

INTRODUCING OUR NEW NAME AND LOGO

For more than twenty years you have known us as the North American Association for the Catechumenate or NAAC. Like many of you we have debated over the years about the use of the “catechumenate” word. We asked ourselves, “Does it convey something so special and unique that it should be preserved and used as a teaching tool to uniquely identify this ancient process? (Yes!) Is it another “church word” that speaks only to insiders? (Yes!) Would it be useful to unhook from notions about a “catechism” as a statement of church doctrine? (Yes!) How will people who do not yet know the catechumenate word find us and connect to us? (Hmmm.)

We are taking a leap into the new identity of JOURNEY TO BAPTISMAL LIVING. We are still the same organization. We still provide catechumenate training



through an intensive immersion experience. We still have an annual Gathering of practitioners to deepen and broaden the catechumenate within parish life and to connect and learn from others

So, come with us as we transition from NAAC to JBL and join us on the Journey to Baptismal Living!

Bev Piro
NAAC President

MAY EVENT IN ASHEVILLE



Explore the catechumenal process

near beautiful Asheville, North Carolina, in May. See page 5 for details.

Aidan Cavanaugh writes of the catechumenate:

“Catechesis helps the convert reassemble his or her personality and life around the new center

of gravity which is God revealed in Christ Jesus . . . attempts to seduce the convert’s initial, subjective, and largely incommunicable experience of faith into the public domain . . . instructs the convert in basic discipline for living a Christian life.”

CULTURE AND BAPTISM

We are increasingly aware that underneath the recovery of the catechumenate in our churches, there is an order (*ordo*) – a common pattern: formation in faith and baptizing in water together, leading to participation in the life of the community.¹ We could expand this pattern to include the broader life of the faith community to include proclamation/evangelization, conversion, profession of faith, water bath, meal and Christian formation/life in community.² In other words, the catechumenate is integral to the pattern of ecclesial life wherever the church engages the world with the gospel.

The Rev. F. Kabasele Lumbala, a liturgy scholar and teacher, describes baptism on Easter Eve in Zaire. In the stages prior to baptism, the candidates for baptism are confined for a period of asceticism and intense prayer, and then opening the mind with instruction and practice. (He narrates the baptism with exclusively masculine pronouns, so you may

want to read the account in a more inclusive way.)

After the readings and the homily —

- *Proclamation of faith and renunciation of Satan.*

- *Miming death-resurrection:* The candidates are told to lie down on mats; they are covered with banana leaves; a penitence of mourning song is struck up, or simply silence is kept. The priest moves forward holding the candidate's right arm. He raises it shouting in a strong voice: "Christ has risen from the tomb, living forever. You too, live with him, rise." As the candidate is getting up, Psalm 117 (118): 16-17 is sung: "The right hand of the Lord has risen, the right hand of the Lord has performed a feat of strength. No, I shall not die, I shall live to tell the Lord's works."

- *Water rite:* Water is poured on the candidate's head while the trinitarian formula is recited, and incense is wafted around the newly baptized.

- *Conferring the new name:* When

the priest asks the godfather to tell him the candidate's name, the godfather answers by reciting his godchild's genealogies, at the end of which he pronounces the name chosen for baptism as the "crowning" of his identity. Once the godfather has finished, the priest greets the newly baptized adult in a special way, solemnly pronouncing his new name aloud. He shakes his hand warmly. The name is no longer necessarily a Western Christian name of some saint. It can be chosen in the local culture, provided that it is in connection with God's gift.

- *Godfather's commitment:* The priest invites the godfather to commit himself to his role as guide in the godchild's faith. The godfather then takes hold of a tool of his trade (a hoe for farmers, a book for teachers or office workers, a measuring instrument for traders). He does a dance step or simply walks round his godchild, then come and takes up position in front of the priest,

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INTENSIVE TRAINING FOR THE ADULT CATECHUMENATE

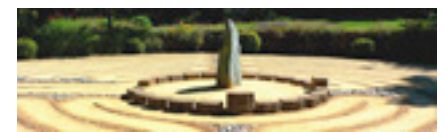
Experience and Reflection:
Learning the Way of the Adult
Catechumenate
June 27-29, 2017
Mercy Center, Burlingame, California

The Adult Catechumenate is transforming lives and congregations in the 21st century. Not another program, but a process responsive to the people who seek to learn more about the way of Christ or deepen their faith and spirituality within a community of worship, prayer, study, and

outreach.

A full training event will be held concurrently with the ecumenical Annual Gathering of catechumenate practitioners. There will be opportunities for both groups to overlap at meals, worship, and workshops.

This intensive immersion into the highly experiential process is the primary way the process is understood and embraced. Training is geared for congregational teams new to the Adult Catechumenate or for new team members.



