CENACLE SESSIONS
A Modern Mystagogia
A Guide for the Mystagogue

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After this last stage has been completed, the community and the neophytes move forward together, meditating of the Gospel, sharing in the eucharist, and performing works of charity. In this way they understand the paschal mystery more fully and bring it into their lives more and more. The period of postbaptismal catechesis or mystagogia is the final period of initiation of the newly baptized.

--(RCIA, §37)

To strengthen the first steps of the neophytes, it is desirable that they be helped carefully and familiarly in all circumstances by the community of the faithful, by their godparents, and by their pastors. Great care should be taken that they obtain full and joyful insertion into the life of the community.

--(RCIA, §235)
TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction...........................................................................................................v
Session I: Called and Chosen.................................................................1
Session II: Sight and Insight.................................................................5
Session III: Light and Life......................................................................9
Session IV: Water and Spirit.................................................................13
Session V: Bread and Life.......................................................................16
Session VI: Love and Commitment.........................................................20
Session VII: Power and Peace.................................................................23

Appendix A: Discussion-Starter Questions/Participants...A1
Appendix B: Model Letter of Invitation.................................................B1
Appendix C: General Background to the Gospel of John......C1
Appendix D: Scripture Texts Used in the Sessions..............D1
  Session I: Called and Chosen.......................................................D1
  Session II: Sight and Insight........................................................D3
  Session III: Light and Life.............................................................D6
  Session IV: Water and Spirit........................................................D8
  Session V: Bread and Life...............................................................D10
  Session VI: Love and Commitment...............................................D12
  Session VII: Power and Peace.......................................................D14

Appendix E: The Role of Memory......................................................E1
Appendix F: Suggestions for Music.....................................................F1
Appendix G: Evaluation Forms...........................................................G1
INTRODUCTION
The call for the restoration of the ancient catechumenate to the Church came in 1962 in Sacrosanctum Concilium (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy), the first document produced by the Fathers of the Second Council of the Vatican. Specific rites were not promulgated, however, until January 6, 1972, in the document Ordo initiationis christianae adultorum (The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults [RCIA]). The full implementation of the process has been quite slow, especially in Western, developed nations.

In the United States when the RCIA began to be used, it took the form -- more often than not -- of group instruction classes or convert classes to which public liturgical ceremonies were tacked on. For all the deficiencies in its implementation, however, the new approach was under way -- not in the way the framers of the RCIA document had envisioned nor in a form recognizable to Cyril of Jerusalem, John Chrysostom, Ambrose, or Augustine. But at least attempts were being made to restore the catechumenate.

Thanks to the work of RCIA pioneers, such as Christiane Brusselmans, the Reverend James B. Dunning, the Reverend Ron Lewinski, and a few others, the process of welcoming new Christians into the Church began to take form in hundreds of parishes, where over the last decade it has been transformed into a reality much closer to the experience of the early Church. These modern catechumenate "missionaries" insisted that the RCIA was a process, not an academic program; that it ultimately had more to do with conversion and formation than it did with facts and information; and that it was a spiritual journey for both seekers and believers rather than a new approach to adult education. Those involved in the direction of catechumenates listened, reacted, tried the "process approach," and usually became enthusiastic supporters.

However, 15 years have now passed since the promulgation of Ordo initiationis christianae adultorum, and there still remain gaps and weaknesses in the full implementation of the RCIA. All is not well with the RCIA process. This lassitude
is perhaps most evident in the postbaptismal period -- the mystagogia: it just does not seem to be happening.

An Effort to Meet the Need

Cenacle Sessions: A Modern Mystagogia has been developed in an effort to answer the pastoral need for an effective mystagogia in today's Church. Like the RCIA itself, Cenacle Sessions is designed to be flexible -- adaptable -- so that local communities can use it to match their pastoral situations.

The title for this process-based program has been chosen to show the connection between our modern neophytes and the first disciples who (as traditional belief holds) continued to meet in the Upper Room -- the Cenacle -- following the Good Friday-Easter Sunday experience. It was in the Cenacle that the disciples had celebrated the Lord's Supper; it was in the Cenacle that they first heard from the lips of Mary Magdalene that "I have seen the Lord!"; it was in the Cenacle that they gathered to pray and to remember; it was in the Cenacle that they experienced the presence of the Risen Jesus; it was in the Cenacle that they received power from on high; and it was from the Cenacle that they went forth to evangelize and to minister.

Cenacle Sessions aims to provide a similar atmosphere and experience for today's new disciples.

History of the Mystagogia

Before discussing the details of Cenacle Sessions, it is necessary to come to some understanding of the role of the mystagogia in the early Church.

Developed in the early centuries of the present era, the mystagogia originally consisted of instructions to the newly baptized given daily during Easter week. At these gatherings, the neophytes heard lectures, usually delivered by the bishop, concerning the meaning of the sacramental actions in which they had participated at the Easter Vigil.

The history of the development of the mystagogia -- like the history of the entire catechumenate -- is sketchy. The process evolved in disparate geographical locations over long periods of time. What we do know of the mystagogical lectures is found in the texts of the addresses of the mystagogues themselves.
For instance, in A.D. 348, Cyril of Jerusalem delivered a series of mystagogic lectures (only five of which are still in existence) in a small chapel at the site of the Holy Sepulcher. Three of these instructions dealt with baptism/chrismation, one with eucharistic doctrine, and one with the eucharistic liturgy.

