

Making Disciples

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Initiation into Christ and into his Body, the Church, has its climax in the celebration of baptism; nevertheless, genuine initiation is a process and not a single moment in time. So also returning to the way of Christ is a process, similar to initiation, yet different in that it recognizes the once-for-all nature of baptism.

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Rites of Initiation

Introduction to the rites

Baptism is the sacrament through which we are united with Christ and his people. But this union is achieved through a process of conversion, formation, enlightenment and incorporation that takes time — time for the Spirit to work in the individual and through the ministry of the whole people of God. The celebration of baptism is the climax of this process; but if initiation consists merely of this ritual celebration, the union is unlikely to be fruitful.

The Christian community needs to support and guide this process of conversion; and the ancient tradition of the *catechumenate* provides some valuable insights to shape this ministry. A catechumenal process for our time will be different from that of the early Church, but the resemblance will be the recognition of *thresholds* that all Inquirers cross on their journey of faith as they come to terms with the questions raised by baptism into the way of Christ.

Baptism itself is the final threshold; but preliminary thresholds, when celebrated together with the community of faith, mark out distinct periods of formation, bringing one period of the journey into sufficient focus and clarity that a new period can begin. The rite of Welcome marks the passage from inquiry into the commitment to be a *hearer* of the word of God (what traditionally is called a *catechumen*). The rite of Calling marks the passage from being a *hearer* into being a *candidate* for baptism. Baptism marks the passage from intense preparation into the time of discovery of one's new sacramental identity.

Infant baptism is an extension of the normal practice of baptizing 'those who can answer for themselves'; it assumes that those who answer for them will reaffirm their own baptismal covenant. The church must therefore assist them in doing so authentically, providing whatever formation is necessary to support them. The following rites make provision for adapting to this form of ministry to families.

The rites of Welcome and Calling are intended for use within the principle gathering of the Lord's people on the Lord's Day (Baptism is normally celebrated on one of the baptismal festivals). Becoming a Christian is not a private thing. Through the celebration of these threshold moments, the whole congregation is empowered to share in the ministry of formation, and the coordination of this ministry with the Church Year marks the convergence of the individual's journey with the journey of God's people.

The parish clergy are absolutely crucial to developing the catechumenate. Their commitment to seekers, and their enthusiasm for sharing Good News, will inspire parishes to change current baptismal practices. However, when the primary model for ministry is pastoral care alone, the institution will naturally exist primarily for the support of its own members. In that model, anything unfamiliar or difficult may produce reactions which threaten the harmony of the parish and the security of the clergy. The catechumenate requires the Church to refocus its energy on those outside itself, particularly on the many people with spiritual questions. Parishes that have developed a catechumenal process have found new life in the strong commitment of their newest members, as well as in the spiritual maturing of parishioners directly involved in the process.

Clergy especially need to be at the forefront of this change, and this will require not only sensitivity but also conviction and courage. Working with even one or two respected leaders of the congregation who are committed to renewing the Church will provide the support necessary to face negativity with confidence and faith. This team will pray together, working to discern the Spirit's movement within the parish.

Clergy may be overwhelmed by the immensity of implementing the catechumenate, assuming that it should be introduced fully formed. In fact, that would be an impossible task! What follows should be considered a model

toward which parishes can begin to work. In practical terms, the catechumenate will be easier and more effectively developed gradually, in measured steps, in a way that best evolves in your parish. Three initial steps will facilitate implementation. First, begin to celebrate all baptisms publicly, within the Gathering of the Faithful (see the *Book of Alternative Services*, p 146). Second, introduce parish sponsors, who may initially simply offer the congregation's hospitality to Inquirers. Third, introduce the pre-baptismal rites. These rites themselves can inspire enthusiasm for welcoming newcomers, and encourage all members to share in the joy of preparing for baptism.

Music

Music can play an important role in amplifying (and in implementing) these catechumenal rites. By providing opportunities to respond musically to what is happening in the rites, short musical acclamations enable congregational participation and ownership. While music has been written specifically for the rites,¹ it is also possible to use a verse of a hymn or a song refrain.² Musicians have a critical role determining what music will be appropriate and accessible for their parish.

Sponsors

A sponsor's primary role is one of hospitality, interpreting the community to the newcomer, and the newcomer to the community. Hearers may request personal acquaintances as sponsors, but it is essential that the principle sponsor be carefully chosen from the parish in order to enable full integration of the hearers into the congregation. Potential parish sponsors may be encouraged by the assurance that, in the end, it is not programming skill or theological savvy that will entice seekers into the life-changing waters, but rather, the genuine warmth of authentic relationships built on risk and trust.

Sponsors walk alongside hearers in the unfolding journey of faith, drawing them into relationship, and into increasing confidence in the stories of Christ, in personal and corporate prayer, and in the life of service to others. Sponsors give the gift of time and attention, listening for the presenting needs of hearers and enticing them deeper and deeper into the life of the community as it gathers in liturgy, mutual support, and discernment of the Spirit's leading.

The hearer's gifts are celebrated as a holy offering which adds a new texture to the community's particular identity. While modelling dimensions of the communal life for the hearer, the sponsor articulates the hearer's unique contribution to the community. Thus, the whole congregation, deeply engaged in the story of the new life emerging from within, cannot fail to see the importance of its own role in supporting it.

It is crucial that sponsors feel empowered to share their own experience of God. Such sharing models language that enables hearers to express their own feelings, challenges and questions. Sponsors must be assured that candidly sharing their spiritual struggles and discoveries is far more effective than pretending to have all the answers. Walking with another person in the journey of faith almost inevitably leads to growth as much for the sponsor as for the hearer, and those who recruit sponsors must remain alert to the ongoing conversion of both parties, and indeed, the ongoing conversion of the parish as a whole. Theological content is important, but will naturally develop as questions arise for both sponsor and hearer in their shared exploration. Leaders of the baptismal preparation process can watch for those opportunities. The hearers, watching and listening as their sponsors pray with them, explore the meaning of the Word, and serve the needy, will discover that theology is taking shape in practical ways, coming to life before their eyes. The first concern for hearers is not knowledge, but relationship.

The Catechesis Team

The leadership of baptismal preparation is best undertaken by a team composed of pastoral staff and committed members of the congregation (including sponsors) which can provide encouragement and support

for new sponsors. Many new sponsors are aware of a rich, personal relationship with God, but have had little experience in articulating it. Since most people learn best by seeing and doing, leadership team members can be paired with new sponsors to model skills which may be tested in a safe environment. Hearing a leader's story of faith will help new sponsors recognize God's presence in their own lives, and make it easier to tell their stories. It also gives them first-hand experience at what they will be inviting hearers to do. As leaders pray with sponsors, they in turn will be encouraged to pray more confidently with hearers. Once the process has begun, it will be helpful to gather the sponsors together occasionally, to draw out their experiences, successes and struggles, and to provide support and resources for any questions that have emerged.

Most members of the body of Christ already possess the ability to effectively nurture hearers, but many feel inadequate. They must be assured that, using their gifts of love, the Spirit will work to help hearers find their own role in the redemption that God brings to the world.

Catechetical Methods

In addition to sharing in the celebration of the Lord's Day and the other major festivals, those undertaking an apprenticeship in the Way of Christ need to gather regularly with their sponsors and catechist(s) to reflect on what they are hearing and experiencing within the life of the community. Formation in the Way of Christ is defined by the rites but developed by [catechetical methods](#).

Both prayer and hospitality are important dimensions of these gatherings. Hospitality will usually include food and drink.

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Welcoming Inquirers or Families as Hearers

Introduction to ‘Welcoming’

Who is it for? The Acts of Apostles portrays a pattern in which evangelizing is something more than ‘inviting people to church.’ Invariably, new people are drawn into the community of Christ’s followers only after they have been met on their own ground. When we expect people to meet us on *our* ground, we are then tempted to distort the liturgy into a form of evangelism (or worse, into a form of entertainment). But if we have met people on their own terms, this rite of Welcome constitutes the crossing of a threshold in the relationship. Thus the Welcoming of Inquirers or Families to be Hearers assumes that there has already been an informal (ie, non-liturgical) relationship with the Inquirer. Those who are ready to pursue their quest within the life of the Church and in the light of the gospel may then be encouraged to become hearers, and be welcomed on their journey using this rite or an adaptation of it. See the suggested [pattern of formation](#).

When to do it. This rite of Welcome may be used at any time in the year within a principal Sunday service. Although any number of Inquirers may be welcomed on one occasion, no attempt should be made to fit their welcome into some preconceived seasonal schedule. The spirit of the gospel entails beginning with the agenda of those we seek to serve, rather than our own agenda. They may be welcomed as hearers whenever they are ready, rather than waiting for some pre-conceived occasion that fits the church’s agenda.

For those not able to answer for themselves. While the catechumenate is framed for adult candidates, it is customary that baptism is sought for infants or young children. We need to recognize this as a daring extension of the offer of baptism that is appropriate only under very special conditions: when the parents or guardians of the child are committed to modelling and sharing our communal life in Christ. Still, it is important that we take the personal convictions of parents seriously, not rejecting their request outright on the grounds of non-involvement, but equally not putting them into the position of making vows for their children that they cannot make for themselves. Consequently, when babies and infants are to be baptized, catechesis must be for the parents, to revisit and renew their own baptismal covenant and receive guidance and encouragement in modelling the Christian life for their child. We must be prepared to start with them wherever they are.

Potential Obstacles. The church has an unfortunate heritage of teaching that baptism is the only way to ensure entry into heaven. Some adults, and (more commonly) parents seeking baptism for a young child, may be concerned about the death of someone unbaptized. They will need to be assured of God’s love for all people, baptized or not, and that baptism has an altogether different purpose than ‘insurance.’

Parents may feel obliged to schedule the baptism to accommodate travelling grandparents and other relatives. It is important, however, to help them recognize baptism as adoption into the household of God, the new family of the child. The restoration of ‘baptismal festivals’ is one of the ways we draw new members into the unfolding drama of our shared Christian story.

Some families, with a christening robe that has been passed from generation to generation, may be concerned that their baby will outgrow the gown, and they will resist a catechumenal process of any length. In fact, from ancient times, the baptismal gown has been an important symbol. However, it will be helpful to remind parents that the gown is not an end in itself, but symbolizes what St Paul describes as “putting on Christ”, and represents the faith that we are passing on. Still, there are ways to use the family gown, such as leaving it undone, or simply presenting it to the child (as white robes may be presented to adults).

Dates are an issue for many people and especially for parents of young children who may be dealing with many time constraints and, particularly if there is a new baby, varying degrees of sleep deprivation. They tend to want a clear time-line. Though they may feel that ‘short and sweet’ will be more manageable, taking a longer time allows them to approach preparation for the baptism of their child as a spiritual exercise that enables them to

renew and deepen their relationship with God, a relationship they will model for their child. These rites give shape to this more careful, thoughtful and enriching process.

An unfortunate consequence of the Church's minimalist approach to baptism in recent generations is that Inquirers may come to us with expectations that have been shaped by an understanding of baptism as a peripheral family event rather than a life-changing process of initiation into the body of Christ. Other factors contribute to this trivialization of the sacrament, such as sending baptized children away during the Sunday service and insisting that the baptized be confirmed before allowing them to receive communion — actions which can compromise their sense of belonging as full members. Catechesis teams must be prepared to apologize for the negligence of the Church in teaching what baptism really means, as they invite Inquirers into a new understanding of baptism as the beginning of an intimate and transforming relationship with Christ which marks them as his own forever.

Presentation

The one being welcomed may be brought by the sponsor to the entrance of the gathering, rather than being seated before the service.³ After the opening greeting, the presider goes out to greet them. Members of the gathering accompany the presider, or all turn toward the place of welcome. The presider expresses the delight of the Church in receiving those who are drawn to the story of Jesus and the life of faith and encourages the members of the congregation to remember their own journey in faith.

The presider then invites the sponsor to introduce the Inquirer. The introduction includes these words,

**I present N (or N the son/daughter of N and N)
who wishes (or who wish their child) to follow the way of Christ.**

The presider asks of the Inquirer, or of the parents who speak on behalf of a young child,

What do you seek (for your child)?⁴

Answer (The Inquirer, or one of the parents, makes a response that has been prepared in conversation with the sponsor during the time of inquiry.)

Presider **What do you ask of this community?**

Answer (Again, the response will be something prepared in conversation with the sponsor during the time of inquiry.)

The presider replies as follows, or in some similar words, adapting the reply to the answer given.

God gives the light of life
to everyone who comes into the world,
so that those who seek may truly find,
and may live in God's joy for ever.
You have followed that light;
you have come to seek the face of the Lord.
Are you ready to share with us
in the Church's worship of God
and service to the poor,
and in seeking to know the way of Christ?⁵

Answer **I am.**

OR, if there are only parents presenting a child, the presider replies as follows, adapting the reply to the answer given.

God gives the light of life
to everyone who comes into the world,
so that those who seek may truly find,
and may live in God's joy for ever.
You have followed that light,
which has drawn you (back)
into the fellowship of the Holy Spirit.
Will you re-examine the covenant made in your baptism
and seek the help of God and the support of this community
in embracing that covenant?

Answer **I will.**

Question Are you ready to seek God's face
by sharing with us and with your child
in the Church's worship of God
and service to the poor,
and in seeking to know the way of Christ?

Answer **I am.**

To the sponsor and congregation the presider says,

Dear friends in Christ,
will you care for *N* (and *his/her* family),
and support *him/her/them*
by prayer and by example?⁶

People **We will.**

Presider Will you help *him/her/them* to grow
in the knowledge and love of God
and of God's Son, Jesus Christ our Lord?

