

A Liturgy for Catechumens

Authorised for use in the Diocese of Glasgow and Galloway

Notes

Among catechumens, a distinction is to be made between disciples on the Way of Faith, and those who have made the decision to be baptised.

When the ancient liturgical rites of Christian initiation were reformed in the sixteenth century, the remnant of the rite of making catechumens was lost or subsumed within the rite of Baptism.

In the Scottish Episcopal Church's rite, Holy Baptism (2006), Section 2 (God's Call) and Section 3 (Turning to Christ) represent part of the order for making a catechumen. The decision to be baptised is expressed in Section 2. But what is missing is the initial stage, prior to formal instruction, which leads to the decision to be baptised. The first part of the rite anciently happened at the door of the church, and included signing with the cross, the use of the oil of the catechumens, and the element of deliverance.

This short rite provides each of these elements, and allows adult catechumens to embark on the Way of Faith in a public way, and with the public support of their sponsors, as well as the whole of their local Christian community.

The first part of the rite picks up on elements of 'Welcome of Disciples on the Way of Faith' from Common Worship (2000), but with some different use of language. The signing and prayers take their lead from the pre-Reformation rite that would have been used in Scotland, but the pattern is greatly simplified and the language heavily adapted. The language of deliverance is no stronger than that used by Our Lord when he taught us to pray.

The signing was traditionally made on the head and the breast. For this purpose, 'breast' may be interpreted as somewhere about the nape of the neck. According to the most ancient custom, the signing with oil may be done by a person of the same sex as the catechumen.

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This short liturgy ideally takes place before the beginning of the principal celebration of the Eucharist on Sunday.

The catechumens are met at the church door and led inside. The liturgy takes place near the church door. The catechumens are accompanied by sponsors who introduce them with these words:

Brothers and sisters in Christ, it is our joy and privilege to present
N and N.

The Priest addresses the catechumens:

N and N, what is it that you seek?

We seek to learn the Way of Christ.

N and N, we welcome you with joy, and give thanks for God's
presence in your lives.

The Priest addresses the People:

N and N are among us as a sign of the journey of faith to which we
are all called. Will you support and pray for them?

With the help of God, we will.

The Priest addresses the sponsors:

Sponsors, will you accompany N and N on the journey of faith,
to support them with friendship, love and prayer?

With the help of God, we will.

God give you faith,
to share the good news of his kingdom.

God give you hope,
as you walk together with our Lord Jesus.

God give you love,
to serve N and N, whom he was the first to love.

God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit,
bless, sustain, and watch over you. **Amen.**

The Priest addresses the catechumens individually:

N, will you receive the sign of the cross,
the sign of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ,
the power of God to those who are being saved?

I will.

Receive the sign of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ upon your
head.

Receive the sign of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ upon your
breast.

The oil may be poured or the sign of the cross made.

The Priest either says one of these prayers over the all catechumens, or may say different prayers over each catechumen individually:

God of Abraham, God of Isaac, God of Jacob,
who led your children Israel out of the land of Egypt,
guarding them by day and by night;
Guard these, your children N and N:
deliver them from the powers of darkness,
surround them with your love,
guide them by your wisdom,
and lead them to the grace of Holy Baptism.
Through Jesus Christ our Lord,
who lives and reigns with you, and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

Or

God of heaven and earth,
God of angels and archangels,
God of patriarchs, prophets and apostles,
God of martyrs, and all the holy saints:
Look upon your servants N and N:
deliver them from the power of evil,
surround them with your love,
guide them by your wisdom,
and set their feet on the Way that leads to life.
Through Jesus Christ our Lord, etc. **Amen.**

Or

O God of our Lord Jesus Christ,
whom every tongue shall confess,
before whom every knee shall bend,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth.
Look upon your servants N and N:
deliver them from the power of evil,
surround them with your love,
guide them by your wisdom,
and set their feet on the Way that leads to life.
Through him who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life,
who lives and reigns with the you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever . **Amen.**

The disciples are presented with a bible or the gospels and/or the 'four texts' - (i) Jesus' Summary of the Law; (ii) the Lord's Prayer; (iii) the Apostles' Creed; (iv) the Beatitudes. The Eucharist begins.