Often the mystagogical instructions also focused on the importance of sustaining the conversion experience. In A.D. 389, John Chrysostom, recognizing that baptism and entrance into full communion with the Church did not represent the end of the journey but only a milestone along the way, told the neophytes of the Church of Constantinople:

... Do everything and act everywhere as permanently dwelling in Christ, creator of the universe and master of our nature. And when I say Christ, I say also the Father and the Holy Spirit.

... It is right that those who have Christ, not as represented by a garment but as permanently residing in their souls, and with Christ [they also have] his Father and the presence of the Holy Spirit [permanently residing in their souls], give proof of a firm confidence and show everyone, by the correctness of their conduct and the probity of their lives, that they bear the royal image.

... Imitate him, you also, I implore you, and you will be called neophytes not only for two, three, ten, or twenty days, but you will still merit this name after ten, twenty, or thirty years, and in fact for all of your lives. (Baptismal Catecheses [Catecheses ad illuminandos] 4,4; 5,20; 4,17)

Challenges of the Mystagogia Today

The modern Church is having difficulties implementing an effective mystagogia.

A natural lethargy seems to set in on clergy, catechists, parishioners, neophytes, and sponsors following the rigorous and the oftentimes frenetic activities of Lent, Holy Week, and the Easter Vigil. Everyone is just plain tired (many would choose a stronger word here -- perhaps exhausted).

The richness of the liturgical rites of the Easter Vigil seems to communicate that this is the climax, or peak, or destination of the catechumenal journey. Clergy and RCIA team members often reenforce this perception by presenting
neophytes with certificates that are often mistakenly seen as diplomas, holding festive receptions in their honor following the Easter Vigil rites, and taking other actions that say -- intentionally or not -- "You have arrived! It is over."

Often, the very act of handing out typed schedules of the inquiry and catechumenal sessions -- especially when the last item listed is the Easter Vigil -- sends a strong message to the neophytes that the celebration of the Easter sacraments is their destination. Pastoral staffs need to emphasize from the very first meeting that the journey of faith really is a journey and that there is no destination on this side of the grave. There may be rest stops, oases, and side trips, but only the Lord is the final destination. As Psalm 62 tells us: "In God alone there is rest for my soul." Augustine also pointed this out in one of his prayers in the Confessions, "... our hearts are restless until they rest in you, Lord." Belonging to the Church is a matter of always being restless, always staying on the move -- on the move even after the Easter Vigil.

Finally, the key element that gave rise to the need for a mystagogic period in the early Church no longer exists. This key element was the disciplina arcani, or the discipline of the secret.

The Discipline of the Secret

The term mystagogia was borrowed directly from the pagan mystery religions of the time and means literally a "leading through the mysteries." In the early days, the Church observed the discipline of the secret, which required strict silence from believers concerning the rites and beliefs surrounding the initiation sacraments of baptism, chrismation (confirmation), and eucharist. The sacraments were called the mysteries then; they are referred to as mysteries in the Eastern Catholic and Orthodox churches to this day.

It was the discipline of the secret that barred outsiders from the assembly of the faithful and required catechumens and the elect to leave the worshiping assembly before the eucharist was celebrated. It was the discipline of the secret that gave that portion of the Mass we now call the "Liturgy of the Word" its former name: "Mass of the Catechumens."
The discipline of the secret was probably enjoined on believers for two major reasons:

- Christianity was an illegal religion; its members were subject to persecution, including death. Therefore extreme care was taken when admitting new members. Were they sincere or were they spies? If their conversions were sincere, would they be strong and deep, or would they apostatize at the first signs of persecution?

- Withholding certain pieces of information was intuitively recognized as good psychology and pedagogy. A fifth-century bishop quotes Aristotle as saying, "those undergoing initiation [in the mystery religions] are not expected to gain knowledge but an experience and a disposition."

It seems that the early bishops of the Church -- along with those involved in the pagan mystery cults -- "discovered" the value of what we call today "experiential learning" techniques. The "awe-inspiring rites" (as John Chrysostom referred to them) were to be experienced first, then explained.

Some scholars suggest that the discipline of the secret was adopted directly from the pagan mystery cults and was the Church's way of competing with them. This theory, however, has been challenged regularly by other scholars.

Whatever the actual genesis of the practice, the disciplina arcani created the need and constituted the very reason for the development and implementation of the mystagogia.

Liturgical Theory, Ancient and Modern Practice

Contemporary liturgical theory is divided on the question of whether or not to prepare candidates for the initiation sacraments by explaining the rites/symbols/liturgical actions in some detail prior to the ceremonies themselves. (One wonders whether our contemporary practice of catechizing children in preparation for their sacramental celebrations builds in a reflex action that causes us to do the same thing with adults.)

At any rate, most parishes have already decided the question: the rites and teachings are explained -- usually in some detail -- beforehand. It is probably not reasonable to think
that the majority of pastors, catechumenate directors, and catechists will "purify" their educational and liturgical theories by changing their method of sacramental catechesis. Additionally, it may not even be appropriate in today's Church to adopt this practice just because it was done during the first six centuries of the Church. The antiquity of a practice does not by any means make it automatically a desirable practice today.

