



NewsLetter

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Theology in the *Praenotandae*: Initiation

Building upon the ancient axiom that there is a reciprocal relationship between prayer and belief, “Theology in the Praenotandae” – an ongoing series of the Secretariat of Divine Worship – explores that relationship as it is reflected in the Introductions of the liturgical books. Each article of the series highlights some of the theological themes that are integral to the celebrations of the rites and provides examples of the way in which the relationship between belief and worship is seen in the text of the rites.

Christian Initiation, General Introduction (CIGI)

CIGI provides a succinct theology of the essential unity of the three sacraments of initiation and their role in the community of the faithful. Even if they are not celebrated at the same time, as foreseen in the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* (RCIA), there is an internal coherence to the theological foundations of these sacraments. This unity is reflected in the *praenotanda* as Baptism, Confirmation, and the Eucharist are described in relation to one another in virtue of their effects: together they bring the faithful more fully into Christ and “enable us to carry out the mission of the entire people of God in the Church and in the world” (CIGI, no. 2). Through these sacraments, the faithful are “joined to Christ’s death, burial, and resurrection... and are part of the entire people of God” (no. 1). Not only do these sacraments affect one’s relationship with Christ, they also affect a person’s role within the faith community.

The *praenotanda* then turns its focus to the importance of Baptism and its foundational implications for the Christian’s life within the Church. It is “the door to life and to the kingdom of God, [and] is the first sacrament of the New Law, which Christ offered to all, that they might have eternal life” (no. 3). This entrance into the kingdom of God initiates the Christian into the community of believers, who, having been baptized, have “a sacramental bond of unity linking all who have been signed by it” (no. 4). This bond of unity amongst Christians is grounded in the unity of the Trinity that one encounters through Baptism. The *praenotanda* notes that “[t]he blessed Trinity is invoked over those who are to be baptized, so that all who are signed in this name are consecrated to the Trinity and enter into communion with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit” (no. 5).

All the sacraments, not just those that are referred to as “sacraments of initiation,” draw the faithful deeper into this communion. However, the sacraments of initiation are particularly foundational for living one’s life as a reflection of his or her relationship with God and with his or her fellow Christians because they are intimately connected to the Paschal Mystery of Christ. We are baptized into his death and

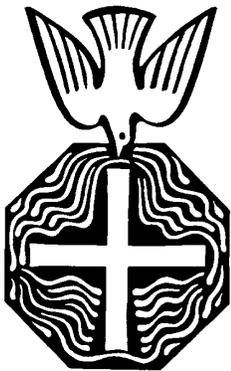
resurrection to become children of God, anointed with the Holy Spirit to be conformed more closely to Christ, and share in his Body and Blood in the Eucharist to unite our offering with his (see no. 2).

Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA)

Although the RCIA, like the CIGI, addresses the unity of the sacraments of initiation, the focus of the RCIA's *praenotanda* is on the journey to initiation. It expresses the unique theological character of the RCIA in which there are several rites over an extended period, designed to gradually bring the *initiators* deeper into the faith. This process is done in the presence of and with the support of the community. "By joining the catechumens in reflecting on the value of the paschal mystery and by renewing their own conversion, the faithful provide an example that will help the catechumen to obey the Holy Spirit more generously" (RCIA, no. 4).

The rites of the RCIA are designed for "a spiritual journey of adults that varies according to the many forms of God's grace, the free cooperation of the individuals, the actions of the Church, and the circumstances of time and place" (no. 5). Because of this, each period and step of the process has its own theological focus which can be seen in their introductions, though all are oriented towards the journey's culmination in the sacraments of initiation. The theology of each period is expressed in the rites that are celebrated during those time periods. The theological theme of the first period, that of Evangelization and the Precatechumenate, is evangelization. Through this, those who are seeking faith may hear the word of God proclaimed and see it witnessed in the faith community (see nos. 36-37). This period ends with the first step of the Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens, in which those who are seeking publicly respond to hearing and witnessing the word of God. This is seen in the rite when the priest prays in thanksgiving to God "for these your servants. You have sought and

summoned them in many ways and they have turned to seek you" (no. 53). This step then leads into the second period, that of the Catechumenate. This period is shaped by the theological principle that one comes to know God better by encountering him in the life of the Christian community and in the word of God (see no. 75). As such, the rites of this period include liturgies of the Word of God, minor exorcisms, blessings, and anointings; all designed to foster the catechumen's growth in their faith (see nos. 90-105). This period ends with the second step, the Rite of Election in which the Church acknowledges the decisions of the catechumen to continue their journey towards initiation (see nos. 119-120).