People **We will.**

Presider Will you share with *him/her/them*,
as God gives you opportunity,
your own experience of life in Christ?⁷

People **We will.**

Thanksgiving and Signing

The presider prays for the Inquirer (or the child), saying,

God of steadfast love,
on behalf of this our friend *N* (OR on behalf of the family of *N*)
we offer thanks and praise to you
for the experience of your guiding presence
which has brought *him/her/them* to this day.
Help us to serve *him/her/them* faithfully
with the kindness you have shown us,
and to accept with joy
all the gifts of grace *he/she/they* bring(s).
Together may we offer ourselves in your service,
seeking your kingdom
and the honour of your holy name;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**⁸

The sponsor marks each part of the body with the sign of the cross while the presider says,

- † N, receive the cross of Christ on your forehead,
as a sign of his great love for you.
- † Receive the cross on your ears,
that you may hear the Gospel of Christ.
- † Receive the cross on your lips,
that you may respond to the word of God.
- † Receive the cross on your eyes,
that your way may be illumined by the light of Christ.
- † Receive the cross on your hands,
that the mercy of God may be known in all your work.
- † Receive the cross on your feet,
that you may follow where Christ leads the way.
- † Receive the cross on your shoulders,
that you may bear the gentle yoke of Christ.
- † Receive the cross on your heart,
that Christ may dwell in you by faith.⁹

Calling to be a Hearer¹⁰

Then the presider says to him/her/them,

God's word is like bread to our hearts;
we cannot live without it.
God's word is like rain
that comes down upon the earth;
it brings forth fruit in our lives.
Come now and share with us
in hearing the word of the Lord.

The sponsor accompanies the hearer who takes a place among the people. A suitable hymn may be sung during this procession.¹¹ The service continues with the Collect of the Day and the Proclamation of the Word.

Handing on the Gospel

After the reading of the Gospel, or before the Calling to be a Hearer, the hearer may be presented with a copy of the Bible by the sponsor.¹² The sponsor, or another minister, says,

N, receive the good news; take hold on eternal life.
May you always find in Jesus Christ a true friend.

Petitions for hearers may be included regularly in the Prayers of the People: that they may be confirmed in their desire to seek God, that the wounds of sin may be healed in them, that their vision may be enlarged to encompass all the joys of God's kingdom, and that the community may be faithful in its care for them.

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Calling Hearers as Candidates for Baptism

Introduction to 'Calling'

Who is it for? Hearers who have tested and confirmed their desire to enter the Baptismal Covenant, and whose calling is attested by their sponsors and catechists, may be formally called to be baptismal candidates in this manner. While sponsors and catechists help in this discernment, it is important to recognize that election is the work of God (not in the modern sense of being chosen by popular vote, but rather a calling out to participate in the divine plan for the world). Thus the popular view of baptism as a way to achieve security is reversed, and the risk entailed in accepting a divine vocation and mission is revealed.

The most serious question this rite raises is: By what authority does a congregation pass judgement on the acceptability of candidates for baptism? (The issue arises specifically in the question put to the sponsor, "Do you believe that the time has come for these our friends to take the gentle yoke of Christ within the covenant of Holy Baptism?")

How is a community to exercise this discernment without violating the freedom of the Spirit? When Saul of Tarsus attempted to join the church in Jerusalem, the Christians there very nearly rejected him as unacceptable. They needed to be reminded that it was their inescapable calling to welcome him, however unsavoury his record, simply on the grounds that he had finally begun to listen to the gospel, and to identify himself with it. So today, anyone called upon to exercise discernment regarding potential baptismal candidates must understand that this does not mean passing judgement upon their lives, but attesting to signs of the Spirit's enlivening work within them. Have they been hearers of the word? Have they heard the call of God? Have they made some discernible response to it? Do they look forward to the life described by this covenant? Do they want to be part of this community of faith? See the suggested patterns of [Weighing the Call to Discipleship](#) and [Lenten Scripture Reflection](#).

Unlike the rite of Welcome, this rite is framed in the plural; now hearers enter the time of the Church, rather than being dealt with on their own individual timetables. All who are ready, therefore, will be chosen together. Of course, all the current hearers will not necessarily be presented, since a rite of passage should not be automatic.

When to do it. Pastoral preparation for this rite needs to include opportunities for hearers (or their parents) to clarify with their sponsors the meaning for their own lives of the Baptismal Covenant. This rite marks the climax of catechumenal formation, challenging both candidate and community to mutual commitment, and to trust in the great promise and to face the high challenge symbolized by the Baptismal Covenant. It thus marks the beginning of a period of preparation for baptism, as distinct from the preceding period of preparation for the Christian life in general.

If the baptism is to be celebrated at Easter, this rite would normally occur on the first Sunday of Lent. For a Pentecost baptism, this rite might most appropriately occur on the Sunday after Easter Day; for All Saints', on a Sunday near the beginning of September; and for The Baptism of the Lord, on the First Sunday of Advent. In any case, enough time needs to be kept for intentional spiritual preparation; a week or two before the baptism would hardly be sufficient.

The rite of Calling should be used within a principal Sunday service, before the Prayers of the People. It takes a section of the Presentation and Examination from the Baptismal rite and makes of it a separate event.

On the First Sunday of Lent, immediately before the Prayers of the People, the presider begins:

Dear friends in Christ,
every year at the time of the Christian Passover,
we celebrate our redemption
through the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.
Among us stand hearers who hope to share for the first time
in this great celebration through the sacrament of Holy Baptism.
Lent is the time for their final preparation;
they will need the help of God's Spirit
who purifies and enlightens us;
they will need our care and encouragement
as we accompany them in this journey of faith.¹³

OR at other times of the year,

Dear friends in Christ,
among us stand hearers who hope to share with us
in our celebration of *Pentecost /The Baptism of the Lord /All Saints'*
through the sacrament of Holy Baptism.
This is the time for their final preparation;
they will need the help of God's Spirit
who purifies and enlightens us;
they will need our care and encouragement
as we accompany them in this journey of faith.

The presider continues:

For some time now
N and *N* (*and/or the parents of N and N*)
have shared with us in hearing the word of the Lord;
they have sought to know the way of Christ
(*themselves, and for their children*).
Now, let us testify concerning them (*and/or their children*)
that they are truly called and rightly chosen
for Holy Baptism.¹⁴

Presentation

The hearers who are to be presented are brought by their sponsors to stand facing the congregation.

Adults and Older Children:

Those able to answer for themselves are presented by their sponsors as follows:

Sponsor I commend *N* as a candidate for Holy Baptism.¹⁵

The presider asks each candidate when presented,

Do you desire to be baptized?

Candidate **I do.**¹⁶

Presider For some time now you have been testing and confirming this desire to enter the baptismal covenant. Are you ready to answer the call of Christ?¹⁷

Candidate **I am.**

When all have been presented, the presider asks the sponsors,

Do you believe that the time has come for *these our friends* to take the gentle yoke of Christ within the covenant of Holy Baptism?¹⁸

Sponsor **I do, as God is my witness.**

Infants and Younger Children:

Then those unable to answer for themselves are presented individually by their sponsors as follows:

Sponsor I commend N as a candidate for Holy Baptism.

The presider asks the parent(s),

For some time now you have been confirming your own baptismal commitment as you prepare to bring your child into the baptismal covenant. Are you ready to answer again the call of Christ?

Answer **I am.**

The presider asks the sponsor to testify on behalf of the parents,

Do you believe that the time has come for *this family* to confirm their Christian commitment so that their child may enter the covenant of Holy Baptism?

Sponsor **I do, as God is my witness.**

When all have been presented, the presider asks the parents and sponsors,

Will you be responsible for seeing that the child you present is nurtured in the faith and life of the Christian community?¹⁹

Answer **I will, with God's help.**

Presider Will you by your prayers and witness help this child to grow into the full stature of Christ?

Answer **I will, with God's help.**

All Candidates:

The people stand. The presider may then ask the sponsors and the congregation,

Brothers and sisters, will you accompany *these our friends* through the coming days of spiritual preparation?²⁰

People **We will.**

Presider Will you watch and pray with them as they pass over from death to life through the waters of baptism?²¹

People **We will.**

Calling to Baptism and Enrollment of Names

The presider then turns to the candidates and, taking each one by the hand, says,
N, God has chosen you
for baptism into our Lord Jesus Christ.
Be assured that God is faithful
to those who are called.²²

The presider then says,
Let the names of these candidates now be entered in the book,
in joyful anticipation of their baptism
at the Paschal Vigil (or Pentecost/The Baptism of the Lord/All Saints).

*Here each sponsor may enter in the Baptismal Register (or in a specially designated book) the name of the candidate he or she has presented, reading the name aloud.*²³

The candidates may remain together before the congregation; and the presider invites the congregation to pray, in these or similar words:

Let us pray for these persons
whom God has called, and for ourselves,
that together we may come to share
the joys of Easter.²⁴

If the baptism is to be celebrated at some time other than Easter, the following invitation may be used instead:

Let us pray for these persons
whom God has called, and for ourselves,
that together we may come to share
the new life God has promised.

Prayer over the Candidates

The candidates kneel, and each sponsor may place a hand upon the shoulder of the one being sponsored; infants and younger children may be held in arms.

The presider, with hands stretched out over the candidates, says,
God of love and power,
your purpose is to bring all creation
within your saving embrace.
Unite to your Son *these* whom you have chosen,
and bring *them* through the water of Baptism
to the banquet of salvation.

May *they* share with all your people
the perfect freedom of your service
as *they bear* witness to your grace;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

The candidates then return to their places.

The Prayers of the People

A deacon, or other appointed person leads the Prayers of the People. During this period of preparation, candidates will be named each Lord's Day in the Prayers of the People. One or more of the following petitions may be adapted for use in the prayers:

We pray for N and N who are preparing for Baptism:

- A that in coming to a knowledge of the power of sin,
they may truly repent and be truly healed;
- B that they may be protected from all worldly illusions
and given courage to accept the challenge of the Christian way;
- C that being delivered from all fear,
their lives may be enriched with love for others;
- D that being established in God's love,
they may know their worth and become good stewards of the gift of life.

The following collect may be used to conclude the prayers on the day candidates are enrolled:

Gracious God,
grant that all who are baptized into the death of Jesus Christ
may be delivered from every evil,
commit their lives to you,
and share in the eternal priesthood of Christ our Lord;
for to him, to you, and to the Holy Spirit
belong all glory and blessing,
now and for ever. **Amen.**

The service continues with the Confession, or the Peace.

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Holy Baptism

Introduction to Baptism

Who is it for? “Baptism is the sign of new life in Christ. Baptism unites Christ with his people. That union is both individual and corporate. Christians are, it is true, baptized one by one, but to be a Christian is to be part of a new creation which rises from the dark waters of Christ’s death into the dawn of his risen life. Christians are not just baptized individuals; they are a new humanity.” (*BAS*, p 146)

The catechumenate provides a period of mentoring in the way of Christ and the opportunity for hearers to weigh the meaning of the baptismal covenant in order that they and the community of faith together may discern a readiness to enter this new humanity. The following adaptation of the *BAS* rite of Holy Baptism is intended for celebration with those who have already been publicly called to be baptismal candidates on an earlier occasion, using the rite of Calling.

When to do it. “The celebration of...Holy Baptism requires careful preparation by both the community and the candidates. The service should take place when a congregation gathers for the principal Sunday eucharist, ideally on days that are particularly appropriate for baptism — Easter (especially at the Vigil), Pentecost, All Saints, the Baptism of the Lord — and when the bishop is present.” (*BAS*, p 146)

Pastoral preparation for the rite of Baptism needs to include opportunities for candidates to discern what it will mean for them to renounce evil and turn to Christ as Saviour and Lord. They need to be encouraged to discover all that God has in store for them in the gift of baptism. Traditionally the focus for this discernment process has been the Prayers for Deliverance within the liturgy on the Sundays of Lent following the Sunday of their calling to baptism (see [Prayers of Deliverance for Baptismal Candidates](#)). Whether or not such public acts of prayer take place, it is important that candidates be provided an opportunity to discern and name the evils that inhibit us from answering God’s call and rob us of the freedom of God’s service. See the suggested pattern of [Lenten Scripture Reflection](#).

It is also desirable for candidates and sponsors to keep a vigil of prayer, or make a retreat (of which the Great Vigil of Easter may be the climax). This is a time for recalling, in the spirit of thanksgiving and expectancy, their journey thus far in the catechumenate within the larger journey of the people of God.

Enriching the celebration. Nothing that follows is intended to compromise the *BAS* form of the rite. The Presentation (*BAS* p 153) is not to be omitted; rather, it is moved to an earlier occasion as part of the rite of Calling in order to strengthen the role of the community in the celebration. The following adaptation does, however, suggest ways to enrich the rite, developing the implicit drama of the rite in two ways. It suggests using movement to articulate the relation between the Examination of the Candidates (the Act of Repentance, *BAS* p 154) and the Celebration of Baptism (*BAS* p 156 ff). And it suggests expanding the gift-giving ceremony that follows the baptismal act (*BAS* p 160).

The fuller significance of this sacrament can be explored with the newly baptized in the weeks following. See the suggested pattern of [formation in sacramental living](#).

The order for Holy Baptism is found in the Book of Alternative Services, p 151.

When the Presentation (BAS, p 153) has already been made on an earlier occasion, the presider says these or similar words,

Sisters and brothers in Christ,
at the beginning of Lent,
(or at the beginning of Advent, or [on specified occasion],)
N and N responded to God's call
and were enrolled as candidates for Holy Baptism.
Now the hour has come for *these* our friends (or *these little ones*)
to follow Christ through the dark waters of his death
into the dawn of his risen life.
As we witness this great work of the Spirit,
I call upon you to remember your own baptism
and to welcome *these persons*
into the household of God.²⁵

The service continues with the Examination of the Candidates (the Act of Repentance), beginning from the top of p 154.

The following two enrichments of the rite are also commended:

It is appropriate to locate the Examination of the Candidates (the Act of Repentance, p 154) at a place other than the font. The candidates and their sponsors may stand at one of the entrances to the worship area with the Paschal Candle in front of them; they may turn to face out toward the 'darkness' as they respond to the first three questions, and then turn toward the 'light' as they respond to the question, "Do you turn to Jesus Christ...?" Following this Act of Repentance, they may be led in procession by the Paschal Candle to the font, either during the Prayers for the Candidates or the singing of a hymn.²⁶

After the Thanksgiving over the Water, each candidate may speak about how the Spirit has led him/her to this moment, that the whole congregation may be encouraged to renew its commitment to Christ. Then the presider invites the congregation to join the candidates in affirming the Baptismal Covenant, saying, "Let us join with those who are committing..." (BAS, p 158).