Purpose of the Modern Mystagogia?

Regardless of which theories and practices eventually become normative in the Church, we know two things for certain: the discipline of the secret no longer exists and catechesis on the mysteries prior to their celebration is commonplace today.

Both of these facts raise real questions concerning the appropriateness of the mystagogia itself and the content of the mystagogic period:

- Is the mystagogia still a relevant part of the initiation process?
- Has the Church's contemporary experience of integrating newcomers rendered this ancient period of reflection obsolete?
- Are we expecting too much of modern-day neophytes?

Some parishes, tailoring the RCIA process to the nine- or ten-month school year, use the seven-week Easter season to finish what properly ought to have been the content of inquiry classes. Others use it as a time to evaluate the entire process -- another signal to neophytes that "the journey is over." Others experience diminishing attendance during the Easter season as neophytes discover that the content of the sessions is without much substance. Still other parishes opt for one or two gatherings during the Easter season, thus breaking the momentum established during the catechumenate -- and suffering a loss of participation.

As one who has worked with the RCIA process for a number of years, I believe that the mystagogia is not only relevant but vital to the complete and effective initiation of new Christians. Our contemporary methods of implementing the mystagogia (or, worse, our total disregard of this period of initiation) and the lack of substantial content of the mystagogia have rendered this period ineffective and virtually useless.

It is pastorally important that the mystagogia be implemented
in effective ways because this period of reflection is actually, as Robert Duggan has pointed out:

the gateway to the rest of life as a fully incorporated member of the Church. If the RCIA is to be an instrument of substantial, lasting reform and renewal of parish life, then the mystagogia will have to play a crucial role in establishing the pattern according to which conversion will be lived over and over by each and every member of the community. ("Mystagogy and Continual Conversion: RCIA Success Stories." Christian Initiation Resources Reader. Vol. IV: Mystagogia and Ministries, 1984, p. 30.)

During the inquiry and catechumenal periods, we are very careful to see that community is built, fellowship is extended, and tender, loving care is given. These aspects of the process are universally recognized as vital and important. How is it then that we abandon the neophytes at our baptismal fonts and immersion pools?

Need for a Modern Mystagogia

Here lies the source of Cenacle Sessions. Here lies the impetus to develop an effective mystagogia for our time. An effective mystagogia is called for because our new sisters and brothers, still wet with the life-giving baptismal waters and still enveloped with the sweet fragrance of the holy chrism, are often left alone, each to find her or his own way into the fabric of the life of our parishes. And many are not able to find that way by themselves.

If the mystagogia serves no other purpose than that of softening for the neophytes the psychological shock of being forced out of the catechumenal nest and of integrating them easily into the community, then such a process is not only a "nice" way to bridge this transitional period but it is an absolute necessity demanded by Christian love and concern.

Defining a Modern Mystagogia

Today, in the absence of the discipline of the secret and with the practice of catechizing the elect about the "mysteries" before they experience the sacraments, we seem to have no real reason for "leading our neophytes through the mysteries" after Easter. Still, we recognize that there is a definite need for a reflective, transitional, integrative process to help neophytes adjust to their new identities.
How, then, are we to define a modern mystagogia?

I propose that a twentieth-century American mystagogia should be defined and understood as simply this: a savoring time.

A modern mystagogia should be a time used not so much for explication as for meditation, not so much for tying up loose ends as for tying bonds of love to the neophytes, and not so much a time of signing up neophytes for this or that ministry as for exploring with them the world of service into which they have so recently entered.

A modern mystagogia is a time to savor the marvelous things the Lord has accomplished in the individual lives of the neophytes and in the corporate life of the faith community.

A modern mystagogia is a time to savor the gifts of the new members and to help them find their individual places to which the Lord beckons them in their new family.

The Process in General

Each of the seven Cenacle Sessions -- meant to be held once each week during the Easter season -- is structured to include a period of prayer, a time of remembering the ritual experiences of the RCIA, input from the mystagogue, and a discussion/group process activity. Suggestions for the involvement of the neophytes in the following Lord's Day parish eucharist, through which they can continue to be a visible presence to the community, are also included as an option.

The content of the sessions consists of calling upon each person's power of memory and linking those memories to the RCIA Lenten rites and to selections from the Gospel of John, a gospel that many scholars believe was written -- at least in part -- for neophytes of the late first century. Many scholars believe that the author of the Fourth Gospel put his experiences of Jesus into writing because of his concern that the deeper message and cosmic meaning of Jesus as Word, Lord, and Source of Life was being lost to neophytes and to their communities with the passage of time and with the dying of the last of the witnesses who had known Jesus in the flesh and as Risen Lord prior to his return to the Father.

Setting, Environment

Ideally, the group (or groups) of neophytes should be convened in a home (or at least in a nonclassroom setting), and not more than two-thirds of the group should consist of
neophytes. The balance of the group should comprise members of the neophytes' new faith community. The hope here is that these sessions will help introduce the neophytes to more members of the local faith community, thus establishing relationships that will alleviate the abandoned-at-the-font syndrome. The mixed membership will also help the group serve as a "training ground" for members of the community who might be interested in serving as mystagogues in future years.