Registration will open in January, and space is limited. Watch our website for more information coming soon. www.catechumenate.org.

Costs: Training Program \$200
Mercy Center Housing and Meals (Tuesday-Thursday) \$280
Commuter Fee includes meals (no breakfast) \$105
Extra Night-early arrival on Monday \$140

CULTURE AND BAPTISM

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to whom he holds out the tool. The priest blesses it, informing him that from now onwards all his activities will have to proclaim salvation in Christ.

- *Confirmation ointment*: The priest lays his hands on the baptized person and anoints him on the forehead.

- *Ointment with white kaolin (white clay)*: The priest puts some white kaolin on the candidate's arms, cheeks, and feet, telling him he is a new being with new status in the church and wishing him fruitfulness and prosperity in his baptismal commitment. He makes him pass in front of the congregation, saying: "Just as Christ has passed from this world to his Father, in the same way N. has passed from the bondage of sin to liberation, from death to life. What has just been fulfilled to him is what we have to live, all of us who have been baptized. Let us applaud N. and exult with jubilation." A song of joy and a hallelu-

jah are struck up. The offerings are presented and the eucharist takes place, during which the newly baptized will accede to the table of the Lord.³

Lumbala notes that in Bantu perception baptism restores the harmony lost in the disruption of creation by sin. The godfather's dance around the godchild is a sign of this harmonization. Following his narrative of adult baptism, he describes baptism of infants with additional insights into the relationship of rites and culture.

The point of sharing this account is to illustrate inculturation of the *ordo* of baptism. It invites NAAC practitioners to rejoice in the rich diversity of baptismal practice and to reflect on our own enactments of initiation.

Notes

1 "Report of the Consultation," in *Becoming Christian: The Ecumenical Implications of Our Common Baptism* (Faith and Order Paper



No. 184; ed. Thomas F. Best and Dagmar Heller; Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1999) §4, §19-20, pp. 75, 77.

2 See Susan K. Wood's "Is Baptism Complete or Part of a Larger Christian Initiation? A Dialogue with Lutheran Sacramental Theology" in *Seminary Ridge Review*, Spring, 2015 Volume 17, Number 2, p. 38.

3 "Black Africa and Baptismal Rites" in *Becoming Christian*, pp. 37-38.

Dan Benedict is an elder (presbyter) in The United Methodist Church. He has long been involved with NAAC and the catechumenate. He is a brother in The Order of Saint Luke and lives in Hawaii.

ANNUAL GATHERING FOR THE ADULT CATECHUMENATE



Turning Hearts toward God: The Lenten Practice of Baptismal Preparation

June 27-29, 2017

Mercy Center, Burlingame, California

In the San Francisco Bay Area

How does the Spirit turn our hearts toward God?
How do faith communities engage those to be baptized in this turning?

What maps and patterns of practice guide it?

We are fortunate to have presenters from the Roman Catholic and Reformed traditions to stimulate our reflection on the signs of lives being formed in Christ. Team RCIA's Nick Wagner and Diana Macalintal will mine the riches of the rites and mystagogical ap-

proaches of The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults. Presbyterian, Paul Galbreath, will explore how a broad appropriation of the sequences of the catechumenate engage hearts in turning toward God in action and behavior. As a community of worship, study, and prayer we will turn our minds and hearts to appreciate the deep structures of the Lenten journey for our own ministries of baptismal formation.

Registration will open in January 2017.

PARISH ADMINISTRATION AS CATECHESIS

Towards an *ἐκκλησία* (ecclesia) of Disciples
Parish Administration as Catechesis

(This is an extract from a longer paper by a student, Andrew Rampton, 3rd yr MDiv, at Huron University College, London, ON Canada, and is reprinted with permission.)

If catechesis is an ongoing process which encompasses the entire life of an *ecclesia* — an holistic process — then the day-to-day administration of the affairs of that community are just as suitable a place for catechesis as any...

Historically the church has espoused a top-down model of parish administration. In a parish the local priest, often styled the rector,¹ was responsible for, legally and often in practical terms, the administration of that parish: scheduling of events, necessary paperwork for the church and local secular governments, keeping a watchful eye on the condition of physical assets such as buildings, planning educational events or series, and the list goes on. Many clergy are comfortable with this sort of executive role, but it is not, theologically, the role of the clergy within a Christian community. At no point in the ordination rite does a priest promise to fill out paperwork or make sure the boiler is in running order. It may be the local priest or pastor's responsibility to see that these things are done, but that does not make it the local priest or pastor's responsibility to do them. Jesus himself had no trouble delegating work when needed. At the

feeding of the multitude Jesus identifies a way to feed everyone but needs the people organized and needs time to do his work. He entrusts the work of organizing the crowd to his disciples and, in short order, everyone is fed with food left over for more. (Matthew 14.13–21, Mark 6.31–44, Luke 9.10–17 and John 6.5–15)... With this in mind it falls to the priest to serve as the chief identifier of gifts within the *ecclesia* and to suggest and aid people in putting them to best use. Even as experienced Christians grow in their roles and develop their gifts, the opportunity presents itself for further catechesis as they take on greater or different responsibilities within the community...