The theme of the period of Purification and Enlightenment is that repentance and conversion of heart help to "enlighten the minds and hearts of the elect with a deeper knowledge of Christ the Savior" (no. 139). This is understood within the context of the final weeks of preparation before initiation into Christ's Paschal Mystery. During this period, the three Scrutinies help to "complete the conversion of the elect and deepen their resolve to hold fast to Christ" (no. 141) through Scripture readings and prayers. The final step is the celebration of the sacraments of initiation which take place, most appropriately, at the Easter Vigil. The journey of coming to the faith culminates in these sacramental celebrations, when the elect are fully initiated into the Paschal Mystery and the life of the Church. Though this is the culminating step, the journey does not end but continues afterward with a period of Mystagogy or Postbaptismal Catechesis in which the neophytes continue to deepen their understanding of the mystery of God and connect with the faith community (see nos. 244-246).

Rite of Baptism of Children (RBC)

The RBC has its own *praenotanda* but also includes the CIGI. There are three primary theological themes that are expressed in this sacrament. The foremost theological theme of Baptism is that it is a response of faith to Christ and in this it incorporates the Christian into the Paschal Mystery (see CIGI, nos. 3, 6). The remaining two theological aspects flow from this incorporation (see no. 7). One of these aspects is the understanding that Baptism is a cleansing from sin which prepares the faithful to become adopted children of God (see no. 5). Secondly, because all who participate in this sacrament enter into the one Paschal Mystery, they are thus incorporated into the Christian community (see no. 4).

The community is united in faith as members of the Body of Christ. As such, they play an important role in the celebration of the sacrament. The faith community is involved in the sacrament through catechizing the parents

who are preparing their child for Baptism and fostering a community in which the child can grow in the faith (see RBC, no. 4). This faith in the mystery of God “is not the private possession of the individual family, but the common treasure of the whole Church of Christ” (no. 4). The rubrics of the RBC state that “baptism should take place on Sunday, the day on which the Church celebrates the paschal mystery. It should be conferred... in the presence of the faithful” (no. 32). The ritual thus ties together the faith the community celebrates with the community itself.

Theological aspects of the sacrament can be seen in the prayer text as well. In the Blessing and Invocation of God over Baptismal Water (see nos. 53-55), which occurs at the beginning of the celebration of the sacrament, the prayer traces the faith journey of God’s people through salvation history and the way in which water has been used as a medium of God’s grace. The prayer concludes in these words: “You created man in your own likeness: cleanse him from sin in new birth to innocence by water and the Spirit. We ask you, Father, with your Son to send the Holy Spirit upon the water of this font. May all who are buried with Christ in the death of baptism rise also with him to newness of life” (no. 54). In this text, one can see that the three theological themes of Baptism are expressed: incorporation into the Paschal Mystery, a cleansing of sins, and a unity among all those who have participated in this sacrament.

Order of Confirmation (OC)

One of the prominent theological themes in the *praenotanda* for the OC is the close connection between the sacraments of initiation. It states that “[t]hose who have been baptized continue on the path of Christian Initiation through the Sacrament of Confirmation” (OC, no. 1). One way this connection is demonstrated in the rite is through the involvement of the sponsors for the *confirmandi*. These sponsors are to help prepare those individuals for Confirmation and be present at the celebration of the sacrament. They are also called to “help them to fulfill their baptismal promise faithfully in accordance with the Holy Spirit whom they have received” (no. 5). This connection can also be more visibly demonstrated through the *praenotanda*’s proposal that “it is desirable that the godparent at Baptism, if available, also be the sponsor at Confirmation” (no. 5). The preferred celebration of Confirmation is within a Mass (see no. 13). There, the celebration of the rite of Confirmation is situated between a renewal of baptismal promises by the *confirmandi* (see no. 23) and the celebration of the Eucharist, “so that the fundamental connection of this Sacrament with all of Christian Initiation, which reaches its culmination in the Communion of the Body and Blood of Christ, may stand out in a clearer light” (no. 13; see nos. 31-32).