The Cenacle has come to be understood as the Upper Room of the Last Supper and of the descent of the Holy Spirit. The simple meaning of a cenacle, however, is a small dining room usually on an upper floor of a house. It seems all the more appropriate, then, that we call this particular modern mystagogical savoring process Cenacle Sessions.

A Final Word

The author of the Fourth Gospel set forth his purpose in these words: "These [signs of Jesus] have been recorded so that you may continue to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and so that through this faith you may have life in his name." (Jn 20:31)

It is our hope that Cenacle Sessions will provide the vehicle through which John's purpose may be realized in our own day: that our neophytes may continue in their belief in Jesus as Christ and Lord and that they may be immersed in that Source of Life who is Jesus.

Praised be Jesus Christ!

William R. Bruns
First Sunday of Lent, 1987
THE SESSIONS
SESSION I: CALLED AND CHOSEN

Environment:

You may wish to consider having vining plants, such as philodendron, arranged as a centerpiece in the meeting room. Additionally, you may wish to have on hand some newly rooted individual vines that participants could take home with them to plant and watch grow.

7:30  Introductions

Introduce yourself if everyone does not know you. Ask all participants to introduce themselves and suggest that each person identify her- or himself as a new member of the Church, a sponsor, a parish member, etc.

7:45  Introduction of the Mystagogia

Introduce the concept of Cenacle Sessions (see introduction). Emphasize that these sessions are not a scripture study, but that scripture will be used as a way of deepening our faith commitment and of strengthening our relationships with the Lord and with one another.

Explain to participants the general outline of the sessions:

- Prayer
- The Remembering (see Appendix E)
- Scripture
- Discussion
- Simple refreshments, socializing
- Suggestions for involvement at Sunday Liturgy (optional)

8:15  Prayer:

(It is assumed that the mystagogue is the prayer leader. While this is not absolutely necessary, it would probably be wise for the first few sessions to set the tone and pace and to guide participants in The Remembering.)

Opening Song:

(See suggestions in Appendix F.)

Opening Prayer:

Spontaneous by mystagogue
The Remembering:

Recall for the participants the Rite of Election and the Call to Continuing Conversion as celebrated in your parish (or with your bishop, if that is your custom) this past Lent. Elements you may wish to bring to mind:

- Being called by name from out of the assembly
- The response of the catechumens, candidates, sponsors.
- Signing of the Book of the Elect
- Music that has come to be special to the neophytes -- perhaps a recurring hymn used throughout Lent or the catechumenate or a special piece used at this particular rite (you may wish to use this as the music at the beginning of the prayer time)
- The reaction of the congregation.

Ask participants to try to bring to mind their feelings at that rite: anxiety, eagerness, joy, fear, happiness, tearfulness, being deeply touched . . . .

Allow silent time or time with music playing.

Scripture Reading: John 15:1-17

Prayers of Petition or Thanksgiving:

Voice one or two prayers yourself, then invite spontaneous prayers from the participants.

Closing Song:

(See suggestions, Appendix F.)

8:30 Discussion:

Here are possible discussion-starter questions. Your group may use all of them; you may use one of them; you may use none of them. The task is not to "answer the questions." The task at hand is to discuss The Remembering and the scripture.

1. What was your predominant feeling during The Remembering?
2. What symbolic action from the Rite of Election/Call to Continuing Conversion spoke most powerfully to you? Why?

3. What did it mean to you to move from the status of catechumen to that of elect? (If some members of the group had already been baptized: What did it mean to you to be called by the Church to continuing conversion?)

4. How do you feel about that designation: elect?

5. In the scripture reading, Jesus describes himself as the vine and his followers as the branches. What do you think he was trying to tell us in that metaphor?

6. Jesus told his followers that they didn't choose him, but that he chose them. Do you feel chosen by the Lord?

7. Who chooses whom?

8. Are there people who never get chosen by Jesus?

9. In the scripture reading, Jesus told his followers that he would call them friends. Is that a word you would use to describe your relationship with Jesus? Why? If not, what word would best describe your relationship with him?

10. What does it really mean in the Church "to love one another"? What do you think is really required of us on a day-to-day practical level?

11. Do you believe that we are required to lay down our lives for each other? What does that mean?

9:15 Closing Prayer:

You may wish to close with a spontaneous prayer or to adopt a common prayer to recite together at the end of each session. If you have vines for participants, you may wish to give them to them at this time.
Suggestions for Next Sunday's Liturgy:

The Gospel for Easter II is John 20:19-31: Thomas the Doubter. Both old and new Christians should be strengthened with the words of Jesus in this passage: "You believe because you can see me. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe."

Ask for one or two volunteers from among the neophytes to address the assembly on Sunday and briefly tell the congregation how they feel about being a new member of the Church and the parish.
SESSION II: SIGHT AND INSIGHT

Environment:

Use an attractive urn, decanter, or cruet of olive oil as a central symbol for this session. Also have on hand a small bowl into which you can pour the oil during the prayer and from which you will anoint the participants.

7:30

Prayer:

Opening Song:

(See suggestions, Appendix F.)