After the baptism, the signing, and the prayer, "Heavenly Father, we thank you..." an expanded ceremony of gifts may follow:

The Robing, the Giving of the Light, and Other Gifts²⁷

The newly baptized may be presented with gifts by their sponsors:

After albs or other white clothes have been presented to all, one of the ministers says,

Receive the robe of righteousness
to show that you have put on Christ.

All **Be clothed in Christ's love,
that you may stand without fear or shame
on the day of his coming.**²⁸

After the light from the Paschal Candle has been presented to all, one of the ministers says,

Receive the light of Christ,
to show that you have passed
from darkness to light.

All **Let your light so shine before others
that they may see your good works
and glorify your Father in heaven.**²⁹

After crosses have been hung around the necks of all, one of the ministers says,

Receive the sign of the cross
to show that you are dead to sin
and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

All **Do not be ashamed of this Gospel,
but take up your cross daily and follow Christ.**³⁰

After a taste of milk and honey has been offered to all, one of the ministers says,

Receive the riches of your homecoming
to a land of milk and honey.

All **Taste and see that the Lord is good.
Happy are they who trust in God.**³¹

Other symbolic gifts may be presented at this time.³² A hymn or anthem may be sung while the new Christians withdraw to put on the new clothing. When they rejoin the congregation, bells may be rung.

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Prayers for Those in Formation

Introduction

For hearers (and for parents preparing for their children's baptism), Formation in the Word is built around the regular encounter with God through the Proclamation of the Word in the liturgy: participation in the Sunday Liturgy of the Word is normative. But hearers also need opportunities for their response to this Word to be validated and confirmed, strengthened and developed, through sharing with others of the faithful in prayerful reflection and obedient action. Sometimes it will be appropriate to [dismiss hearers after the Proclamation of the Word](#) for this purpose. [Aural Reflection on Scripture](#) is an examples of catechetical method for such times of formation. The catechist may include in such small gatherings acts of [Prayer for Hearers and Baptismal Candidates](#), laying hands on each one.

In addition to this pattern of regular reflection that seeks to cultivate obedience to the Word, it is helpful to provide opportunities for praying together (outside the Sunday Liturgy and involving catechists and sponsors and others of the faithful as appropriate). Modeled on the Daily Office, such acts of prayer will seek to honour the emerging concerns and needs of hearers. Scripture texts may be chosen to introduce particular elements of the story of salvation or specific doctrinal themes, as appropriate. Within the context of such prayer there will be opportunities for personal story-telling, shared reflections, and catechetical instruction; and the rites of [Handing On the Lord's Prayer](#) and [Handing On the Baptismal Creed](#) have their proper setting within such prayer as well. A catechist normally presides at these celebrations.

Once hearers have been [called to Holy Baptism](#), the community may be guided in its support for them through a form of solemn prayer for baptismal candidates within the Sunday eucharist. Such [prayer for deliverance](#) serves to articulate the cosmic victory over the powers of darkness achieved in Jesus' death and rising, and now being played out in the lives of those called to follow the way of Christ.

After their baptism, new Christians are prayed for within the Celebration of the Eucharist where they now have taken their rightful place (see [Prayer for New Christians](#)). Throughout the Easter season it is appropriate that their presence be explicitly acknowledged at the Table.

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Sending Out Hearers for Formation in the Word

Introduction to 'Sending'

During the Sunday Eucharist, at the conclusion of Liturgy of the Word, the hearers may be sent off to reflect at greater length on the Word of God, accompanied by a catechist and on some occasions by their sponsors. This act should not be seen as exclusion from the Liturgy of the Faithful (there is much for hearers to learn from being present from time to time throughout the Prayers of the People and the Celebration of the Eucharist, even if they are not sharing in communion). Rather, this dismissal signifies the special calling of hearers to mark, learn, and inwardly digest what they are hearing. It is also indirectly a reminder to all the faithful of their own distinctive calling to be God's priestly people.

After the Sermon (or after the Gospel), hearers may be called forward and sent to their task in this way.

Presider I invite *hearers* to come forward with *their* catechist (and sponsors).

The Presider places the Lectern Bible or Book of Readings into the hands of one of the hearers or the catechist, saying,

Go in peace,
to enter more deeply into the mind of Christ;
and the blessing of God,
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
be among you. **Amen.**

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Prayers for Hearers and Baptismal Candidates

Introduction to Prayers

At the conclusion of each gathering for catechesis and reflection on the scriptures, a time of silent prayer may be observed, during which all may be encouraged to pray for growth in the life of faith and for freedom to follow the way of Christ. Either the catechist, or all members of the group, may lay hands on the head or shoulders of each hearer in silence. Then the catechist may offer one of the Prayers for Hearers, or another suitable prayer.³³

1 God of power,
 you created us in your image
 and formed us in holiness and justice.
 When we sin against you,
 you do not abandon us,
 but in your wisdom choose to save us
 by the incarnation of your Son.

We, your humble servants
who are plagued by evil and the tyranny of the enemy
need you to keep us far
from the spirit of wickedness, falsehood, and greed.

Uphold *N* and *N* in the life of your kingdom,
and open *their hearts* to understand your Gospel,
so that, as *children* of the light,
they may rejoice to be counted among your people,
bearing witness to your truth,
and practicing your commands of love.
We ask this through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**³⁴

2 Lord Jesus Christ,
 when you climbed the mountain to preach,
 you turned your disciples from the paths of sin
 and revealed to them the blessings of your kingdom.

You help all who hear the word of the Gospel,
strengthening us to resist the spirit of greed, of lust, and of pride.

May *N* and *N* find the blessings of your kingdom
in poverty and in hunger, in mercy and in purity of heart.
May *they* work for peace,
joyfully endure persecution,
and so come to rejoice and be glad in the reward
you have for *them* in heaven
where you live for ever and ever. **Amen.**³⁵

3 Lord Jesus Christ, loving Redeemer of all,
your name alone has the power to save,
that name before which every knee shall bend
in the heavens, on the earth, and under the earth.

Only you can free us from the snares and malice of Satan;
only you can heal our weakness and blot out our sins.

We pray for *these* your *servants*, *N* and *N*
who *worship* you as the true God.
Look upon *them*, and enlighten *their hearts*.
Give *them* discernment to know what pleases you
and courage to live by your Gospel,
that *they* may become the dwelling place of your Spirit;
for you, O Christ, hold them in your love,
now and for ever. **Amen.**³⁶

4 Lord Jesus Christ,
sent by the Father and anointed by the Spirit,
when you read in the synagogue at Nazareth
you fulfilled the words of the prophet Isaiah,
proclaiming liberty to captives
and announcing a season of forgiveness.

You challenge us to trust in you alone,
that our minds may be untroubled
and our lives unshackled from worldly desire.
Your enlivening Spirit enables us to grasp your promises
and liberates us from a spirit of unbelief.

We pray for *these* your *servants*, *N* and *N*,
who *have* opened *their* ears and *hearts* to your word.
Deepen *their* faith in you
that *they* may continually be amazed by the gracious words from your mouth
and reveal the coming of your kingdom in this time and place.
For you, O Christ, bring liberty and forgiveness to them and to all people,
now and for ever. **Amen.**³⁷

5 God of infinite wisdom,
you chose the apostle Paul
to proclaim your Son to every nation.

In the same way you have chosen each of us
and enabled us to trust not in flesh and blood
but in your call alone.

We pray that *these* your *servants N* and *N*
may follow in the footsteps of St Paul.
Search *their hearts* and open *their eyes* to your truth
that, freed from all deception, *they* may never look back
but welcome the new world your risen Son is creating.
May *they* count everything as loss
compared with the unsurpassed worth
of knowing Christ and being found in him
who is *their* eternal reward for ever and ever. **Amen.**³⁸

6 Creator and Redeemer of all,
your love shines in every age,
bringing truth and life.

We, whom you have called out of darkness into your marvellous light,
out of sin into purity of heart,
out of alienation into the embrace of a holy people,
now call upon you with joyful expectation.

Your great love has drawn *these hearers*
to seek and find you.
Look upon *N* and *N* today
and bring to fulfilment in *them* the plan of your grace,
that *they* may know *their* calling in your royal priesthood,
be radiant in the light of salvation,
and reveal your love in *their lives*.
We ask this through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**³⁹

7 God of Light,
you cut away corruption and strengthen faith,
you build up hope and foster love.
You lead us into abundant life.

We, who are threatened by unbelief and hesitation in faith,
by the love of money and lawless passions,
by enmity and quarrelling, and by every manner of evil,
call upon you now in humility and trust.

Free your *servants N* and *N*
whom you have called,
and empower *them* by your Holy Spirit
to be holy and faithful in your sight.
Create in *them* a spirit of reverence,
of patience and hope, of balance and purity,
and of charity and peace.
We ask this through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**⁴⁰

8 O God, Most High,
you are the Creator and Saviour of all,
our Beginning and our End.

You deliver us from every evil,
and grant us peace in our day.
In your mercy, you keep us free from sin
and protect us from all anxiety
as we wait in joyful hope
for the coming of our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

In your love you have formed *these* your *servants N* and *N*;
in your mercy you have called *them* and received *them*.
Search *their hearts* today and watch over *them*;
keep and complete in *them* the plan of your love.
May *they* be cherished among Jesus' disciples,
be encouraged in *their* loyalty to Christ,
and be honoured by our Lord in your presence.
We ask this in his holy name. **Amen.**⁴¹

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Handing On the Lord's Prayer

Introduction to 'Handing On'

Who is it for? The cornerstone of Christian daily prayer, the Lord's Prayer, is one of the most precious gifts the Christian community can give to hearers. The story of Jesus teaching his disciples how to pray is a story of encouragement; many people, like the disciples, worry about how to pray. Knowing that this is the prayer Jesus taught, the prayer that has been passed down, generation to generation, will encourage hearers to pray with confidence and with an anticipation of sharing in the royal priesthood of those who call God their Father. This personal and corporate aspect is important in helping hearers to deepen their own intimacy with God and be part of the worshiping community. We follow Jesus' example of understanding people's worries and concerns about praying, if we encourage hearers to use the language of today and pass on to them a contemporary version of the Lord's Prayer. For parents of children too young to answer for themselves, being presented with the Lord's prayer emphasizes the central importance of their own prayer life in their child's faith formation. They will model a life of prayer to their children, continuing to pray for and with them as they have done since their child's conception. And so it will be their privilege to pass on this most precious gift.

When to do it. This presentation may take place as soon as the catechist considers it to be profitable.

This presentation takes place within the usual pattern of praying together, in the presence of sponsors and representatives of the congregation. Selections may be made from the following readings. The Gospel reading listed must be used.

Old Testament Readings

Isaiah 55. 6 - 11 *Seek the Lord while he maybe found*
Hosea 11. 14, 8 - 9 *Out of Egypt I called my son*

Psalms and Suitable Refrains

23 *In God I trust and will not be afraid*
103. 8 - 18 *The Lord is close to all who call him*
138 *The Lord will make good his purpose for me*
145. 8 - 17 *Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, O Lord*

New Testament Readings

Romans 8. 12 - 17 *The Spirit bears witness that we are children of God*
Galatians 4. 4 - 7 *God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts*
1 Peter 1. 14 - 21 *As he who called you is holy, be holy yourselves*

Gospel Reading

Matthew 6. 7 - 13 (14 - 15) *Pray then in this way: Our Father*

Before the Gospel is read, the presider addresses the hearers as follows:

Dear friends,
hear now the teaching our Lord gives to those
who would come to the Father through him.

In this reading from Matthew, the text of the Lord's Prayer provided by the translator may be replaced by the text used in the liturgy.

The hearers may each be given a copy of the Lord's Prayer.

They may be prayed for by name, using one of the Prayers for Hearers.

The Prayers of the People may ask that they be confirmed in their desire to seek God, that the wounds of sin be healed in them, that their vision be enlarged to encompass all the joys of God's new creation, and that the community be faithful in its care for them.

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Handing On the Baptismal Creed

Introduction

Who is it for? As hearers proceed through the experience of formation, they become better able to weigh the challenge of the covenant of Holy Baptism. At some appropriate time, this challenge must be made explicit so that the discernment of their readiness for baptism may begin.

The heart of this covenant is the Baptismal Creed. This creed provides a summary of the Good News and a key to the scriptures. It is the 'Rule of Faith' – the core narrative of salvation history – providing hearers with a starting point for reading the Bible, and a tool for situating the diverse elements of scripture in relation to God's saving purpose. It is also a symbolic anticipation of their future bond with Christ and his people. (The questions and answers which follow the Creed define the traditional Christian response to this good news.)

When to do it. Catechists will know when the time is ripe, but celebrating this rite before the beginning of Lent will enable those who are ready for baptism at Easter to be formally called as candidates on the first Sunday of Lent. (If baptism is to be celebrated at Pentecost, this rite might most appropriately occur before calling candidates to baptism on the Sunday after Easter Day; for an All Saints' baptism, before calling candidates on a Sunday near the beginning of September; and for baptism on The Baptism of the Lord, before calling candidates on the First Sunday of Advent.)

This presentation takes place within the usual pattern of praying together, in the presence of sponsors and representatives of the congregation. Selections may be made from the following readings.

Old Testament Readings

Deuteronomy 6. 20 - 24 *You shall say to your children, We were Pharaoh's slaves*
Deuteronomy 26. 5 - 9 *A wandering Aramean was my ancestor*
Isaiah 52. 7 - 10 *How beautiful are the feet of the messenger who brings good news*

Psalms & Suitable Refrains

33. 12 - 22 *Our soul waits for the Lord; he is our help and shield*
78. 1 - 8 *We will proclaim your faithfulness, O Lord*

New Testament Readings

Romans 10. 5 - 13 *Confess with your lips and believe in your heart*
1 Corinthians 15. 1 - 8 *I handed on to you what I in turn had received*

Gospel Readings

Matthew 16. 13 - 18 *On this rock I will build my Church*
John 12. 44 - 50 *I have come as light into the world*

After the readings the presider addresses the hearers as follows:

Dear friends,
hear now the confession of that faith
by which Christians are bound together
in the covenant of God's grace.

Presider I now invite all the baptized to confess again the faith of our baptism:
Do you believe in God the Father?

People **I believe in God,
the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.**

Presider Do you believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God?

People **I believe in Jesus Christ,
his only Son, our Lord.
He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit
and born of the Virgin Mary.
He suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried.
He descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again.
He ascended into heaven,
and is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come
to judge the living and the dead.**

Presider Do you believe in God the Holy Spirit?

