

Mystagogy

Mystagogy: Living the Mystery?

<https://www.catholicapostolatecenter.org/blog/mystagogy-living-the-mystery>

What is Mystagogy?

Our faith needs mystagogy first and foremost because of one simple reason: we celebrate and proclaim a mystery.

As evangelists and catechists, I think it is important to recognize that for some people, the idea of religious “mystery” *prima facie*, conjures up images of a Da Vinci Code-esque Church shrouded in secrecy, New Age spiritualism, or even a pre-scientific belief in “magic.” But the sacraments do not initiate us into a special club or secret society. Through them, we are made participants in the life of Jesus Christ.

Faith begins and ends in mystery, most especially the mystery of the Most Holy Trinity, “the central mystery of Christian faith and life . . . the source of all other mysteries of faith” (CCC 234). In the scriptures, liturgy, and sacraments, we truly encounter and participate in the Triune life of God. But no matter how intelligent or insightful we are, we will never fully wrap our minds around God’s glory or totally experience it with our five senses.

Mystagogy comes from the Greek word meaning, “to lead through the mysteries.” The Catechism describes mystagogy as a “liturgical catechesis that aims to initiate people into the mystery of Christ” (CCC 1075). Mystagogy leads us from the external signs and rituals of the liturgy to the inner, spiritual meaning of the divine life they signify. Mystagogy is the form of catechesis that helps us unpack and explore the spiritual treasures contained in the sacraments by continuously reflecting on their meaning and significance in our personal lives of faith.

Mystagogy was the way the early Church Fathers embraced and trained new Christians in the practices and beliefs of the faith. Perhaps the most well-known teacher of mystagogy was St. Cyril of Jerusalem (315-386 CE), who delivered a famous series of sermons, known as “mystagogic catecheses,” (See [Catechetical Lectures 13-23 \(incl. Mystagogical Catecheses\) | EWTN](#)) during the time of Lent through the Easter Octave. After the Second Vatican Council, the Catholic Church revitalized this ancient practice, especially in the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults. But mystagogy isn’t just for the newly baptised; it is the way every Catholic can continually deepen their relationship with Christ by daily drawing on the grace of the sacraments.

Significance for our New Evangelization

Just as Catholics are rediscovering the importance of the “kerygma” (Greek for “proclamation”) for evangelization, mystagogy is incredibly important in our approach to catechesis in the New Evangelization. John Paul II wrote, “Through catechesis the Gospel kerygma is gradually deepened . . . and channelled toward Christian practice in the Church and the world” (*Catechesi Tradendae*, n. 25) (See [Catechesi Tradendae](#)), specifically the form of mystagogy. Additionally, mystagogy serves as a trustworthy guide when reflecting on ways to improve our catechetical methods.

Living the Mystery Daily

Ongoing mystagogy is important because our relationship with the sacraments change as we grow and mature as individuals and meet new life challenges and circumstances. In turn, the sacraments really change us. Pope Benedict XVI said, “The mature fruit of mystagogy is an awareness that one's life is being progressively transformed by the holy mysteries being celebrated” (Sacramentum Caritatis n. 64) (see [Sacramentum Caritatis](#)). By reflecting regularly on the sacraments, we access an incredible strength for our daily tasks.

Developing a practice of Eucharistic mystagogy can combat the routinisation that often sets in to our receiving communion. For those who are married, or preparing for marriage, there is a mystagogy of marriage. With ongoing mystagogic reflection, you may discover new fruits of that sacrament in every season of life.

Studying theology and the Bible is often an undervalued way of developing our spiritual life. Learning about someone or something is a sign of love, and we truly become what we behold (cf 2 Cor. 3:18). Reading the great books and sermons of Catholic authors and theologians greatly expands our hearts and minds to experience the truth and depth of our faith.

The great Catholic philosopher Gabriel Marcel is attributed as stating, “Life is not a problem to be solved, but a mystery to be lived.” Mystagogy is the path leading Christians to learn to live the mystery of our faith. I encourage you to follow the path trod by St. Cyril up through popes John Paul II, Benedict XVI, and Francis, in making this incredible tradition and gift called “mystagogy” a part of your life.

Ways to deepen your faith

Go to Mass each Sunday

This might seem obvious, but sometimes there can be an event that stops you from going to church. Make sure your Sunday priorities start with Mass, and everything else can fall into line afterwards.

Reconciliation (Confession) on a regular basis

Going to reconciliation can help you grow close to your Heavenly Father, as it's not just about confessing sins, it's about seeking His mercy, receiving it, and remembering that God loves you unconditionally. And afterwards you'll feel that little bit lighter and ready to embrace all life has to offer.