Opening Prayer:

Spontaneous by the mystagogue

The Remembering:

Recall for participants one or more of the Scrutinies and/or the Penance Service celebrated with them during Lent. If your parish had the elect render the Creed, recall that. Particular elements you may wish to bring to mind:

Scrutinies with anointings/ephphtha:

• The anointing with oil
• Prayers of exorcism
• The opening of the mouth and ears/the touch of the priest
• Kneeling (bowing) during the prayers of exorcism
• Special music

Scrutinies with the rendering of the Creed:

• The receiving of the Creed
• The giving back (reciting, handing back a scroll, etc.) of the Creed
• Special music

Scrutinies/Penance Service:

• Celebrating the Sacrament of Reconciliation for the first time
• Confessing sins to the priest -- face to face or anonymously.
• Special music
Ask the participants to try to bring to mind their feelings at these rites: fear, relief, joy, acceptance, forgiving, being forgiven, healing.

Scripture Reading: John 9:1-41

Anointing:

Background music is suggested during the following anointing ceremony. "Veni, Sancte Spiritus" (Taizé) is especially appropriate and works well.

Mystagogue:

Slowly pour some of the oil into the bowl. Then, extending one or both hands over the oil say the following or similar prayer:

God, my Lord Almighty, the Father of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, stretch out your hand upon the fruit of this olive with which you anointed the priests and prophets of old.

With your own hand send down into this oil the power of the Holy Spirit so that all who shall be anointed with it may be kept safe from diseases and healed of all sicknesses; and may every Satanic adversary be exterminated through its power; make it an unction of your own grace through the name and through the power of our Lord Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit.

--Amen.

[Adapted from ancient Christian Egyptian prayer found in The Statutes of the Apostles]

After blessing the oil, proceed to each participant and anoint him or her on the head and/or on the hands. Be liberal when applying the oil, and encourage the anointed to rub the oil into their skin. You may anoint in silence or you may wish to pray spontaneously, asking God's strength and healing for each person. When all have been anointed, ask one of the participants to anoint you.

Allow for several minutes of silent prayer following the anointing.
Prayers of Petition or Thanksgiving:

The mystagogue should voice one or two prayers first, then invite the spontaneous prayers of the others.

Closing Song:

(See suggestions, Appendix F.)

Discussion:

8:15

1. What was your predominant feeling as you remembered the Lenten rites?

2. What specific action from those rites touched you the most? What did it "say" to you?

3. To some people, exorcisms, even the simple ones performed in these rites, seem "out of place" in today's world? How do you feel about them?

4. Some churches today do not require the profession of a specific creed by their members. Yet, the Roman Catholic Church continues to adhere to these ancient formulas of belief. How do you feel about that?

5. If you apply the scripture reading about the man who was born blind to today, who or what would you see in the various roles:

   --the blind man?
   --the parents?
   --the religious leaders?
   --the neighbors?

6. Some scholars believe that John was saying in this story that Jesus himself is much like the Pool of Siloam. Why do you think this might be so? (Remember, John tells us that Siloam means "one who has been sent.")

7. The religious leaders threw out the man born blind (they "ejected" him). Do you think this might mean that they excommunicated him? Has anyone rejected you because you of your Christian beliefs or because you joined the Catholic Church?
9:00  Closing Prayer:

You may wish to close with a spontaneous prayer or with an agreed-upon common prayer.

Refreshments

9:30  Dismissal

Suggestions for Next Sunday's Liturgy:

The Gospel for Easter III for all three cycles deals with Jesus being recognized at table — Emmaus (A), A fish supper in the Cenacle (B), Breakfast of bread and fish on the shore of the Sea of Tiberias (C).

Have the neophytes take up a second collection for the hungry or organize the collection of canned goods at all the Masses. Have them bring up the gifts, including the money or canned goods, at the Offertory.
SESSION III: LIGHT AND LIFE

Environment:

The room should be dimly lit as participants arrive. As soon as everyone is seated and you are ready to begin, all lights should be turned off. Prayer begins in total darkness. A Christ-candle, large taper, or the parish Easter candle should be ready in a separate room. You may wish to have neophytes bring their baptismal candles from the Easter Vigil or you may wish to provide them with small tapers or with votive lights that they can take home with them.

7:30

Prayer: Lucernarium (Light Service)

Begin in total darkness. Allow group to experience the darkness for some time (two minutes, perhaps).

The mystagogue or other minister (cantor) enters the room with the lighted candle. At entrance to room, the candle is raised and the minister chants: "Christ our Light," as in the Easter Vigil service. Group responds: "Thanks be to God." This is done three times, as in the vigil service of light, with the cantor intoning the third "Christ our Light" after placing the candle where it will remain for the rest of the evening. Small candles are lighted after the first, second, and third intonations.

If possible, have a cantor sing the Exsultet; or another suitable hymn could be sung by all.

The Remembering:

Recall for the participants the Easter Vigil service of the New Fire and the Paschal Candle. Particular elements you may wish to bring to mind:

• Gathering in the darkened church
• The bonfire outside the church
• Lighting of the Easter candle
• The procession into the church with the lighted Easter candle
• The Exsultet
• The smell of incense and smoldering wicks (when the congregation's candles were extinguished)
Scripture Reading: John 1:1-5; 9-10; 8:12; 28-29; 12:31; 35-36

Prayers of Petition or Thanksgiving:

The mystagogue should voice one or two prayers, then invite spontaneous prayers from others.

Ancient Prayer of the Lucernarium

Bishop (Mystagogue): The Lord be with you.