The greatest shift in this proposed implementation of an ongoing, holistic catechesis is the shift from the rector, or whomever the chief leader of a community might be, from one who directs in an hierarchical fashion to one who guides, teaches, and delegates to those in the *ecclesia* who are capable of doing the necessary work. This is certainly the example set by Jesus among his disciples as related in scripture and one which the church today would do well to consider and make an effort to implement...

Regardless of where it starts, whether with parish administration or another aspect of Christian communal life, or what the particular models and outcomes employed by a given *ecclesia* might be, the restoration of the catechumenate is essential to the future of the church. The need for a lifelong catechetical process,



over the life of the *ecclesia* and not only individual members, as well as for descriptive insight rather than prescriptive instruction, is essential. As William Willimon points out, lifelong catechesis is essential in shaping disciples whose faith does not fail them because "They confront the complexity of life with bits and pieces of insight cobbled together from here or there. Or they try to live in an adult world with the faith that they received as a ten-year-old or rejected as a fourteen-year-old."² At the end of Matthew's gospel, Jesus indicates his trust in the disciples to continue the work of the church, but also promises to be with them all forever. He has delegated work and authority to those who have been sufficiently trained and taught to carry it out, but has not abandoned them or withdrawn his supervision and support in so doing. What does it say of us as individual Christians and as a church, an *ecclesia*, and our faithful commitment to make disciples of Jesus Christ in the world if we continue the long-standing model of prescriptive, instructive catechism which ends at confirmation?

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PARISH ADMINISTRATION AS CATECHESIS

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Ongoing catechesis at all levels of the life of an *ecclesia* develops a Christian culture among those who are involved. It may not be the dominant social culture of the place in which they live, but those involved will, hopefully, tend toward particular ways of resolving conflict, i.e. forgiveness; of eating, i.e. sharing freely as at communion in the spirit of agape; and of meeting the stranger, i.e. hospitably welcoming them and offering them a place in their *ecclesia* and their catechesis. An ongoing, shared, holistic catechetical prac-

tice within the church would be a profound step toward understanding Christianity as a movement and a way of life, rather than a received, unconsidered social norm as it has been in the West for so very long. While we cannot realize prophecy without God's cooperation, it is my firm belief that a move toward an *ecclesia* based on shared responsibility, shared teaching and learning, and a commitment to lifelong growth and development in faith will be a great aid to realizing the new creation described by Isaiah.

"For I am about to create new

heavens and a new earth..." Isa 65:17

NOTES

1 'Rector' is a direct appropriation into English of a Latin word of the same spelling, which refers to a guide, leader, helmsman, or pilot. Whenever this term came into use for the chief priest of a local Christian community it seems that the intention was for the priest not to serve as an executive officer, but as a leader facilitating work by the entire κκλησία.

2 Willimon, *Pastor: The Theology and Practice of Ordained Ministry*, 205.

LEARN HOW TO FORM DISCIPLES AT MAY TRAINING

Join us May 4-6, 2017 for the Catechumenate Training Institute "Come to the Water." Learn what it means to be a discipleship congregation at the upcoming institute being held at Lutheran Church of the Nativity in Arden (Asheville), North Carolina. Pastors, musicians, seminarians, and lay leaders are encouraged to attend this event being offered by the North American Association for the Catechumenate (NAAC) and sponsored in part by a grant from the North Carolina Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA).

Host pastor Mark Fitzsimmons indicates that this training is not only for Lutherans in North Carolina but is open to anyone including members of other denominations. Participants will experience all four stages of a faith formation

process that invites people into baptismal living. They will be immersed in the rites and rituals of this ancient-future Christian practice called the Catechumenate.

They will receive resources including a copy of *Go Make Disciples* (Augsburg Fortress) and learn how to introduce this journey of discipleship to their congregations.

Full scholarships are available for students and seminarians. For more information call Lutheran Church of the Nativity at 828-684-0352 or contact Pastor Mark

Fitzsimmons (mfitzsimmons@nativityarden.org) or Pastor Rachel Hoffman (rhoffman@nativityarden.org). One can download a brochure and/or register online at



the NAAC website: www.catechumenate.org

Above, Pastors Mark Fitzsimmons, Richel Hoffman, and Greg Hoffman invite you to join them in Asheville, North Carolina in May 2017

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