the same time, without confusion and without separation, has to be elaborated on.

- Mary in the mystery of salvation and her divine Motherhood (Islam: God cannot have a mother...) and the consequences for the church are to be explained (see Lumen Gentium)
- Death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, eternal life
- Justice and mercy
- Forgiveness of sins and salvation

5. **What does being a Christian mean?**

- Living according to your faith in everyday life: inner attitudes become behaviors, also against the mainstream; this also comprises fasting in the right way and diaconia in everyday life.
- Baptism is a beginning: help is needed for deepening of faith: personal prayer in everyday life, various forms of Scripture meditation
- Passing on faith – giving testimony about the hope we have! (1 Pe 3: 15)
- Religious instruction of children who have (not) been baptized can be difficult in a family if one of the parents is member of another religious community. Spiritually, this needs a lot of exchange and understanding.
- How to deal with problems in the family of origin?
- **Focus: reconciliation as lifestyle**
 - What do reconciliation and forgiveness mean?
 - How do I reconcile with hostile people?
 - It is important to develop an inner attitude that allows God to act, f. ex. if a person is ready to forgive, which is only possible through the grace of inner reconciliation, even if the situation does not get better. This is a long road which needs accompaniment so that the person does not get disheartened and turns away from God.
 - All kinds of religious experience made have to be processed and their positive effects for the life of the respective person needs to be appreciated.
 - It is also vital for the respective persons to let themselves be reconciled with their past, not only in theory, but in the depth of their very nature, and to clearly differentiate between pain and rage or hate. “Pain passes away, but the pain we have endured will never be forgotten.”
 - In that respect, it is also important to pray for those who reject taking steps towards Christianity themselves and therefore make it impossible to continue life within the same environment. This means developing what the Bible recommends as love of the enemy.

Questions to be discussed

1. Liturgy - focus on the Eucharist

What are the biblical and theological reference points?

What does that mean for our understanding of the Eucharist?

How can that be passed on AFTER the experience of Holy Communion?

What is your experience in that respect?

2. Church - Communio

What is already treated in mystagogy in that respect?

How can in-depth understanding be made possible?

What is your experience concerning participation and giving testimony?

How and in how far do newly baptized persons change our understanding of church and Communio?