R: And also with you.

B: Let us give thanks to the Lord, our God.

R: It is right to give God thanks and praise.

B: To God are due greatness and majesty and glory.

We thank you, O God, through your servant Jesus Christ, our Lord, for enlightening us by showing us the incorruptible light.

The day is over and we have come to the fall of night. We have been gladdened by the light of day that you have created for our joy.

And now that we lack not light for the evening, we hymn your holiness and glory, through your only Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord, through whom is given to you, with him and the Holy Spirit, glory, power, and honor now and for ever and ever.

R: Amen!

Hymn:

(See suggestions, Appendix F.)

8:00 Discussion:

1. What was your predominant memory of the Easter Vigil Service of the Light? Why?

2. Did any one symbol or symbolic action from this portion of the Easter Vigil strike you as particularly powerful? [Some possible responses: light/darkness, Easter candle, fire, procession into dark church, glow in the
3. In the scripture reading, Jesus claims to be the light. What do you suppose he meant by using that image?

4. The light is described as life in the scripture reading. How can light be life?

5. How is Jesus light for you?

6. Can you give an example of how Jesus or belief in Jesus has been light in your life?

7. Jesus said that when he is lifted up, he would draw all people to himself. One meaning of "being lifted up" is crucifixion. Do you think there might be other meanings? What might they be?

8. Do you think the Church is generally seen by others as comprising "children of light." If yes, in what ways? If no, why not?

9:00 Closing Prayer:

You may wish to close with a spontaneous prayer or with an agreed-upon common prayer.

Refreshments

9:30 Dismissal

Suggestions for Next Sunday's Liturgy:

Easter IV is "Good Shepherd Sunday," when the Gospel (in all three cycles) deals with Jesus as the good shepherd or the sheepgate.

Surprise your local "shepherds" -- pastor, associate pastors, pastoral associates, catechumenate (RCIA) director, etc., during the Mass with some gesture of appreciation for all the loving shepherding he or she has done for you and for the community.

This could be as simple as a public thank you delivered by one of the neophytes from the pulpit.
(perhaps after the opening prayer and before the first reading -- make arrangements with the lector). Or, you might wish to plan something more elaborate -- a brunch after Mass or a symbolic gift brought up with the other gifts in the Offertory Procession. Be creative.
SESSION IV: WATER AND SPIRIT

Environment:

Have a pitcher of water and a large bowl as the centerpiece of your prayer area. Use the Christ-candle from the last session or have another large, handsome candle situated close to the pitcher and water.

7:30

Prayer:

Opening Song:

(See suggestions, Appendix F.)

Opening Prayer:

Spontaneous by mystagogue

The Remembering:

Recall for participants the moment of baptism at the Easter Vigil. Ask those present who were already baptized and were received into full communion at the vigil and others present who were baptized as adults to remember their own baptisms as well as the baptisms that they witnessed at the Easter Vigil. Particular elements that you may wish to bring to mind:

- The water
- The flow of the water if a fountain or waterfall was present
- The feel of the water as it coursed over the person's head
  [What it felt like to be immersed, if this was an experience of any of the participants]
- The symbolism of death and rebirth, of cleansing.

Scripture Reading: John 3:1-21

Ritual Action:

At the conclusion of the reading, wait in reflective silence for several minutes. Then, the mystagogue should rise, go to the pitcher
and bowl, slowly pour the water into the bowl while pronouncing this blessing:

We humbly ask you, great God of eternal majesty, that through our Lord Jesus Christ, his Word, his Power, and his Wisdom, you may send down the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Adoption, upon this water, so that in its use your children will remember their baptisms when all sins were washed away and when they died with the Lord Jesus and rose up with him into new life as your daughters and sons.

We ask this of you, Father, through the same Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, through all ages of ages.

---Amen.

(Adapted from a prayer for the Blessing of the Font from The Ambrosian Manual, a liturgical book of the tenth century.)

Invite participants to approach bowl individually, take water, and bless themselves with it in memory of their baptism.

If possible, have music playing in the background or sing a hymn during this time. Allow music/singing to continue for several minutes after last person has blessed him- or herself.

Prayers of Petition or Thanksgiving:

The mystagogue should voice one or two prayers, then invite spontaneous prayers for others.

Closing Song:

(See suggestions, Appendix F.)

8:00 Discussion:

1. Nicodemus just doesn't seem to understand Jesus' words about baptism. Did you ever wonder why it was so necessary for people to be baptized?
2. Nicodemus comes to Jesus "in the night." Why do you suppose he did that? Did you ever feel as though you were coming to Jesus in the night -- sort of covering your bets in case you decided Christianity wasn't for you?

3. When did you decide to be baptized? What brought you to that decision?

4. What were you feeling at the moment of baptism? Right afterwards?

5. If you were immersed, could you tell the group what that felt like? What did it mean to you?

6. The scripture for this session speaks again of Jesus as the light who has come into the world. Has the light of Jesus caused you to see things differently since your baptism? What things? In what way are they different now? In what ways are you different now?

7. In this translation, there is the phrase, "Whoever does the truth comes out into the light." "Does the truth" seems an unusual phrase? Do you think it has a different meaning than "speaks the truth"?