People **I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting.**

The hearers may each be given a copy of the baptismal creed.

They may be prayed for by name, using one of the Prayers for Hearers.

The Prayers of the People may ask that they be confirmed in their desire to seek God, that the wounds of sin be healed in them, that their vision be enlarged to encompass all the joys of God's new creation, and that the community be faithful in its care for them.

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Prayers of Deliverance for Baptismal Candidates

Introduction

Who is it for? During the season of Lent our attention is focused on Jesus' final contest with the powers of evil, which culminates in the story of the Passion, and is now played out again in the life of every would-be disciple. The presence of candidates for baptism further strengthens this focus as we pray for them in the midst of this contest.

The Prayers of the People may include petitions for our deliverance from the powers of evil, and especially for deliverance and purification of those whom God is calling into the Christian covenant through baptism. Such prayer may draw upon the growing awareness of sin and evil which emerges through the spiritual disciplines of Lent; and the particular consciousness of the candidates for baptism may be drawn upon as a primary source for such prayer.

In addition, the following prayers for deliverance may be used with candidates who are adults or older children.

By way of pastoral preparation for these acts of purification and enlightenment, candidates can be assisted in recognizing and identifying those elements of the Lenten gospel stories which illumine their own personal experience and history. This can be an opportunity for those who know themselves chosen by God to discern the ways of God in their lives and grow in their perception of the power of sin and their desire for salvation, seeking the freedom which God alone can give. The following public acts of prayer may then serve as communal affirmation of this inward journey. See the suggested pattern of [Lenten Scripture Reflection](#).

When to do it. These prayers for deliverance are appointed for the second, third, fourth, and fifth Sundays of Lent when there are candidates who have already been called to baptism on the first Sunday of Lent. (For baptism at other festival moments in the year, prayers similar to the following may be composed for baptismal candidates, based on the models provided here, and arising out the Sunday gospel readings.)

After the Prayers of the People (and the Confession and Absolution if they are included here) the candidates and their sponsors are called forward by name; the candidates kneel, and each sponsor may place a hand upon the shoulder of the candidate he/she sponsors.

The presider calls the congregation to prayer, in these or similar words:

Dear friends in Christ,
let us pray in silence for *these* chosen ones
who *are* preparing to receive
the illumination of the Holy Spirit
in the sacrament of baptism.
Pray that *they* may be delivered from all evil,
and given the freedom
to serve and worship God alone.

The people stand to pray in silence.

Prayer of Deliverance

The presider then says one of the following:

Lent 2A Lord of heaven and earth,
you are the true reward of all who seek for truth
and the only source of life that endures.
Reveal to *these* your *servants* *N* and *N*,
whom you have called and chosen,
your great salvation,
that *they* may be freed from the dominion of the flesh
and born from above by water and Spirit;
through the one lifted up on the cross,
Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**⁴²

The rite continues below.

Lent 3A God of mercy, through your Son
you revealed your fatherly care for the woman of Samaria
and offered salvation to all who are lonely and estranged.
In your great love, show your mercy to *these* chosen *ones*, *N* and *N*,
who *desire* to be reborn as your *children*.
As *they draw* near to the fountain of living water,
heal *them* of all bitterness and resentment;
by the consolation of your gracious Spirit,
awaken *them* to *their* real thirst for a share in your eternal life.
May *their lives* be a sign of your redeeming love for all amongst whom *they live*.
We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**⁴³

The rite continues below.

Lent 4A Gracious God,
you helped the man born blind to believe in Jesus as the Christ,
and through that faith to reach the light of your kingdom.
Free your chosen *ones*, *N* and *N*,
from the falsehoods that surround and blind *them*.
Strengthen *their hearts* with your loving Spirit
that truth may be the foundation of *their lives*.
May *they* live in your light for ever
and fearlessly bear witness to what *they have* seen and heard.
We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**⁴⁴

The rite continues below.

Lent 5A Almighty God, fountain of life,
you seek your glory in humanity fully alive;
you make known your love in the resurrection of the dead.
Rescue from the tyranny of death *these* chosen ones, *N* and *N*,
who *approach* the waters of new birth and *hunger* for the banquet of life.
Do not let the power of death hold *them* back,
for by *their* faith *they* will share in the resurrection triumph
of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**⁴⁵

The rite continues below.

Lent 2B Ever-faithful God,
look upon your *servants* *N* and *N*.
Free *them* from the power of the Evil One,
and turn *them* from this sinful generation
which looks to itself instead of keeping in mind the things of God.
Give *them* courage and strength to take up *their* cross to follow your Son,
so that *they* may find wisdom in sacrifice,
and truly gain *their* life in the glory of your Son,
Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**⁴⁶

The rite continues below.

Lent 3B Loving God,
you sent your Son to restore to us
the joy of your presence,
that we might worship you in spirit and in truth.
Deliver *N* and *N* whom you have called
from every spiritual tyranny and deceit.
Reveal in *them* the splendour of your sacred dwelling place,
the temple of Christ's body, the praises of your people,
created anew in the resurrection of your Son,
Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Or Holy God,
look upon *these* your *servants*, *N* and *N*.
Deliver *them* from all sham religion
that masks real trust in you,
and drive from us all that hinders passionate spirituality
in *those* who *seek* you,
that *they* may have zeal for your house,
the people in whom you choose to dwell,
and believe the words spoken by your Son.
As *N* and *N* *pass* through the waters of baptism
may *they* be raised to the New Life of Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**⁴⁷

The rite continues below.

Lent 4B

Holy God, whose love embraces the whole world,
we look to the dying victim for healing and salvation;
we turn to the light of his cross
so that every evil in us may be exposed.
Deliver *N* and *N*, your chosen *ones*, from condemnation;
illumine *their* inmost being with your truth;
and fill *them* with your eternal life;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Or

O God, rich in mercy,
behold your *servants* *N* and *N*.
Free *them* from evil,
and fill *them* with the light of your truth,
that *they* may look to the Human One lifted up
and know your power to save the world.
We pray for *them* with thanksgiving
as we wait in joyful hope for the day
when *N* and *N* will pass through the waters of baptism
and be raised up to the New Life of Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**⁴⁸

The rite continues below.

Lent 5B

Merciful God,
as we come to the Passover of the Lord,
the day of judgement of this world
when the prince of this world is driven out,
grant that *N* and *N*, as *they see* Jesus lifted up on the cross,
may be drawn into his eternal embrace.
Give *them* freedom to turn from the life of this passing age
and welcome the life of the age to come;
for by *their* faith *they* will share in the resurrection triumph
of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Or

God of power and might,
drive out the prince of this world
from the *lives* of your *servants* *N* and *N*.
Help *them* to know that it is only by losing *their* life in you
that *they* will truly gain it,
and that by your Son's willingness to be lifted from the earth
all people are drawn to him in your love.
Honour *them*, Father, as *those who follow* and *serve*
our Saviour Jesus Christ. **Amen.**⁴⁹

The rite continues below.

Lent 2C

O God, the source and goal of all creation,
defend and preserve *these* your *servants*, *N* and *N*,
who *have* responded to your call.
Protect *them* from every assault of the evil one,
from the scorn and intimidation that this world holds
for those who seek to know your ways.
Grant that *they* may share the great compassion of your Son
who gave his life for the life of the world.
We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**⁵⁰

The rite continues below.

Lent 3C

God of all the ages,
in the fullness of time you sent your Anointed One
to bring to fulfilment the promised day of salvation.
Ripen the seed you have planted in your *servants* *N* and *N*;
and in this time of your grace,
turn *their hearts* to you
that *their lives* may bear fruit to eternal life;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**⁵¹

The rite continues below.

Lent 4C

Father of mercy,
when we come to ourselves
and acknowledge the poverty of our alienation from you,
your loving arms welcome us home.
Reveal your healing love
to *N* and *N* whom you have called by name.
As *they come* to the waters of new creation,
may *they know themselves* reconciled and welcomed
into the household of faith
through the passion of your Son,
our Saviour Jesus Christ. **Amen.**⁵²

The rite continues below.

Lent 5C

Gracious God,
in Jesus our Saviour you have made us your friends
and shared in our very lives.
May *N* and *N*, your chosen *ones*,
find the freedom and courage
to pour out *their lives*, a fragrant offering
to the one who gave up his life for us all,
your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**⁵³

The rite continues below.

The presider lays a hand on the head of each candidate in an act of silent prayer.

*While this is being done, verses of the hymn *Veni Creator Spiritus*⁵⁴ or a similar hymn, may be sung by the people while the candidates remain kneeling.*

The service continues with the Peace.

One of the following Proper Prefaces may be used:

Lent 2A Blessed are you, gracious God,
 creator of heaven and earth.
 We give you thanks and praise
 through Jesus Christ your Son, our Lord
 who came not to condemn the world
 but to save it in love,
 and through the waters of baptism
 gives us new birth from above
 that we may behold your kingdom.
 Therefore with angels and archangels
 we raise our voices to you in praise
 to proclaim the glory of your name.

Lent 3A Blessed are you, gracious God,
 creator of heaven and earth.
 We give you thanks and praise
 through Jesus Christ your Son, our Lord.
 For he is the living water gushing up to eternal life
 and quenching all thirst.
 Therefore with angels and archangels
 we raise our voices to you in praise
 to proclaim the glory of your name.

Lent 4A Blessed are you, gracious God,
 creator of heaven and earth.
 We give you thanks and praise
 through Jesus Christ your Son, our Lord,
 who came as one of us,
 to lead all people out of darkness
 into the light of faith.
 For we were born in darkness as slaves of sin,
 but through the waters of baptism
 we are reborn as your children
 whose eyes are opened to behold the One who heals us,
 enabling us to see the light of your truth.
 Therefore with angels and archangels
 we raise our voices to you in praise
 to proclaim the glory of your name.

Lent 5A Blessed are you, gracious God,
creator of heaven and earth.
We give you thanks and praise
through Jesus Christ your Son, our Lord,
who wept at the grave of Lazarus his friend,
and raised him from the dead
to reveal his power over death.
In his love for us all
he gives us the holy mysteries
of baptism and eucharist,
and raises us up to eternal life.
Therefore with angels and archangels
we raise our voices to you in praise
to proclaim the glory of your name.

Lent 2B Blessed are you, gracious God,
creator of heaven and earth.
We give you thanks and praise
through Jesus Christ your Son, our Lord,
who calls us to deny ourselves,
and take up our cross and follow him,
that in him we might gain true life.
Therefore with angels and archangels
we raise our voices to you in praise
to proclaim the glory of your name.

Lent 3B Blessed are you, gracious God,
creator of heaven and earth.
We give you thanks and praise
through Jesus Christ your Son, our Lord,
who makes us a sacred dwelling place
that we may become the home
of his new and resurrected life.
Therefore with angels and archangels
we raise our voices to you in praise
to proclaim the glory of your name.

Lent 4B Blessed are you, gracious God,
creator of heaven and earth.
We give you thanks and praise
through Jesus Christ your Son, our Lord,
who was lifted up on the cross
that all who behold him may find healing and life.
Therefore with angels and archangels
we raise our voices to you in praise
to proclaim the glory of your name.

Lent 5B Blessed are you, gracious God,
creator of heaven and earth.
We give you thanks and praise
through Jesus Christ your Son, our Lord,
who, like a grain of wheat which dies in order to bear fruit,
gave his life that all people may live.
Therefore with angels and archangels
we raise our voices to you in praise
to proclaim the glory of your name.

Lent 2C Blessed are you, gracious God,
creator of heaven and earth.
We give you thanks and praise
through Jesus Christ your Son, our Lord,
who gathers us like a mother hen protecting her young,
and calls us to citizenship in the New Jerusalem.
Therefore with angels and archangels
we raise our voices to you in praise
to proclaim the glory of your name.

Lent 3C Blessed are you, gracious God,
creator of heaven and earth.
We give you thanks and praise
through Jesus Christ your Son, our Lord,
who came to reveal God's mercy and forgiveness
that we might bear fruit to his glory.
Therefore with angels and archangels
we raise our voices to you in praise
to proclaim the glory of your name.

Lent 4C Blessed are you, gracious God,
creator of heaven and earth.
We give you thanks and praise
through Jesus Christ your Son, our Lord,
who forgives us even before we confess our sin,
and who rejoices to welcome home the lost.
Therefore with angels and archangels
we raise our voices to you in praise
to proclaim the glory of your name.

Lent 5C

Blessed are you, gracious God,
creator of heaven and earth.
We give you thanks and praise
through Jesus Christ your Son, our Lord,
whose compassion is a fragrance that fills this house,
preparing your church to share in his death and resurrection.
Therefore with angels and archangels
we raise our voices to you in praise
to proclaim the glory of your name.

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Prayers for New Christians

Introduction

The formation of the baptized is a ministry of bringing new Christians to full consciousness of the dignity and calling proclaimed in their baptism. The fifty days of Easter are especially devoted to this purpose. The liturgy of this period is the Eucharist itself, the one part of the Paschal celebration which is constantly repeated; this provides the opportunity to recall the entire paschal mystery and all its symbols, which unfold the meaning of life in Christ. See the suggested pattern of [formation in sacramental living](#).

At the Easter Vigil and during the Easter season (or on the day of baptism and in the weeks that follow), those newly baptized may be prayed for by name in either of these ways:

One of the following may be included among the optional petitions in Eucharistic Prayer 6.

Remember *N* and *N* who *have* been reborn in the waters of baptism; keep *them* for ever in your love.

Or Remember *N* and *N* who *have* shared through baptism the death of your Son; reveal in *them* the glorious resurrection of Christ our Lord.

Or one of the following may be used as the Prayer after Communion.

1. Eternal Father,
your saving power,
made known in the resurrection of Jesus,
has raised us up to sit at your table.
Make us faithful heralds of your gospel,
that all the world may be gathered to your banquet;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
2. Creator of all,
in these holy things we see the signs
of your new creation through Jesus your Son.
Grant that all whom you have made holy
and brought into this communion
may be daily renewed in the power of your Spirit.
We ask in the name of Jesus Christ the risen Lord.
3. Merciful God,
you make known your just and saving reign
through those you call to your service
in union with Jesus our Saviour.
Grant that we who are baptized into him
may faithfully reflect in the midst of this world
the love and joy and peace of your kingdom.
We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ the Lord.

