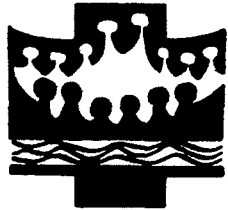


Insights
In Liturgy



By Father Robert J. Schrader

**Renewed
Church:
Paschal Joy**

Somewhere between the underlying messages of the popular lyrics "Is That All There Is?" and "We've Only Just Begun" lies the practical essence of what in the Christian initiation development process of our renewed Church is known as the "Mystagoga." For after many long months of initial inquiry, formal entry into the Catechumenate, and being affirmed, elected, scrutinized, presented and finally baptized/received, confirmed and communioned, our parish communities will no longer see these special rites after the homily each Sunday or witness those who have gone through these stages and rituals leaving the assembly in the middle of the Mass (if indeed this custom has been observed in each parish). Liturgically, there are no more ceremonies left in the rite book, and they now seem to melt in with the rest of the community. But is that really all there is?

The answer to that is a definite "Yes" and "No." Yes, the time and celebrations of preparation and purification are now over. These new members of our Church are now fully initiated

through the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and Holy Eucharist, and after so many months of growing close to their sponsors, their preparers and one another, they are now spiritually launched, as it were, into the intimate vastness of the Church. And yet, insofar as their journey of faith and our journey with them are concerned, we really have only just begun.

The Mystagoga (or Period of Postbaptismal Catechesis in the "mysteries" of our faith) is, according to the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, a time for "deepening the Christian experience, for gaining spiritual fruit, and for entering more closely into the life and unity of the community of the faithful" (RCIA, #7). It is during this time that the community and those who are now fully initiated into, that community (no longer called "catechumen/candidates" or "elect," but now titled "neophytes") "move forward together, meditating on the Gospel, sharing in the eucharist, and performing works of charity" (RCIA, #38) is one of the chief marks of this period and of the rest of their lives. Strengthened by the sacraments, they now "may enter into a closer relationship with the faithful

and bring them renewed vision and a new impetus" (RCIA, #39).

This last point seems most important. For it seems to this writer that the experience of the Mystagoga and the beyond is not so much something these neophytes do as much as what they now are. In a pre-Easter discussion with our eight parish elect, it was shared among themselves and their sponsors and preparers that each of them had already become changed in their very lives as a result of this past year: in how they responded to tensions at work, to belittling gossip at the coffee break, to peer pressures from the unchurched, to the demands and needs of daily life. One of the elect said she has already committed herself to teaching primary CCD this coming year.

Indeed, the Mystagoga can be the richest period of the entire initiation process. There is now a definite newness of life and spirit -- oftentimes putting many of us cradle Catholics to shame in both our understanding and practice of our faith. This is a great time (between Easter and Pentecost) for them to meet the Parish Council president and other lay leaders of the parish, to begin to enter more fully into parish life itself, called to use the gifts and talents with which they have been blessed. (Not too much too quick, though: burnout shouldn't come until at least next Christmas!) And don't forget First Penance catechesis. The renewal of their love for the Lord and his mercy for them

CROSSROADS II



**RENEWED HEARTS
RENEWED CHURCH**

through this beautiful sacrament will be a strong source of support in the years to come. Also, you may even find some of this year's neophytes desiring to be among next year's catechumenate presentors or sponsors: as the fire of the Easter Candle begat the fire of the tapers, so the fire of their new faith may well be the best begetter of new flames of Christ's light in the future.

Bishop Clark will celebrate two special Masses for all neophytes in the diocese on May 8 at Immaculate Conception Church in Ithaca, and on May 18 at St. Ambrose Church in Rochester; both at 7:30 p.m. These will make for opportunities to gather once again with those who two months earlier had gathered to be formally elected to proceed to the Easter mysteries last weekend. During this Paschal season, may we all continue to remember our new Catholic Christians in our general intercessions and daily

prayers. And may the Lord enkindle in each of us the same enthusiasm and energy of paschal joy

that has been a hallmark of the Church's neophytes from the days of the early martyrs till our own.

**Easter Over?
It's Just Begun!**

Lent may be over but the Easter season has just begun. That may well be the theme of Crossroads II in entering into the many events of the 50 days between Easter Sunday and Pentecost Sunday.

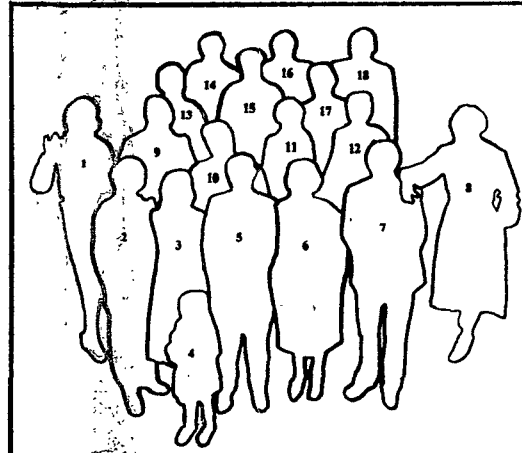
For instance, The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults program will be in full activity. Bishop Matthew H. Clark will continue his Crossroads journey by celebrating two Neophyte Masses for those newly initiated into the life of our faith community. The first is scheduled at 7:30 p.m., Tuesday, May 8, at Immaculate Conception in Ithaca, and the second at 7:30 p.m., Tuesday, May 15, at St. Ambrose in Rochester.

In addition, four new priests will be ordained and parishes will be active with First Communions and Confirmations, baptisms and marriages.

The diocesan Liturgy Office notes, "The Great Fifty Days is not an Easter afterthought. These are days of great rejoicing filled with the dynamism of the early Church as recorded in the Acts of the Apostles which is proclaimed throughout the season of Easter."

Thus, the spirit of Easter should prevail for the 50 days until the Feast of Pentecost, June 10, which concludes the Lent-Easter-Pentecost season and the Crossroads II journeys of Bishop Clark.

Parish Brochure Features Staff



This photograph by Terrance J. Brennan of the personnel of St. Mary's Church, downtown, will appear on the cover of a brochure commemorating the parish's 150th anniversary. These brochures will be distributed at the parish's booth in the city sesquicentennial exhibit at the War Memorial April 28-May 5.

- 1-Sister Sheila Walsh, SSJ, pastoral staff;
- 2-Dennis Meeh, parish council chairperson;
- 3-his wife, Kathleen;
- 4-daughter, Allison;
- 5-Charles Burnett, sacristan;
- 6-Rita Carberry, parish council member;
- 7-Thomas Donohue, music director;
- 8-Sister Joan Sobala, SSJ, pastoral staff;
- 9-Joseph Hofmann, finance;
- 10-Jean Boyle, secretary;
- 11-Eileen O'Brien, staff volunteer;
- 12-Sister Kathleen Milliken, RSM, public relations;
- 13-Joan Young, pastoral staff;
- 14-Thomas Bagwell, maintenance;
- 15-Father James Lawlor, pastor;
- 16-Harold Hacker, finance;
- 17-Gladys Post, household staff;
- 18-Stanley Zawacki, permanent deacon.

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