9:00 Closing Prayer:

You may wish to close with a spontaneous prayer or with an agreed-upon common prayer.

Refreshments

9:30 Dismissal

Suggestions for Next Sunday's Liturgy:

With the parish liturgy commission and the pastor, plan to have the neophytes who were baptized at the Easter Vigil assist the presider in an Asperges (Sprinkling) rite at Mass.

It should be made clear to the congregation that the neophytes, as those who have most recently been touched by the life-giving waters of baptism, are very appropriate members of the parish community to assist in this rite.
SESSION V: BREAD AND LIFE

Environment:

Arrange for your centerpiece a plate with bread (a freshly baked loaf, dinner rolls, pita, matzoth), a decanter of wine (or grape juice), one goblet, a candle, flowers.

7:30

Prayer:

Opening Song:

(See suggestions, Appendix F.)

Opening Prayer:

Spontaneous by the mystagogue

The Remembering

Recall for participants the Church's memories of the Last Supper . . . a Seder meal . . . how Jesus took bread, pronounced the berakah (or blessing): "Blessed are you, O Lord our God, King of the Universe, who brings forth bread from the earth . . . . How Jesus then told his followers to take the bread and to eat it . . . that this was his body. How Jesus took a cup of wine and offered the blessing: Blessed are you, O Lord our God, King of the Universe, who gives us wine from the grapes. . . . Then how Jesus told them to drink of the cup that was his blood of the new covenant, blood that would be shed for all. . . . and how Jesus told his followers to do these things in his memory.

We remember.

Recall for the participants their first communion -- at the last Easter Vigil or many, many years ago . . . that very first time they became intimately united with the Lord in holy communion.

Ask the participants to try to recapture their feelings at that moment.

Scripture Reading: John 6:34-38, 44, 47-69
**Ritual Action:**

(Instrumental music might be playing in the background)

The mystagogue takes the plate of bread, breaks the bread into sufficient pieces for the group and passes the plate to the nearest person saying:

"We remember."

Each person, upon taking a piece of bread, says:

"We remember."

All consume the bread.

After everyone has eaten his or her piece of bread, the mystagogue pours wine from the decanter into the goblet (more goblets may now be brought out and filled if there is a need not to share the one cup). The mystagogue lifts the goblet as for a toast and says:

"Lord Jesus, to whom should we go? You have the words of eternal life, and . . .

We remember."

If sharing one cup, each person raises the goblet in a toast and says:

"We remember."

Each person then passes the goblet to the next person who also offers the toast.

(If using individual goblets, the group as a whole should return the mystagogue's toast with "We remember."

Allow several minutes of reflective silence with or without background music.

**Prayers of Petition or Thanksgiving:**

The mystagogue should voice one or two prayers then invite spontaneous prayers from others.
Closing Song:

(See suggestions, Appendix F.)

8:15 Discussion:

1. Can you describe your feelings the first time you received holy communion?

2. In what ways is the Mass important to you?

3. The Fathers of the Church -- those early bishops of the first seven centuries -- had a very literal understanding of the bread and wine of the eucharist being the body and blood of Christ. That understanding was based upon the parts of the Gospel of John we read at this session and on the accounts of the Last Supper in Matthew, Mark, and Luke. How do you understand the presence of Jesus in the eucharist?

4. What do you think Jesus felt like when "many of his disciples went away and accompanied him no more"?

5. Have you ever been so upset with the Church that you thought you ought to leave, but found that you were with Peter: "Lord, to whom shall we go?" Would you be able to tell the group about that experience?

6. Jesus described himself as "the light of the world" and he said that that light was life. In this session's scripture reading, Jesus calls himself "the bread of life" and "the living bread." What is he trying to tell us?

9:00 Closing Prayer:

You may wish to close with a spontaneous prayer or with a common prayer of the group's choosing.

Refreshments:

You may wish to serve more "bread snacks" -- crackers, matzoth, etc., with cheese. And more wine. But of course!
9:30  Dismissal

Suggestions for Next Sunday's Liturgy:

Ask for two more volunteers from the neophytes to address the assembly and tell the people of their feelings about and appreciation of the Mass and the eucharist.
SESSION VI: LOVE AND COMMITMENT

7:30  

Prayer:

Opening Song:

(See suggestions, Appendix F.)

Opening Prayer:

Spontaneous by the mystagogue

The Remembering:

Recall for participants one of the Scrutinies and the giving over of the Lord Prayer (some parishes will have combined these rites).

Particular elements you may wish to bring to mind:

• The kneeling (bowing) during the prayer
• The difficult things in my life that the Lord and the community were bringing into the light.
• The questions and doubts that I had as I searched and searched.
• The time I almost told Father or the catechumenate director or my sponsor that I was going to quit because I just could not give up: [ask group members to silently fill in this blank for themselves].
• The handing over of the Church's "table prayer," the Lord's Prayer. How beautiful it was to really listen to the words as we prayed it together so slowly.
  • how enthusiastically I can pray that God's kingdom will come.
  • how difficult it is sometimes to say "thy will be done."
  • how eagerly I ask for forgiveness for my trespasses
  • how hard it is for me to forgive the people who have hurt me ...
    especially people in my family or in the Church.

Scripture Reading: John 21:14-22
Prayers of Petition or Thanksgiving:

The mystagogue should voice one or two prayers, then invite the spontaneous prayers of others.