4. Gracious God,
through the water of baptism
and the bounty of your table
you make us sharers
in the redemptive work of your Son.
Grant that we may so dwell in him, and he in us,
that we may bring your healing grace to others,
through Jesus Christ our risen Lord.

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Rites of Turning Again to the Way of Christ

Introduction to the rites

Baptism is the sacrament through which we are united with Christ and his people. It is unrepeatable, for Baptism is a celebration of the eternal salvation won for us, once and for all, through Christ's death and rising. Nevertheless, many awaken at some point in their lives to the realization that their Baptism has been unfruitful, and long for a true experience of the mystery of salvation. As they witness others entering new life through catechumenal formation, they may ask for such formation themselves. This rite of 'turning again to the way of Christ' offers a path to such renewal which nevertheless honours the prior truth of their Baptism.

It is a lamentable fact that most baptized people, in North America anyway, are not practising Christians. This may be true for any number of reasons, most notably

- ▶ because the Church has not successfully encouraged parents to take seriously their role in the primary nurture of the faith when they made baptismal vows on behalf of their children;
- ▶ because the Church, like all institutions with a history of abuse of power, is justifiably regarded with suspicion; and
- ▶ because the Church has not always faithfully followed Christ in serving the poor, educating the faithful, and celebrating worship with creativity and passion.

So it is with humility and great excitement that we should welcome those who have been living outside the communion of the Church, but who wish to return as fellow members of Christ. Most will return after a particular crisis, and with many questions. Often there has been a yearning for belonging that has grown over the years. It is the joyful responsibility of the Church to honour and learn from the experience and questions of each person who returns, and to assure them of unqualified support.

This rite will also serve those already active members of the church who wish to turn again to the way of Christ in a deeper way. They may have no need to be ritually welcomed, yet they can make an intentional journey through Lent, including conspicuous participation in the rites of [Ash Wednesday](#) and [Maundy Thursday](#) (see the introductions to those rites for elucidation).

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Welcoming Those Turning Again to the Way of Christ

Introduction to 'Welcoming'

Who is it for? This rite provides a graceful way to welcome and affirm baptised people who have not been active Christians for some time and wish to begin again. It launches people upon a pathway that resembles, yet is distinct from, the catechumenate, because it clearly starts from the reality of their Baptism and honours the membership they already have within the Church. See the suggested [pattern of formation](#).

When to do it. This welcoming rite presupposes that a supportive relationship has already developed between the person who is turning again to the way of Christ and another member of the church, who will act as sponsor. They will have discussed what has precipitated this new desire to be an active Christian, and how over the years God has been sustaining and encouraging the person throughout their life's journey. Once the one turning again to the way of Christ is ready to pursue this spiritual quest within the life of the Church and in the light of the gospel, it is appropriate that this rite of welcome be celebrated.

By way of pastoral preparation, the sponsor will help the person to come to a clear sense of what he or she most deeply desires of God and the Church. Out of this experience a person may then formulate a true response to the first two questions of the rite. The answers may begin to reveal a history of alienation from God and the Church which will need to be taken into account in adapting the rites.

This form may be used at any time in the year within a principal Sunday service, and no attempt should be made to fit people into a preconceived schedule. As with other catechumenal rites, it is appropriate to adapt this ceremony to the particular situation of both the individuals and the church community.

Presentation

The person being presented is brought to the service by a sponsor. After the opening greeting and an act of praise (BAS, page 185), the presider invites them to stand before the congregation⁵⁵, and asks the sponsor to introduce the one being presented. The introduction includes these words, or other words appropriate to the situation.

I present N who wishes to turn again to the way of Christ, within the communion of the Church.

The presider asks of the inquirer,

What do you seek?

Answer (The person makes a response that has been prepared in conversation with the sponsor, during the time of inquiry).

Presider What do you ask of this community?

Answer (Again, the response will be something prepared in conversation with the sponsor, during the time of inquiry).

Question Have you been baptized in water, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit?

Answer **I have.**⁵⁶

The presider replies as follows, or in some similar words, adapting the reply to the answer given:

In baptism, we died with Christ⁵⁷
so that we might begin a new life together
in the power of his resurrection.
You were marked in your baptism with the sign of his cross;
and now you have come
to enter more fully into the meaning of that sign.
Will you reexamine the covenant made in your baptism,
and seek the help of God and the support of this community
in embracing that covenant?

Answer **I will.**

To the sponsor and congregation the presider says,

Dear friends in Christ,
will you care for N,
and support *him/her*
by prayer and by example?

People **We will.**

Presider Will you help *him/her* continue to grow
in the knowledge and love of God
and of God's Son, Jesus Christ our Lord?

People **We will.**

Presider Will you share with *N*,
as God gives you opportunity,
your own experience of life in Christ?
People **We will.**⁵⁸

Thanksgiving

*The presider prays for the person, saying,*⁵⁹

God of steadfast love,
on behalf of this our *brother/sister N*,
we offer thanks and praise to you
for the covenant you made with *him/her* in baptism
and for the experience of your guiding presence
which has brought *him/her* to this day.
Help us to serve *him/her* faithfully
with the kindness you have shown us
and to accept with joy all the gifts of grace *he/she* brings.
Together may we offer ourselves in your service,
seeking your kingdom and the honour of your holy name;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

*A musical acclamation may be sung.*⁶⁰ *Then the presider says to him/her,*

God's word is like bread to our hearts;
we cannot live without it.
God's word is like rain
that comes down upon the earth;
it brings forth fruit in our lives.
Come now and share with us
in hearing the word of the Lord.
Let us prepare our hearts
to hear what the Spirit is saying to the Church.⁶¹

The person and his/her sponsor now return to their places. The service continues with the Collect of the Day and the Proclamation of the Word.

Handing on the Gospel

After the gospel reading, or before the invitation to come and hear God's word, the person turning again to the way of Christ may be brought before the congregation; and a copy of the Bible may be presented to him/her by the catechist, saying,

Remember the story of God's great work
begun in you at your baptism.
May you grow day by day
until you reach the measure of the full stature of Christ.⁶²

The Prayers of the People

The person may be prayed for by name; and the prayers on pp 627 and 628 of the BAS may be adapted for this purpose.

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Ash Wednesday: Calling to the Life of Conversion

Introduction to 'Calling'

Ash Wednesday launches the followers of Christ into the Lenten journey with an act of penitence that demonstrates our vulnerability and the recognition of our utter dependence upon God. As St Augustine reminds us, it is the compelling generosity of God's compassion and forgiveness that empowers us to repent. Experiencing this excess of love, we can begin to let go of enslavement to our own deformed desires and addictions, as we are enticed into a life of increasing liberation and purpose. In a culture where individualism and personal gratification predominate, it is profoundly creative, albeit exceptionally difficult, for Christians to set aside time for the purpose of exposing our inner darkness to the revealing light of Christ. But as Jesus turned toward Jerusalem, confronting the powers of darkness that resisted the reign of God, we also turn to acknowledge and renounce those powers which have drawn us away from the light.

Who is it for? When those who have been alienated from the gathered life of the Church return to a more intentional relationship with God and fellowship with the community, their presence is a powerful reminder of the Church's call to on-going conversion. Their willingness to return, to forgive and to be forgiven, reveals our own need for the healing of divisions and for harmonizing the fragmented aspects of our lives. See the suggested pattern of [Lenten Scripture Reflection](#).

When to do it. It is assumed that, by Ash Wednesday, those who are returning to Christ will already have spent time telling their stories to sponsors who will have helped them to articulate the ways in which God has been drawing them back into the worship and service of the body of Christ.

Ash Wednesday, of course, draws all the followers of Christ into reflection on his disturbing determination to go to Jerusalem. But there are times when a member already invested in a life of faith has turned some new corner on this pathway, or has experienced a new perspective which results in a desire to mark this particular Lenten journey by celebrating it more intentionally. This too may be celebrated within this rite.

The exhortation following the sermon (BAS p 281) may be expanded in the following manner.

After the sermon, all stand, and the presider addresses the congregation, saying,

Dear friends in Christ,
every year at the time of the Christian Passover
we celebrate our redemption
through the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.
Lent is a time to prepare for this celebration
and to renew our life in the paschal mystery.
It is also a time for those who are turning again to the way of Christ
to prepare by self-examination and penitence
for a new commitment to the covenant they once entered at their baptism.
We begin this holy season
by remembering our need for repentance,
and for the mercy and forgiveness proclaimed
in the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Presentation

Those turning again to the way of Christ may then be presented individually.⁶³

Sponsor **I present N who wishes to follow the path of penitence,
and turn again to the way of Christ.**

Presider For some time now you have been confirming your baptismal
commitment. Are you ready to answer again the call of Christ?

Answer **I am.**

Here the person being presented may be invited to tell how the Spirit has led him/her to this moment.⁶⁴

As each one is presented, the presider asks of the sponsor,

Do you, as sponsor, believe that the time has come for this person to join
us in this time of discipline, in submission to the Spirit of Christ?

Sponsor **I do, as God is my witness.**

The presider may then ask the sponsors and the congregation,

Brothers and sisters, will you accompany *these* our friends through the
coming days of spiritual preparation?

Sponsor **We will.**

The presider then continues,

I invite you therefore, in the name of the Lord,
to observe a holy Lent
by self-examination, penitence,
prayer, fasting, and almsgiving,
and by reading and meditating on the word of God.

Let us kneel before our Creator and Redeemer.

The service continues with the silence, and Psalm 51 (p 282).

After the prayer over the ashes (p 285), the presider may say,

I invite *N and N* who are turning again to the way of Christ
to receive this sign of ashes.

By the power of the Holy Spirit,
may God grant you to be for us
a living sign of that conversion
to which the Lord now calls us all.⁶⁵

Ashes are applied to the forehead of each, with the following words.

Remember you are dust, and to dust you shall return.

Then one of those turning again to the way of Christ may say,

I invite all who in this season of Lent
are turning again to the way of Christ
to receive this sign of ashes.

They may then join with the presider in applying ashes to others, using the same words.

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Maundy Thursday: Restoring Communion in Mutual Service

Introduction to 'Restoring'

Maundy Thursday begins the most intense three days (the Triduum) of the Christian year. The liturgies of Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, the Great Vigil of Easter, and Easter Day are intended to be experienced as one extended celebration. Because the Thursday rite is our participation in the Last Supper, with our Lord's washing of the disciples' feet before the sharing of bread and wine, it is a particularly appropriate and poignant moment to complete the period of reconciliation for those turning again to the way of Christ. From this moment on, they will participate fully with all the Faithful in Christ in celebrating the passion and resurrection of the Lord.

Of course, it is to be expected that submitting to the loving kindness of another – having one's feet washed – will be emotionally difficult, as we're reminded in the Maundy Thursday gospel. Peter was mortified: "Lord, you will never wash my feet." Jesus responds, "If I don't wash you, you don't really belong to me." In a typical human reaction, Peter then demands a full bath, "Lord, don't wash just my feet. Wash my hands and my head." Jesus' reply is particularly significant for the Maundy Thursday rite. "Those who have bathed and are clean all over need to wash just their feet. And you, my disciples, are clean . . ." Thus the Maundy Thursday ritual of foot washing is especially appropriate for those who are already baptized, but are returning to the Church. This is not the washing of baptism, but the washing *in remembrance* of baptism – a communion restored in mutual service. It is our joy and responsibility to remind those returning that they are "already clean" through baptism, and that their renewed commitment to Christ is inherently about servanthood.

Who is it for? Although for some time it was common for the clergy to wash the feet of 12 members of the congregation, supposedly representing Jesus and his disciples, the Church has reawakened to the value of the ministry of all Christians, and this way of doing foot washing has come into question. All disciples are called to servanthood. It is appropriate, therefore, that those who are turning again to the way of Christ be the first to have their feet washed and then in turn to wash the feet of others, as models of the renewal to which all are called in Lent. Their renewal is our renewal, and their re-commitment is iconic of our constant call to conversion in Christ.

The exhortation following the sermon (BAS p 305) may be expanded in the following manner:

Presider Fellow servants of our Lord Jesus Christ,
on the night before his death,
Jesus set an example for his disciples
by washing their feet, an act of humble service.
He taught that strength and growth in the life of the kingdom of God
come not by power, authority, or even miracle,
but by such lowly service.

N and *N* have been examples for us in turning again to the way of Christ.
Therefore, I invite *them* to receive this sign of restoration
to the community perpetually reborn
in the cleansing waters of baptism.

*Those turning again to the way of Christ are then seated on chairs near the front of the assembly; the presider, carrying a towel, proceeds to wash their feet, and then hands them towels.*⁶⁶

*One of those turning again to the way of Christ may say,*⁶⁷

In this season of lent we are all turning again to the way of Christ.
Therefore I invite you, who share in his royal priesthood,
to come and accept this sign of his loving service.
But come remembering his admonition
that what will be done for us is also to be done by us to others,
for “a servant is not greater than his master,
nor is one who is sent greater than the one who sent him.
If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.”

*These then share in washing the feet of others; those receiving this sign may also share in administering it to others (including the presider).*⁶⁸

The service continues with the Prayers of the People.

The presider may introduce the greeting of the Peace in these or similar words:

On this night Jesus gathered his own
and gave them this holy meal as a sign
that would draw them back into his peace
even after they had betrayed and forsaken him.
We ourselves, who have often betrayed him
and betrayed or offended one another,
are now reconciled by the blood of his cross.
Therefore, in Christ’s name I implore you,
be reconciled to one another.

The peace of the Lord be always with you.
And also with you.

The presider may first greet those who have turned again to the way of Christ, and then invite members of the congregation to greet them as well.⁶⁹

If the room is stripped of ornaments after the communion, those who have turned again to the way of Christ may appropriately assist in this work.

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Reaffirming the Baptismal Covenant

Introduction to Reaffirmation

Who is it for? There are many ways for members of the Church to affirm their Christian faith. Weekly participation in the eucharist is the normative reaffirmation of the baptismal covenant. Daily prayer, private and corporate, articulates and nourishes trust in the Lord. Acts of ministry also confirm the faith that is in us. James has much to say on this in his epistle (James 2:14-26). Those turning again to the way of Christ, particularly when coming home to the Church after some time away, should be encouraged to reaffirm their faith formally within the Community of the Faithful. This act of reaffirmation *with* the Church, then, emphasizes re-integration into the Body of Christ, and has a profound effect both upon those returning and upon the members of the Church. It is a reminder both of the need for continual conversion for all Christians inspired by Christ's Spirit, and of the Spirit's work of reconciling all humanity.