Another prominent theological theme in Confirmation is the role of the Holy Spirit, strengthening what was already given in Baptism. In Confirmation, by “this gift of the Holy Spirit the faithful are more fully conformed to Christ and are strengthened with the power to bear witness to Christ for the building up of his Body in faith and charity” (no. 2). The *praenotanda* highlights several ways in which this gift of the Holy Spirit is expressed in the sacramental action and lives of the faithful. One way is through the ministry of the bishops, who are the ordinary ministers of this sacrament (see no. 7). Because the bishops are the successors of the Apostles, their ministry in Confirmation demonstrates a “clearer reference to the first outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost.... Thus the reception of the Holy Spirit through the ministry of the Bishop shows the close bond that joins the confirmed to the Church and the mandate received from Christ to bear witness to him before all” (no. 7).



Two of the important sacramental signs used in Confirmation, the laying on of hands and the anointing with Chrism, express the reception of the Holy Spirit and our mission to bear witness to Christ in the world. The *praenotanda* makes note of these ritual gestures and explains their symbolism. “[T]he laying of hands on the candidates by the Bishop... [recalls] the biblical gesture, by which the gift of the Holy Spirit is invoked” (no. 9; see nos. 24-25). Through the anointing of the *confirmandi* with Chrism, “the baptized receive the indelible character, the seal of the Lord, together with the gift of the Spirit that conforms them more fully to Christ and gives them the grace of spreading among men and women ‘the pleasing fragrance of Christ’” (no. 9; see nos. 26-29).

Rev. Randy L. Stice Appointed as Secretariat Associate Director

Monsignor J. Brian Bransfield, USCCB General Secretary, has announced the appointment of Rev. Randy L. Stice, a priest of the Diocese of Knoxville, as Associate Director of the USCCB Secretariat of Divine Worship, effective July 1, 2017. Stice will serve alongside Rev. Andrew Menke, Executive Director; Carmen Aguinaco, Multicultural Specialist; Matthew Godbey, Administrative Assistant; and David Ringwald, Staff Assistant.

Ordained to the priesthood in 2007 for the Diocese of Knoxville, Stice has most recently served as pastor of St. Mary Catholic Church in Athens, Tennessee, in addition to his service as diocesan director of worship and liturgy. He has also served as diocesan master of ceremonies and in previous assignments as parochial vicar.

Stice earned the Licentiate in Sacred Theology from the University of St. Mary of the Lake/Mundelein Seminary in 2007 and a Master's degree in Liturgy from the Liturgical Institute at Mundelein in 2011. He has published articles in *The Heythrop Journal*, *Sacred Architecture*, and the *Adoremus Bulletin*. Stice is also the author of three books on the sacraments, each published by Liturgy Training Publications: *Understanding the Sacraments of Healing: A Rite-Based Approach* (2015); *Understanding the Sacraments of Vocation: A Rite-Based Approach* (2016); and *Understanding the Sacraments of Initiation: A Rite-Based Approach* (2017).

The Secretariat welcomes Fr. Stice to the Conference and looks forward to working with him in fostering the vibrant liturgical life of the Church in the United States.

2019 Liturgical Calendar Available for Purchase

The 2019 edition of the *Liturgical Calendar for the Dioceses of the United States of America* is available for purchase from the USCCB Secretariat of Divine Worship. The calendar lists each day's celebration, rank, liturgical color, Lectionary citations, and Psalter cycle.

Calendars are on sale for \$10.00 each, and are available either in 8½ × 11" paperback or e-mailed in Microsoft Word or PDF format. Checks are to be made out to the Committee on Divine Worship and mailed to the Secretariat at 3211 Fourth Street, NE, Washington, DC 20017, ATTN: 2018 Liturgical Calendar.

*Almighty ever-living God,
who gave us the Paschal Mystery
in the covenant you established
for reconciling the human race,
so dispose our minds, we pray,
that what we celebrate by professing the faith
we may express in deeds.*

- Roman Missal, Friday within the Octave of Easter, Collect

**A JOYFUL AND BLESSED EASTER
from the
COMMITTEE ON DIVINE WORSHIP
and the
SECRETARIAT OF DIVINE WORSHIP!**