Daily prayers

Now if you find it difficult to set time aside each day for prayers, then there are ways to incorporate prayers into your daily life without you neglecting other important duties. For example, if you're in traffic, then you can always take the time to pray and thank God though, nothing will ever replace a set time for God each day. Try to work toward it little by little.

Reading, podcasts, etc.

There are so many books and online resources that are great for Catholics. The Bible itself is in a category all its own as the Word of God. But beyond that, there are so many types of spiritual reading, from the Catechism to books, readings and resources on or about saints and a broad range of other topics that can inspire you in your daily life, and even demonstrate love and kindness.

Perform a daily act of mercy

There are Corporal and Spiritual Acts of Mercy that you can easily carry out in your day, that won't take up too much time. From trying to forgive those who've wronged you, to offering food to those in need.

Read Daily Mass readings

This might be tricky if you feel overwhelmed and pushed for time, but it's something you can work up to. The readings said at Mass each day and analysis of them are available on the Internet and on apps, such as Hallow, Univesalis etc.

Pray the Rosary

Praying the Rosary might be a little time-consuming, but you could start with praying just a decade. Then over time, build it up and before you'll know it you'll be reaching out to Our Lady on a daily basis.

Show gratitude

You can pray, and offer your help, but it's also important to take stock of everything you have. You can practice daily gratitude, in which you consider all the things you are grateful for in that day. You could either write them in a journal, or just think about it in your prayers. But once you appreciate everything you have, you'll certainly grow in faith.

Join your local Catholic community

It's lovely to grow in faith with other members of your parish or Catholic community. If you're not able to physically get out and about, you can join groups online that suit your particular needs.

Daily examination of conscience

The Compline (Night Prayer) or just before going to sleep are excellent times to give thanks to God for the good things or events that he provided during the day, to look at, with his help and guidance, what you did right during the day and what you may have got wrong, why, and how to improve or make amends tomorrow.

Retreats

A day or a series of days passed in solitude and consecrated to practices of asceticism in particular to prayer and penance.

Resources

Books, CD's, Journals Etc.

The parish has a library (located in the parish hall) of books, CD's and other literature on a wide range of subjects which are free to borrow.

Daily Readings at Mass

There are numerous resources which provide the Daily Readings and/or commentary on the scripture for the day. E.g. **Living Word**

[Living Word - The Catholic Archdiocese of Canberra & Goulburn \(cgatholic.org.au\)](http://cgatholic.org.au)

There are many free, pay for subscription or one-time payment services which provide daily resources.

Univesalis

This is a limited free, full-service subscription or one-time payment App or Program for various platforms (Android, iPhone, Mac and Windows) which can be customised and provides the Daily Prayers, Order of Mass for the day, Readings at Mass and commentary, the Rosary, the Angelus, Saints days and other texts and readings.

<https://univesalis.com/index.htm>

Catholic Bible

There are numerous Catholic Bibles in book form, online or which can be downloaded to your mobile phone or computer.

E.g. New Jerusalem Catholic Bible from Google Play

<https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=new.jerusalem.bible.AOUOCEWWFIXDPVWS>

Catechism of the Catholic Church

The catechism aims at presenting an organic synthesis of the essential and fundamental contents of Catholic doctrine, as regards both faith and morals. Its principal sources are the Sacred Scriptures, the Fathers of the Church, the liturgy, and the Church's Magisterium. Available in book in book form, online or which can be downloaded to your mobile phone or computer.

E.g. Vatican Catechism of the Catholic Church [Catechism of the Catholic Church](#)

Courses and other resources

Too numerous to mention all. Some are free or for subscription:

Word on Fire Institute: [Resources - Word on Fire](#)

Sycamore: [What is Sycamore? - Sycamore](#)

FORMED: [Browse - FORMED](#)

Catholic Online Learning Resources: [Catholic Online Learning Resources](#)

Catholic Online: <https://www.catholic.org/>

Cath News: [Catholic News and Jobs in Australia](#)

Ascension Press: [Ascension \(ascensionpress.com\)](#) – Includes podcasts, video's and articles from Fr Mike Schmitz ("Bible in a Year" and "Catechism in a Year") and others.

Prayer (Adopted from a prayer of Confirmation from St. Theresa of Avila Church, Grovetown, GA)

Holy Spirit, strengthen us with your gifts of Wisdom, Understanding, Counsel, Fortitude, Knowledge, Piety, and Fear of the Lord, and serve as a disciple of Christ. Grant that we may grow into the fullness of the stature of Christ. Fill us with the joy of your presence. Increase in us the fruit of your Spirit.

Help us to experience and trust your dwelling within so that we can count on your guidance today and every day. Show us the way to help one another become better disciples of Jesus Christ, sharing your love with our world and with each person we meet.

Come, Holy Spirit! Come!

Amen