When to do it. In the ancient Church, the Great Vigil of Easter eventually came to be seen as the most fitting occasion for baptism, when the Faithful gathered to celebrate Christ's death and rising. The Easter Vigil has, once again, become the annual rite of reaffirmation for Christians, and as such is the most appropriate occasion for those who have turned again to the way of Christ to publically reaffirm their faith. The *Book of Alternative Services* makes specific provision for all members of the congregation to reaffirm their faith at the Easter Vigil, even when there are no baptisms. It is in this context that those who have turned again to the way of Christ re-assert their profession of faith. Care must be taken not to usurp the special status of those being baptized at the Vigil, however. For this reason those who have turned again to the way of Christ stand with the community during the Baptismal Covenant; then, after the Welcoming of the Newly Baptized, they may symbolize their reaffirmation by going first to the font to touch the water, giving the lead to the rest of the congregation.

The fuller significance of such reaffirmation can be explored with returning Christians over the weeks that follow. See the suggested pattern of [formation in sacramental living](#).

After the welcoming of the newly baptised (or, when there are no baptisms, after the renewal of baptismal vows), each person who has turned again to the way of Christ may go to the font to touch the water as a memorial of their baptism.

The presider then invites the whole congregation to touch the water,

**Emboldened by the work of God's Spirit in *N and N*,
let us all come to the font and touch the water of life,
reaffirming our commitment to the way of Christ.**

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Catechetical Methods

Aural Reflection on Scripture

A suggested regular discipline for hearers and for those turning again to the way of Christ. The default selection is one of the readings already heard in the Sunday liturgy. A cross may be used as a 'talking stick' (only someone holding the cross can speak). Any member of the group may direct the procedure.

First Hearing:

- ▶ The catechist provides a context for the selected reading, if necessary.
- ▶ The catechist invites one person to read the passage aloud, saying, "Listen for what catches your attention: a word, a phrase, or an image."
- ▶ SILENCE. The catechist then hands the cross to the person on the right, inviting that person to share *what caught his or her attention*. The cross is handed around the circle until everyone has had a chance to respond.

Second Hearing:

- ▶ The catechist invites someone else to read the passage aloud a second time, saying, "Ask yourself: Where does this reading touch on my life, my community, our nation, our world?"
- ▶ SILENCE. The catechist hands the cross to the person on the right, inviting that person to share *what in his or her experience this touched on*. The cross is handed around the circle until everyone has had a chance to respond.

Third Hearing:

- ▶ The catechist may advise everyone that they will all be invited, at the end of the session, to pray for the person on their right, in light of the way that person responded to the reading.
- ▶ The catechist then invites someone else to read the passage aloud a third time, saying, "Listen for what God is saying to you through this reading. Ask yourself: What am I being called to be or to do? How is God inviting me to change?"
- ▶ SILENCE. The catechist hands the cross to the person on the right, inviting that person to share *what he or she is being called to be or to do*. The cross is handed around the circle until everyone has had a chance to respond.

Prayer:

- ▶ The catechist invites everyone to offer a prayer for the person on his or her right. Closing prayer is offered, using one of the [Prayers for Hearers](#), or a similar prayer.

Spiritual Conversation / Sharing Faith Journeys

The sponsor will meet periodically (weekly, if possible) with the hearer (or with the one called to the life of conversion) to share their stories, reflect on the experience of formation, pray, and think about next steps.

Reflection on Experiences of Ministry

An intermittent exercise. A catechist may guide this reflection.

- ▶ Who are you when you are most fully and honestly with God?
- ▶ What seems to *you* to be the most urgent work God is trying to do in the world?
- ▶ Considering the gifts you have received from God, what is your part in this work?
- ▶ Who are your models of wise and loving service in God's work of raising up the suffering, fostering reconciliation, or transforming the world?
- ▶ What support do you need from us to fulfil your calling?

Responding to Questions Raised

Every question raised is taken seriously, recorded if necessary, and promised a response. It is not necessarily the role of the catechist to provide the answers, only to foster honest questioning and to recruit teachers who can respond, as needed.

Whatever the regular discipline of formation may be, it is important to take time out for such teaching whenever it is called for by the emerging questions.

Weighing the Call to Discipleship

*Before any decision is made about proceeding to baptism, and in preparation for the rite of **Calling Hearers as Candidates for Baptism**, the potential candidates must be given adequate opportunity to weigh the cost of discipleship, as defined by the Baptismal Covenant. This can be done in two stages: (1) candidates can be helped to weigh both the freedom and the urgency with which they will confess, "I believe and trust in God . . . in Jesus Christ . . . in the Holy Spirit . . .", as spelled out in the Apostles Creed; and (2) candidates can be helped to weigh the implications of the commitments they will make when they respond to the questions that follow the Apostles' Creed. This process of weighing the call to discipleship can be initiated by catechist and sponsor sharing their own sense of calling in response to these two parts of the Baptismal Covenant (BAS, pages 158 - 159).*

Lenten Scripture Reflection

A suggested discipline for baptismal candidates and for those who have been called to the life of conversion, for use during the first four weeks of Lent; a method of oral reflection on the text of the gospel appointed for the coming Sunday. This will be most effective for those who are already practised in aural reflection on scripture (above). A cross may be used as a 'talking stick'. Any member of the group may direct the procedure.

First Hearing:

- ▶ The catechist provides a context for the selected reading, if necessary.
- ▶ The catechist invites one person to read the passage aloud, saying, "Listen for what Jesus is offering."
- ▶ SILENCE. The catechist hands the cross to the person on the right, inviting that person to say *what he or she heard Jesus offering*. The cross is handed around the circle until everyone has had a chance to respond.

Second Hearing:

- ▶ The catechist invites someone else to read the passage aloud a second time, saying, "Listen for signs of resistance to Jesus."
- ▶ SILENCE. The catechist then hands the cross to the person on the right, inviting that person to share *what kind of resistance to Jesus he or she heard*. The cross is handed around the circle until everyone has had a chance to respond.

Third Hearing:

- ▶ The catechist invites someone else to read the passage aloud a third time, after giving the following instruction: "Listen for human responses to Jesus with which you can identify personally."
- ▶ SILENCE. The catechist hands the cross to the person on the right, inviting that person to share *what he or she must learn to risk or to renounce in order to accept what Jesus is offering*. The cross is handed around the circle until everyone has had a chance to respond.

Prayer:

- ▶ The catechist invites everyone to offer a prayer for the person on his or her right.
- ▶ Closing prayer is offered, using the Prayer of Deliverance based on the reading (pages 38 to 49), adapted as necessary.

Exploring the Sacramental Life

A suggested discipline for the weeks after baptism, especially during the Easter season. In addition to continuing oral reflection on the lectionary, it is important that new Christians begin to learn to acknowledge and claim their new sacramental life. The following questions, used repeatedly, are intended to stimulate growing openness to sacramental formation. Any member of the group may direct the procedure.

Reflecting on Experience of Sacraments:

After posing each of the following questions, the leader hands the cross to the person on the right, inviting response. The cross is handed around the circle until everyone has had a chance to respond.

- ▶ Think about all that we *did* in the celebration of the Great Three Days, in Baptism and Eucharist. What did you see that you had not seen before? What affected you most deeply?
- ▶ What do these things say about us as the company of Jesus' disciples? About the new world God is bringing into being?
- ▶ What will it mean for us to live as we pray?

Hearing the Scriptures:

- ▶ The catechist provides a context for a selected reading, if necessary.
- ▶ The catechist invites one person to read the passage aloud, after giving the following instruction: "Listen for ways that this reading illumines our experience of Lent and Eastertide."
- ▶ SILENCE. The catechist then hands the cross to the person on the right, inviting response to the question, *How does this text illumine our experience of the Great Three Days, of Baptism and Eucharist?* The cross is handed around the circle until everyone has had a chance to respond.

Prayer:

- ▶ Closing prayer is offered, using the Sunday Collect, or another appropriate prayer.

Communal prayer is the normal context for all such catechetical practice. The order for Home Prayers (BAS pages 685 - 697) illustrates one way of combining hospitality (food and drink) with spiritual reflection (catechetical formation) within a pattern of common prayer.

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1.E.g., the two volume *Who Calls You By Name*, GIA Publications, 1991 by David Haas.

2.Besides hymns from the Christian Initiation section, here are a few suggestions from *Common Praise*:

10	We, the Lord's People
39	You are God's Work of Art
86	More Than We Can Ask or Imagine
281	Who Are These Like Stars Appearing
308	Jubilate Deo
312	Sing a New Song unto the Lord (refrain)
418	Draw the Circle Wide
377	To the Name of our Salvation
486	Love Divine (any of the 3 verses)
529	God, My Hope on You Is Founded
548	Eye Has Not Seen, Ear Has Not Heard
600	You Call Us Out

Two other pieces are worth noting. In the rite of Welcome, the song 'I Will Change Your Name' (words and music by D.J. Butler, Mercy Publishing, 1987) immediately after the Calling to be a Hearer gives the congregation words to support the ones being welcomed. The refrain of David Haas's 'You Are Mine' (*Gather Comprehensive* 649, LTP) provides similar support right after the Calling, and illuminates the action of Enrollment of Names. The affirming words of the text of both songs are written in God's own voice.

3.Beginning the ritual at the entrance means that the members of the congregation (or its representatives) make the first move in welcoming a newcomer. It also gives symbolic weight to the act of crossing the threshold. In accompanying the presider members of the congregation demonstrate that they are not mere spectators but desire to encourage the Inquirer toward the way of Christ. The logistics of this will depend on the details of the local setting, and require adapting. This is a kind of welcome in which children may have a special ministry. If microphones are used by the worship leaders, it is desirable for the newcomers and sponsors to have them as well. If the one being welcomed is a child of members of the worshipping community, it may be more appropriate that the family begin among the assembly rather than at the door.

4.True evangelizing begins where people are, encouraging them to know themselves so they may embrace God's love for them. It takes their concerns and longings seriously and helps awaken them to the deeper hunger of their lives. So a newcomer begins by articulating some deeper longing to the gathered community, encouraging all the faithful to remember their own desires which motivated them on their spiritual journey. Of all the various elements of the catechumenate, this has often been the easiest to introduce in parishes because it opens up the congregation to the myriad ways in which God invites people into community.

"What do you seek?" is the same question Jesus put to would-be disciples, the question he asked the blind man at Jericho, the question we all must face if our religion is to be more than the impulse to measure up to some external expectations of us. It is the question we will want to ask if we trust the stirring of the Spirit.

By way of pastoral preparation for this presentation and welcome, Inquirers may be assisted in coming to a clear sense of what they most deeply desire of God. Out of this experience they may then formulate true responses to the two questions of the rite. The answers to these questions will be given more confidently, and with more conviction, if they have already been heard and affirmed by the sponsors. This also provides an opportunity to make clear that if 'baptism' is the Inquirer's initial answer, the question must be explored more deeply: "What do you seek from God in a baptized life?"

5. The catechumenal process makes a fundamental assumption that God has always been active in the life of Inquirers (indeed, of all people). Everyone who inquires about baptism has been called, encouraged, unsettled, or wooed by God. Before they are formally welcomed as hearers, their sponsors help them reflect on that experience and articulate how God has been present to them.

The question, “Are you ready . . .” articulates the minimal terms of the covenant which the person enters as a hearer.

6. It is essential that this covenant with an Inquirer be mutual and shared by a community that is eager to do its part.

7. The communal life of a parish can grow in richness and vitality as the congregation welcomes and supports those who are becoming fellow members of the faith community, celebrating the gifts they bring. In order to make these commitments, it is important that members of the congregation have opportunities to explore the meaning of their own baptism, and find practical ways of supporting those who come among us. It is through the stories that we share that we find meaning and order in our own lives, within the larger drama of God’s story.

8. The prayer of thanksgiving, “God of steadfast love...”, makes explicit the awareness that all this has taken place in the presence of a delighted Father who has run out into the road to embrace a returning son or daughter/child. Every newcomer enriches and changes the community, and our response is thanksgiving.

9. It is important that an Inquirer knows that the way of the cross is the path Christians take in all that they do. The signing with the cross is a dual act of sanctification and remembrance: we recall the utter profanity of the cross as an instrument of defilement and death, and the sacredness of the crucifixion as the beginning of the transfiguration of all things. In a moment of tender intimacy, the Inquirer is invited to share our path, receive life in all its fullness, and face the evil of the world with no more defence than trust in God.

It is desirable (but not necessary) that the sponsor touch the Inquirer when making the sign of the cross. If there are a number of Inquirers being welcomed, all can be signed at the same time, each by a sponsor, while the presider speaks the meaning of the action.

10. In using the word ‘hearer’ (an English equivalent of the Greek ‘catechumen’), we have opted for clarity over ecclesiastical jargon. *Catechumen* comes from ancient Greek *kata* (=down, against, reflected back, answering to, alongside of, each to each), + *ekhein* (to sound/ring); hence, to echo. It is hoped that the good news of Jesus will ring a chord in the experience and longing of the catechumen. Catechesis always involves a question/answer format, as opposed to lecturing — a mutual hearing by which the Spirit inspires both the Inquirer and members of the Church.

This Calling to be Hearers is therefore placed before the ritual Proclamation of the Word. Clearly this rite of Welcome expects the proclamation that follows to be joyful, intelligent and thoughtfully presented. The challenge is to make our ritual proclamation something worthy of serious attention. The BAS has clearly issued the same challenge by extending the title ‘proclamation’ to include the ritual of public scripture reading. Beyond any attending ceremonial (e.g., processing the book during the initial entrance to the room, maintaining an auspicious place for scripture readings, use of candles or incense etc.), the most important dimension of proclamation is the active participation of the congregation.

11. The processional cross should lead the procession. The hearer and sponsor may be preceded by the paschal candle as a sign of the light that illuminates all people and leads us to the knowledge of God. The procession symbolizes the shared pilgrimage of disciples.

