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The Role of Scripture and Liturgy in Catholic Faith Formation

Week 4: September 25, 2008

- VIII. Preparation: The rite of enrollment in which we seek to inscribe our name into the book of life.
- A. Strengthening of faith: Purpose of catechesis! Beginning with Genesis and the literal sense and then moving into the spiritual sense
  - B. Purification: “The rust of the soul should be removed so that only the true metal remains.”
    - 1. Renunciation: Renounce Satan and all of his pompous circumstance and false worship. This was accompanied by the proper gesture of the hands, which in antiquity was a solemn pledge of an oath.
    - 2. Alliance: not just a pledge, but also a movement of prayer. This to be accompanied by the raising of your right hand. It was a profession of your faith.
- X. Baptismal Rite: By “rite”, we mean to speak of the practical arrangements made by the community for the basic type of worship received from God in faith. “Ritefully” speaking, this has its primary place in the Liturgy and subsequently in the Sacraments. It also expresses a particular way of doing theology and catechizing the faithful.
- A. *Consult Word of the Week on **Paradise***. Paradise is that place from which Adam was driven out and to which Baptism restores us.
  - B. “*Take off the old man*” is symbolic of our sinfulness and mortality. A configuration to the nakedness of the Cross. The stripping of Christ’s cloth is a figure of putting away the old cloth, a putting away of the dominion and reign of evil, a participating in the stripping and “pasch” of Christ.
    - 1. In addition to this nakedness, there is also a return to a primitive innocence, child like.
    - 2. In this return to primitive innocence, there is a recovery of the sentiment towards filial trust, which was the overarching blessing in Paradise!
  - C. Oil: Used as both a remedy to heal and an ointment to strengthen. The healing is proper to the removal of any traces of sin and the strengthening is proper to initiating the newly baptized Christian into the battle of good verses evil.
    - 1. Athletes in antiquity would use certain oils to strengthen their muscles. As Christians, we have entered a “holy contest” in which we are called to step up to the line of scrimmage and battle against the demons, thrusting ourselves into the divine battlefield!
  - D. Immersion, Emmersion, and the invocation of the Trinity: The rite of purification is followed by the immersion into the bath/water and

subsequent emmersion, or coming out, in which there is a communication of the Holy Spirit which makes man a child of God and a new creation.

1. Baptism is also the antitype of the Passion and Resurrection.
  2. (historical) The rite imitates, represents, and symbolizes the events of history past, (actual) but the content of the saving grace allows us to participate in it!
- E. Gal.3:27: “*You who have been baptized in Christ have put on Christ*”. Cloth in the ancient world was very symbolic. In some cases believed to actually have the spiritual forces that have surrounded its wearer...
1. Adam’s loss of robe is a desanctification...a reduction in the state of holiness
  2. The new cloth in Christ is about sanctification...a return to the paradise of the holy.
  3. This participation is a prefiguring of what is to come, the class of martyrs (white cloth).

- XI. Sphragis: The imposition of the sign of the cross on the forehead of the candidate at Baptism...read quotes from both Cyril and Gregory of Nazianzen. In ancient times, the Sphraigis designated the mark in which a mark was stamped, or else the mark made by the object. Therefore, Sphragis was the word for seal used to impress a mark on wax. *Consult Word of the Week on Typology*. Consider Paul’s usage in 2 Cor.1:22; Eph.1:13; 1 Cor.9:2...He uses the symbol to speak of the authentic sign of Christianity.
- A. Flock of Christ: Sphragis was the mark in which shepherds branded the beast of their flock in order to distinguish them. The Good Shepherd knows his own sheep and will defend them against those prowling.
1. Ownership: In Baptism, we are incorporated into the flock of Christ and we belong to Christ. In addition, just as the sheep graze upon the food that the Shepherd provides so we are called to be nourished in the field of sacraments.
  2. Protection: The sphragis, that is the mark that enables the master to recognize his own, is also a pledge of salvation. The Good Shepherd will protect what he sees rightfully belong to him
  3. Image and likeness: The seal also imprints upon the soul the very image of God, returning it to its original state...Gregory of Nyssa: “*the imprint of rebirth.*”
- B. Army of Christ: The Sphragis was also the sign that enlisted us into Christ’s army. Paul applies this theme in his own vision of Christian triumph.
1. St. Cyril of Jerusalem: “*We have been enlisted into the campaign of Christ...*”
  2. Tertullian: “*Military oath...Baptism was the military enlistment in the service of Christ.*”
- C. Slave of Christ: The Sphragis was also the sign of a slave. This could be applied to which a faithful servant belonged to God, as a slave would be to a master.

1. Sign of the Cross with everything that you do (read selection on Anthony of Padua)...Stigmata/Francis/Pio
- D. Circumcision: Sphragis introduces us into the theology of the covenant. Just as circumcision was the seal of alliance for the Old Israel so is Baptism a new pledge of allegiance to Christ in the New Covenant.
1. *Consult Word of the Week on **Covenant***
  2. Rom.4:11; Eph.1;13...Faith/Obedience and the Sphragis (the one eternal sphragis is met in the NC).
  3. New Creation...2 Cor.5:17; Gal.6:15...putting on the cloth of Christ.
    - a. Death and resurrection: The Eighth day and circumcision is about new life and a participation in the Christ's own Resurrection...Holy Spirit...Eph.1:13, 4:24;Roms.6:4, 7:6
- E. Irrevocability: Circumcision was once the sign between God and man...the new seal is Baptism, which communicates that which is *“the essential nature which God binds Himself to dispose of His blessings on favor of the man in with whom he makes a covenant”* (Danielou, 67).
1. What characterizes this covenant is its irrevocability...the infidelities of man can withdraw himself from the benefits of the promise, but he can never revoke was is etched onto his soul...Justice/Mercy