12. Presentation of a copy of the bible, if included, must not overshadow the ritual of Proclamation of the Word, which is the real 'handing on of the good news.'
13. The first paragraph (used only if hearers are being called to baptism at the beginning of Lent) can serve as a summons to all to recognize the renewed character of Lent within our tradition: a time of preparation for the renewal of the covenant of our baptism in the Paschal Feast. The following paragraph acts as an alternative when baptism is to occur at one of the other great baptismal festivals.
14. The words about being 'called' and 'chosen' are not meant to suggest that there are any who are *not* called, but to acknowledge the need for discernment in recognizing God's call — of responding to the voice of the Good Shepherd — against the clamour of tradition, family, community or culture. It is the integrity of *this* response that allows individuals to recognize that they are truly called and rightly chosen.
15. This commendation may be made with confidence when sponsors have had opportunity to guide and encourage hearers during the initial time of exploration of the Christian way, practice of Christian life skills and discernment of their readiness to embrace the challenge of being actively committed Christians.
16. Adult hearers may be given the opportunity to amplify their own response to the question, "Do you desire to be baptized?" and so to share with their new found family of faith something of their sense of discovery, or of anticipation, or the nature of the decision they have made.
17. There is a difference between the recognition of God's call to enter the Christian covenant and the experience of participation in Christ's death and resurrection, through which those being baptized actually do enter the covenant. There is a distinct change of agenda here, from a timetable determined by the needs of the individual to the rhythm of life of the Christian community — to the dimension of 'Church time'.
18. This question ("Do you believe that the time has come...") assumes a direct personal knowledge of the potential candidates who, by this point, should be well known, by sight at least, to the congregation. Sponsors may be given the option to add personal testimony in corroboration of their response. It should be noted that this is *not* a question of the candidates' *worthiness*, or the credibility of their performance or conformity. Rather, the issue is *readiness* to enter this very specific covenant — to pass through this particular narrow door.
19. During catechesis, parents and sponsors have undertaken to strengthen their faith, through questioning, study and prayer, in recognition of their responsibilities for the primary nurture of the faith of this child. Because the Church is going to ask parents to undertake the spiritual formation of their children, it is incumbent upon the Church to provide appropriate resources. While many churches offer Sunday School, this question implies that the primary form of Christian nurture will be at home. Workshops on faith development for parents, celebrating ecclesiastical seasons at home, print and Internet resources (for both adults and children), and small peer groups, are all possible means to give parents the skills and support they will need in order to accomplish this important ministry.
20. Through the companionship and hospitality extended by the congregation, candidates are more fully integrated into the life of the parish by the time of their baptism. The willingness of the congregation to be open to share personal experiences will set the stage for those seeking baptism to fully explore their call to the Christian life.
21. The question challenges the congregation to recognize in the candidates the Christ with whom, like the disciples in Gethsemane, we are called to watch and pray. From this point the congregation remembers the candidates (and their parents) in the Prayers of the People.

22. This moment is the culmination of a long period of soul searching, and brings with it a joy and anticipation which may be celebrated with embraces and a suitable hymn or song. (See footnote 2.)

23. It is preferable that the candidates' names be written into the Baptismal Register. If this seems inappropriate ("What if they decide not to be baptized?"), then this rite of Calling may very likely be premature. In the event that names are written into another book, it should be of significant size to signify its importance and permanence. It is possible, for example, to purchase a commercially available *Book of the Elect*.

24. The invitation to pray for the candidates marks the beginning of the period of Candidacy. This is a moment of great solemnity, signified by the gesture of the sponsors.

25. This exhortation acknowledges (especially for the sake of visitors) that what follows is the climax of a long preparation involving both the congregation and the candidates. If the movement suggested in the rubrics that follow has been adopted, this exhortation may appropriately precede the movement of the principal ministers to the place of the examination (Act of Repentance).

26. This movement has its origins in the practice of the early Church (and finds its echo in the current practice of the Eastern Orthodox rite of Baptism).

Although the *BAS* rite is sometimes experienced as excessively 'wordy', once these movements — movements implied by the words themselves — have been introduced, the words may be heard in all their power. An appropriate gesture that candidates may use to accompany the act of facing the 'darkness' is to hold their arms out before them, palms facing away from themselves — a gesture of 'renunciation'. The positioning of the Paschal Candle in this movement is important within the symbolism of the act as a whole.

27. A shower of gifts upon the new Christians is a fitting welcome and a moving sign of the new life of grace which is sustained by the generous gifts of God shared among God's holy people. It is fitting for gifts to be presented by sponsors and/or other members of the congregation, including children.

28. Robing in white after baptism may well be the earliest post-baptismal ceremony of all, a sign of "putting on Christ" (see Galatians 3:27, and compare Colossians 3:9-10 and Ephesians 4:22-24). It is important to recover the memory that the alb is not a ministerial garment, but the white robe of the baptized, the legitimate vesture of every Christian in worship.

Candidates for baptism should be encouraged not to don the new clothes until after coming up from the water; parents of child candidates should be urged to save the 'christening gown' for this moment. If candidates have been immersed (or water has been poured over them), they will not be able to don the new clothes until they have taken off the wet ones; for the purpose of this presentation, it is enough that the new garment be draped over the candidate's arm (or over the arm of a sponsor).

29. The sign of light is the one gift suggested by the *BAS* rite. The gift of light is not the gift of a candle but the gift of the flame taken from the Paschal Candle. Thus the new Christians may appropriately light their candles from the Paschal Candle held before them.

30. A pendant cross to be worn daily is a fitting gift, and one commonly offered by sponsors in some traditions. Like the gift of new clothes, it can be a sign of "putting on Christ".

31. Milk and honey were the legendary blessings associated by God's people of old with their entry into the land of God's promise. It is appropriate to link together the Christian appreciation of the new life in Christ and these ancient symbols of the blessings of God's kingdom. Thus, a bowl of milk sweetened with honey, may be presented to each new Christian to taste; alternatively, a tray with a cup of milk and a plate of honeycomb may be offered for tasting.

32. Another way to perform these post-baptismal ceremonies is for one of the ministers to say the first part of the assigned text as the gift is presented to each of the newly baptized, and then, after all have received that gift, to use the first line of the response as the cue line for the congregation to join in, thus:

Minister Receive the riches of your homecoming
 to a land of milk and honey.

When the newly baptized have all been served, the minister says,

All Taste and see that the Lord is good.
 Happy are they who trust in God.

33. The use of these prayers presupposes a certain relationship of trust between the catechist and the hearers, and a recognition of the catechist as a person of deep faith. It is important that the catechist discern carefully which of these prayers is appropriate, given the issues that have been discussed in the formation sessions. Each of them echos a particular biblical text; and a catechist may choose to follow this model in composing a prayer based on a text used in the session. Alternatively, a prayer may be chosen that gives voice to the concerns and aspirations expressed by hearers themselves. While touching the one being prayed for is a venerable spiritual tradition, it is important to do this with great care. There are some cultures in which touch is appropriate only in close family relationships, and there are people whose experience of abuse makes them extremely uncomfortable with being touched. Catechists needs to discern with the hearers their level of comfort, recognizing both that touch is important in Christian prayer and that permission must be given.

34. **Scripture Text Behind the Prayer: Ephesians 5: 8 - 11**

Once you were darkness, but now in the Lord you are light. Live as children of light – for the fruit of the light is found in all that is good and right and true. Try to find out what is pleasing to the Lord. Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them.

35. **Scripture Text Behind the Prayer: Matthew 5: 1 - 12**

When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. Then he began to speak, and taught them, saying:

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

“Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

“Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

“Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.

“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

“Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”

36. Scripture Text Behind the Prayer: *Philippians 2: 5 - 11*

Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus,
who, though he was in the form of God,
did not regard equality with God
as something to be exploited,
but emptied himself,
taking the form of a slave,
being born in human likeness.
And being found in human form,
he humbled himself
and became obedient to the point of death –
even death on a cross.

Therefore God also highly exalted him
and gave him the name
that is above every name,
so that at the name of Jesus
every knee should bend,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
and every tongue should confess
that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.

37. Scripture Text Behind the Prayer: *Luke 4: 16 - 30*

When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives
and recovery of sight to the blind,
to let the oppressed go free,
to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour.”

And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. Then he began to say to them, “Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.” All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his mouth. They said, “Is not this Joseph’s son?” He said to them, “Doubtless you will quote to me this proverb, ‘Doctor, cure yourself!’ And you will say, ‘Do here also in your hometown the things that we have heard you did at Capernaum.’” And he said, “Truly I tell you, no prophet is accepted in the prophet’s hometown. But the truth is, there were many widows in Israel in the time of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, and there was a severe famine over all the land; yet Elijah was sent to none of them except to a widow at Zarephath in Sidon. There were also many lepers in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha, and none of them was cleansed except Naaman the Syrian.” When they heard this, all in the synagogue were filled with rage. They got up, drove him out of the town, and led him to the brow of the hill on which their town was built, so that they might hurl him off the cliff. But he passed through the midst of them and went on his way.

38. Scripture Text Behind the Prayer: *Philippians 3: 7 - 11*

Whatever gains I had, these I have come to regard as loss because of Christ. More than that, I regard everything as loss because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and I regard them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but one that comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness of God based on faith. I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the sharing of his sufferings by becoming like him in his death, if somehow I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

39. Scripture Text Behind the Prayer: 1 Peter 2: 9 - 10

You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

Once you were not a people,
but now you are God's people;
once you had not received mercy,
but now you have received mercy.

40. Scripture Text Behind the Prayer: Galatians 5: 19 - 25

Now the works of the flesh are obvious: fornication, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, anger, quarrels, dissensions, factions, envy, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these. I am warning you, as I warned you before: those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

By contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against such things. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also be guided by the Spirit.

41. Scripture Text Behind the Prayer: Revelation 1: 5b - 8

To him who loves us and freed us from our sins by his blood, and made us to be a kingdom, priests serving his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. Look! He is coming with the clouds; every eye will see him, even those who pierced him; and on his account all the tribes of the earth will wail. So it is to be. Amen. "I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.

42. Gospel Reading Behind the Prayer: John 3: 1 - 17

Now there was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews. He came to Jesus by night and said to him, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God; for no one can do these signs that you do apart from the presence of God." Jesus answered him, "Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above." Nicodemus said to him, "How can anyone be born after having grown old? Can one enter a second time into the mother's womb and be born?" Jesus answered, "Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not be astonished that I said to you, 'You must be born from above.' The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit." Nicodemus said to him, "How can these things be?" Jesus answered him, "Are you a teacher of Israel, and yet you do not understand these things?

"Very truly, I tell you, we speak of what we know and testify to what we have seen; yet you do not receive our testimony. If I have told you about earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you about heavenly things? No one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

"For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.

"Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him."

43. Gospel Reading Behind the Prayer: *John 4: 5 - 42*

So he came to a Samaritan city called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired out by his journey, was sitting by the well. It was about noon.

A Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink." (His disciples had gone to the city to buy food.) The Samaritan woman said to him, "How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?" (Jews do not share things in common with Samaritans.) Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water." The woman said to him, "Sir, you have no bucket, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water? Are you greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us the well, and with his sons and his flocks drank from it?" Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life." The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water, so that I may never be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water." Jesus said to her, "Go, call your husband, and come back." The woman answered him, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "You are right in saying, 'I have no husband'; for you have had five husbands, and the one you have now is not your husband. What you have said is true!" The woman said to him, "Sir, I see that you are a prophet. Our ancestors worshipped on this mountain, but you say that the place where people must worship is in Jerusalem." Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father seeks such as these to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth." The woman said to him, "I know that Messiah is coming" (who is called Christ). "When he comes, he will proclaim all things to us." Jesus said to her, "I am he, the one who is speaking to you."

Just then his disciples came. They were astonished that he was speaking with a woman, but no one said, "What do you want?" or, "Why are you speaking with her?" Then the woman left her water jar and went back to the city. She said to the people, "Come and see a man who told me everything I have ever done! He cannot be the Messiah, can he?" They left the city and were on their way to him.

Meanwhile the disciples were urging him, "Rabbi, eat something." But he said to them, "I have food to eat that you do not know about." So the disciples said to one another, "Surely no one has brought him something to eat?" Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to complete his work. Do you not say, 'Four months more, then comes the harvest'? But I tell you, look around you, and see how the fields are ripe for harvesting. The reaper is already receiving wages and is gathering fruit for eternal life, so that sower and reaper may rejoice together. For here the saying holds true, 'One sows and another reaps.' I sent you to reap that for which you did not labour. Others have laboured, and you have entered into their labour."

Many Samaritans from that city believed in him because of the woman's testimony, "He told me everything I have ever done." So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them; and he stayed there two days. And many more believed because of his word. They said to the woman, "It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is truly the Saviour of the world."

44. Gospel Reading Behind the Prayer: *John 9: 1- 41*

As he walked along, he saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" Jesus answered, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned; he was born blind so that God's works might be revealed in him. We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming when no one can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world." When he had said this, he spat on the ground and made mud with the saliva and spread the mud on the man's eyes, saying to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which means Sent). Then he went and washed and came back able to see. The neighbours and those who had seen him before as a beggar began to ask, "Is this not the man who used to sit and beg?" Some were saying, "It is he." Others were saying, "No, but it is someone like him." He kept saying, "I am the man." But they kept asking him, "Then how were your eyes opened?" He answered, "The man called Jesus made mud, spread it on my eyes, and said to me, 'Go to Siloam and wash.' Then I went and washed and received my sight." They said to him, "Where is he?" He said, "I do not know."

They brought to the Pharisees the man who had formerly been blind. Now it was a sabbath day when Jesus made the mud and opened his eyes. Then the Pharisees also began to ask him how he had received his sight. He said to them, "He put mud on my eyes. Then I washed, and now I see." Some of the Pharisees said, "This man is not from God, for he does not observe the sabbath." But others said, "How can a man who is a sinner perform such signs?" And they were divided. So they said again to the blind man, "What do you say about him? It was your eyes he opened." He said, "He is a prophet."

The Jews did not believe that he had been blind and had received his sight until they called the parents of the man who had received his sight and asked them, "Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How then does he now see?" His parents answered, "We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind; but we do not know how it is that now he sees, nor do we know who opened his eyes. Ask him; he is of age. He will speak for himself." His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews; for the Jews had already agreed that anyone who confessed Jesus to be the Messiah would be put out of the synagogue. Therefore his parents said, "He is of age; ask him." So for the second time they called the man who had been blind, and they said to him, "Give glory to God! We know that this man is a sinner." He answered, "I do not know whether he is a sinner. One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see." They said to him, "What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?" He answered them, "I have told you already, and you would not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you also want to become his disciples?" Then they reviled him, saying, "You are his disciple, but we are disciples of Moses. We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where he comes from." The man answered, "Here is an astonishing thing! You do not know where he comes from, and yet he opened my eyes. We know that God does not listen to sinners, but he does listen to one who worships him and obeys his will. Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a person born blind. If this man were not from God, he could do nothing." They answered him, "You were born entirely in sins, and are you trying to teach us?" And they drove him out.

Jesus heard that they had driven him out, and when he found him, he said, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" He answered, "And who is he, sir? Tell me, so that I may believe in him." Jesus said to him, "You have seen him, and the one speaking with you is he." He said, "Lord, I believe." And he worshipped him. Jesus said, "I came into this world for judgment so that those who do not see may see, and those who do see may become blind." Some of the Pharisees near him heard this and said to him, "Surely we are not blind, are we?" Jesus said to them, "If you were blind, you would not have sin. But now that you say, 'We see,' your sin remains."

45. Gospel Reading Behind the Prayer: *John 11: 1 - 45*

Now a certain man was ill, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. Mary was the one who anointed the Lord with perfume and wiped his feet with her hair; her brother Lazarus was ill. So the sisters sent a message to Jesus, "Lord, he whom you love is ill." But when Jesus heard it, he said, "This illness does not lead to death; rather it is for God's glory, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it." Accordingly, though Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus, after having heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was.

Then after this he said to the disciples, "Let us go to Judea again." The disciples said to him, "Rabbi, the Jews were just now trying to stone you, and are you going there again?" Jesus answered, "Are there not twelve hours of daylight? Those who walk during the day do not stumble, because they see the light of this world. But those who walk at night stumble, because the light is not in them." After saying this, he told them, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I am going there to awaken him." The disciples said to him, "Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will be all right." Jesus, however, had been speaking about his death, but they thought that he was referring merely to sleep. Then Jesus told them plainly, "Lazarus is dead. For your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him." Thomas, who was called the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with him."

When Jesus arrived, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days. Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, some two miles away, and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them about their brother. When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, while Mary stayed at home. Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask of him." Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again." Martha said to him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day." Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?" She said to him, "Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one coming into the world."

When she had said this, she went back and called her sister Mary, and told her privately, "The Teacher is here and is calling for you." And when she heard it, she got up quickly and went to him. Now Jesus had not yet come to the village, but was still at the place where Martha had met him. The Jews who were with her in the house, consoling her, saw Mary get up quickly and go out. They followed her because they thought that she was going to the tomb to weep there. When Mary came where Jesus was and saw him, she knelt at his feet and said to him, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her also weeping, he was greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved. He said, "Where have you laid him?" They said to him, "Lord, come and see." Jesus began to weep. So the Jews said, "See how he loved him!" But some of them said, "Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?"

Then Jesus, again greatly disturbed, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone was lying against it. Jesus said, "Take away the stone." Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, "Lord, already there is a stench because he has been dead four days." Jesus said to her, "Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?" So they took away the stone. And Jesus looked upward and said, "Father, I thank you for having heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I have said this for the sake of the crowd standing here, so that they may believe that you sent me." When he had said this, he cried with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" The dead man came out, his hands and feet bound with strips of cloth, and his face wrapped in a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Unbind him, and let him go."

Many of the Jews therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what Jesus did, believed in him.

46. Gospel Reading Behind the Prayer: *Mark 8: 31 - 38*

Then he began to teach them that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. He said all this quite openly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. But turning and looking at his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, "Get behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things."

He called the crowd with his disciples, and said to them, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it. For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life? Indeed, what can they give in return for their life? Those who are ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of them the Son of Man will also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels."

47. Gospel Reading Behind the Prayer: *John 2:13-22*

The Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. In the temple he found people selling cattle, sheep, and doves, and the money changers seated at their tables. Making a whip of cords, he drove all of them out of the temple, both the sheep and the cattle. He also poured out the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. He told those who were selling the doves, "Take these things out of here! Stop making my Father's house a marketplace!" His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for your house will consume me." The Jews then said to him, "What sign can you show us for doing this?" Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." The Jews then said, "This temple has been under construction for forty-six years, and will you raise it up in three days?" But he was speaking of the temple of his body. After he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this; and they believed the scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.

48. Gospel Reading Behind the Prayer: *John 3: 14 - 21*

And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

"For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.

"Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. Those who believe in him are not condemned; but those who do not believe are condemned already, because they have not believed in the name of the only Son of God. And this is the judgment, that the light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. For all who do evil hate the light and do not come to the light, so that their deeds may not be exposed. But those who do what is true come to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that their deeds have been done in God."

49. Gospel Reading Behind the Prayer: *John 12: 20 - 33*

Now among those who went up to worship at the festival were some Greeks. They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and said to him, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus." Philip went and told Andrew; then Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus. Jesus answered them, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also. Whoever serves me, the Father will honour.

"Now my soul is troubled. And what should I say – 'Father, save me from this hour'? No, it is for this reason that I have come to this hour. Father, glorify your name." Then a voice came from heaven, "I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again." The crowd standing there heard it and said that it was thunder. Others said, "An angel has spoken to him." Jesus answered, "This voice has come for your sake, not for mine. Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be driven out. And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself." He said this to indicate the kind of death he was to die.

50. Gospel Reading Behind the Prayer: *Luke 13: 31 - 35*

At that very hour some Pharisees came and said to him, "Get away from here, for Herod wants to kill you." He said to them, "Go and tell that fox for me, 'Listen, I am casting out demons and performing cures today and tomorrow, and on the third day I finish my work. Yet today, tomorrow, and the next day I must be on my way, because it is impossible for a prophet to be killed outside of Jerusalem.' Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing! See, your house is left to you. And I tell you, you will not see me until the time comes when you say, 'Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.'"

51. Gospel Reading Behind the Prayer: *Luke 13: 1 - 9*

At that very time there were some present who told him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. He asked them, "Do you think that because these Galileans suffered in this way they were worse sinners than all other Galileans? No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish as they did. Or those eighteen who were killed when the tower of Siloam fell on them – do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others living in Jerusalem? No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish just as they did."

Then he told this parable: "A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came looking for fruit on it and found none. So he said to the gardener, 'See here! For three years I have come looking for fruit on this fig tree, and still I find none. Cut it down! Why should it be wasting the soil?' He replied, 'Sir, let it alone for one more year, until I dig around it and put manure on it. If it bears fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down.'"

52. Gospel Reading Behind the Prayer: *Luke 15: 1 - 3, 11b - 32*

Now all the tax collectors and sinners were coming near to listen to him. And the Pharisees and the scribes were grumbling and saying, "This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them."

So he told them this parable: "There was a man who had two sons. The younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of the property that will belong to me.' So he divided his property between them. A few days later the younger son gathered all he had and travelled to a distant country, and there he squandered his property in dissolute living. When he had spent everything, a severe famine took place throughout that country, and he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed the pigs. He would gladly have filled himself with the pods that the pigs were eating; and no one gave him anything. But when he came to himself he said, 'How many of my father's hired hands have bread enough and to spare, but here I am dying of hunger! I will get up and go to my father, and I will say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me like one of your hired hands.' So he set off and went to his father. But while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him. Then the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' But the father said to his slaves, 'Quickly, bring out a robe – the best one – and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. And get the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; for this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!' And they began to celebrate.

"Now his elder son was in the field; and when he came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing. He called one of the slaves and asked what was going on. He replied, 'Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fatted calf, because he has got him back safe and sound.' Then he became angry and refused to go in. His father came out and began to plead with him. But he answered his father, 'Listen! For all these years I have been working like a slave for you, and I have never disobeyed your command; yet you have never given me even a young goat so that I might celebrate with my friends. But when this son of yours came back, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fatted calf for him!' Then the father said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. But we had to celebrate and rejoice, because this brother of yours was dead and has come to life; he was lost and has been found.'"

53. Gospel Reading Behind the Prayer: *John 12: 1 - 8*

Six days before the Passover Jesus came to Bethany, the home of Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. There they gave a dinner for him. Martha served, and Lazarus was one of those at the table with him. Mary took a pound of costly perfume made of pure nard, anointed Jesus' feet, and wiped them with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (the one who was about to betray him), said, "Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii and the money given to the poor?" (He said this not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief; he kept the common purse and used to steal what was put into it.) Jesus said, "Leave her alone. She bought it so that she might keep it for the day of my burial. You always have the poor with you, but you do not always have me."

54. The translation by John Webster Grant is very apt (Common Praise #638); also appropriate are 'From the Waiting Comes the Sign' (CP #642), 'Come Down, O Love Divine' (CP #645), 'O Holy Spirit, Enter In' (CP #648), 'God's Spirit As a Rising Gale' (CP #650).

55. For those who are turning again to the way of Christ, the place of welcome is always the place of worship itself, for they are already members through baptism. They are welcomed back into the assembly of those who gather together to hear the proclamation of God's word. The role of the sponsor will be important here, as in the initiation of Christians. As spiritual companion, the sponsor embodies the Church's care for the returning member until that person is able to make a solemn reaffirmation of the baptismal covenant. The text "I present..." should be adapted if it does not express what is happening in the life of the person being presented, for example, when changing denominations.

56. "What do you seek?" is the same question Jesus put to would-be disciples, the question he asked the blind man at Jericho, the same question we all must face if our religion is to be more than the impulse to measure up to some external expectations of us. It is the question we will want to ask the one returning if we trust the stirring of the Spirit in their interior lives. And so it needs to be asked with sensitivity.

The second question, "What do you ask of this community?" is a gentle reminder of the congregation's involvement and delight in the member's return. The members of the community will then have a better understanding of how they may be able to support and help this person.

These questions are about knowing one's own heart, and bringing that openness of heart to the gospel proclamation. It is followed by publicly confessing and declaring one's baptismal standing; consciousness of this standing is thereby reinforced as the real basis of restoration.

57. The words "In baptism, we died with Christ" challenge the person to recognize the profound meaning of baptism and the seriousness of this step. The affirmation about a person's readiness to begin this journey back to life within the covenant leads into the question "Will you reexamine...?"

58. The congregation is called upon to promise its support and faithfulness. The communal life of a parish can grow in richness and vitality as the congregation welcomes and supports those who are turning again to the way of Christ, celebrating the gifts they bring. In order to make these commitments, it is important that members of the congregation have opportunities to explore the meaning of their own baptism, and find practical ways of supporting those who come among us. It is through the stories shared with others that people find meaning and order in their lives and within the larger drama of God's story.

59. The thanksgiving follows without pause ("God of steadfast love...") It makes explicit the awareness that all this has taken place in the presence of a delighted father who has run out into the road to embrace a returning child. It acknowledges the fact that a returning member enriches and changes the community, and our response is thanksgiving.

60. Some suggested refrains from *Common Praise* for this moment:

- 548 Eye Has Not Seen, Ear Has Not Heard (refrain)
- 61 As We Gather at Your Table (verse 1)
- 712 Speak, O Lord; Your Servant is Listening (verse 1)

61. These words link our thanksgiving and the reading of the word, and echo the situation of those turning again to the way of Christ: their recognition, conscious or sub-conscious, that they are indeed starving, hands reaching out for the bread of life. It is hoped that the good news of Jesus will resound in their experience, that they will hear it again as if for the first time, testing the meaning of their history in the Church against this new hearing of the word. It is for this reason that this Welcome is placed before the ritual Proclamation of the Word.

Clearly the Welcome expects the proclamation that follows to be joyful, intelligent and transformative. The BAS has issued the same challenge by extending the title 'proclamation' to include not only preaching but the public reading of scripture as well. The attending ceremonial can help to suggest the supreme importance of this proclamation (e.g., processing the book during the initial entrance, maintaining an auspicious place for scripture readings, use of candles, incense, etc.). The most important element, however, is the active participation of the congregation.

Essentially, this is a period of mystagogy (i.e., of growing into a fuller appreciation of our sacramental life) in which people may rediscover their identity and calling as the Baptised. It is a time to re-enter the life of ongoing conversion and to seek reconciliation with the community from which they had become estranged. Insofar as this estrangement may have resulted from failings of the Church itself, the contrition of the community of faith will play a part in this reconciliation.

62. Presentation of a copy of the bible must not overshadow the ritual of proclamation, which is the real "handing on of the Good News".

63. It is appropriate that those being presented not be called forward at this point, but remain standing in their place (together with their sponsors). Their identity as part of the company of the baptized is thus underlined.

64. Those turning again to the way of Christ may be invited to speak about what caused their alienation from the Church, and the experiences through which the Spirit enticed them back into the community of the Faithful. The sponsor needs to guide them in preparing what they will say at this moment.

65. Those turning again to the way of Christ are invited to receive the sign of ashes first. One of them then invites the congregation to come forward, thus confirming the ongoing conversion of the community. They may join the presider in applying ashes to others. The interdependence of congregation and penitents is strengthened by the active role they are given in this rite.

66. Some visual link to baptism (to underscore the implications of Jesus' response to Peter) is appropriate. The water for the foot-washing may be taken from the font at this moment, using the vessel customarily used in filling the font; or the foot-washing ceremony may be set within the baptistry (if there is one).

67. The iconic leadership of those turning again to the way of Christ through the lenten journey will become explicit when one of them voices this final paragraph of the invitation.

68. Various approaches are envisaged in this rubric. If the presider alone had washed the feet of those turning again to the way of Christ, one of them could be handed the pitcher and another the towel so that they, with the presider (holding a basin), may wash the feet of others. Or this ministry may be given over entirely to those whose feet have just been washed (so that the presider is free to receive the foot-washing with others). Those who subsequently receive the foot-washing may in turn administer it to others in a continuing rotation through the congregation.

69. The sharing of the Peace becomes the first recognition of a fully restored communion between those turning again to the way of Christ and the community of the Faithful. In greeting returning members first, the congregation publicly acknowledges the profound reconciliation that God has brought about.