Closing Song:

(See suggestions, Appendix F.)

8:00 Discussion:

1. Why was Jesus always asking difficult questions?

2. Were you ever uncomfortable during the Scrutinies? Can you tell the group about that?

3. Poor Peter. How do you think he felt?

4. What do you think Jesus meant when he told Peter to feed his lambs, look after his sheep, and feed his sheep? Is this a message for the Pope and bishops, or do you think that Jesus might have been talking to all Christians?

5. When Peter became curious about (and maybe a bit jealous of) the Beloved Disciple, Jesus rather bluntly told him: "What's it to you? You are to follow me." What does that say to you for the living of day-to-day life?

6. It's easy to say, "Jesus, I love you." Why is it so difficult to follow through with the action which that love implies?

7. How do you think that the Church feeds the lambs and takes care of the sheep today?

8. Jesus' followers are often seen in scripture as lambs or sheep. How do you feel about that image? In what ways is it appropriate? When might it not be appropriate?

9:00 Closing Prayer:

You may wish to close with a spontaneous prayer or with a common prayer of the group.

Refreshments
9:30 Dismissal

Suggestions for Next Sunday's Liturgy:

Ask members of the group to identify a Church organization or group that they believe is "feeding the lambs and tending the sheep."

Depending on what type of group is identified, agree to take some appropriate action to help, support, or recognize the group for its work.

(An example: The neophytes decide that the parish's educational ministers [board of education members, administrators, teachers, catechists] do a fine job of feeding and tending. They agree to write them a letter of appreciation to be read [with the presider's permission] at the announcement time at the liturgy.)

(An example: The group decides that the local ecumenical food pantry truly feeds the Lord's poor lambs. They decide to sponsor a campaign to get parishioners to volunteer time to help staff the pantry. This is announced by one of the neophytes at the announcement time of the liturgy.)
SESSION VII: POWER AND PEACE

Environment:

If possible, have a menorah (a seven-branched candelabrum) or have seven separate candlesticks as the dominant part of your prayer space. Have the candles unlighted as the session begins. Display the urn of oil that you used in the anointing rite during Cenacle Session II. Use plenty of flowers in your centerpiece arrangement.

7:30

Prayer:

Opening Song:

(See suggestions, Appendix F.)

Opening Prayer:

Spontaneous by the mystagogue

Ritual Action:

Turn off all lights.

The mystagogue (or another) strikes match and says:

"Come, Holy Spirit, bring us peace."
The group repeats the mystagogue's prayer.

The mystagogue lights one candle and says:

"Come, Holy Spirit, bring us wisdom."
(Group repeats)

The mystagogue lights each candle in succession in the same way with the group repeating each invocation:

"Come, Holy Spirit, bring us understanding."
"Come, Holy Spirit, bring us good counsel."
"Come, Holy Spirit, fill us with strength."
"Come, Holy Spirit, bring us knowledge."
"Come, Holy Spirit, bring us true piety."
"Come, Holy Spirit, help us stand in awe of the Lord."
The Remembering:

Recall for the participants the rite of confirmation. Particular elements that you might wish to mention:

- The words of the priest/bishop: "Be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit... Peace be with you."
- The holy chrism. Did you smell the balsam fragrance?
- The feel of the anointing itself.
- How the oil is absorbed by the skin and becomes a part of you.
- How the oil sticks to you.

Scripture Reading: John 20:19-22

Prayers of Petition or Thanksgiving:

The mystagogue should voice one or two prayers, then invite others to pray spontaneously.

Closing Song:

(See suggestions, Appendix F.)

8:00 Discussion:

1. Did you have any strong feelings that you remembered about your confirmation?

2. How do you think your confirmation has helped/will help you live out your life as a Catholic Christian?

3. Does it strike you as strange that the disciples did not seem to recognize Jesus at first? Why do you suppose that was?

4. When the disciples finally recognized Jesus, what caused them to do so?

5. What did the Father send Jesus to do?

6. Did Jesus ever receive the Holy Spirit?

7. What did Jesus send the disciples to do?

8. Does Jesus send us to do something? What?
9. Why do we need the Holy Spirit to carry out our mission?

10. How might that Spirit help us?

11. What do you think might be some very ordinary, everyday ways in which you can be an apostle (one who is sent) of Jesus today?

9:00

Closing Prayer:

You may wish to close with spontaneous prayer or with a group common prayer.

Refreshments

Suggestions for Next Sunday's Liturgy:

If these sessions are taken in sequence, next Sunday is Pentecost. If the neophytes have been present as a group at liturgy throughout the Easter season, next Sunday should be their last opportunity to assemble and worship as a group. Now they are to be "sent forth" into the faith community, sent forth to serve.

Ask the parish hosts/greeters/ushers to hand out small wax tapers to everyone as they enter the church building for Sunday eucharist.

As the musicians play a gathering song, have the neophytes, holding lighted candles, enter from the rear of the church building and proceed toward the sanctuary by the side aisles; in this way, they "encircle" the assembly. When they are in place, have them turn toward the center aisle. The musicians begin the opening song. At this point, the presider and liturgical ministers may process down the middle aisle.

After the greeting, the presider indicates that the neophytes are to extinguish their candles and take their seats.

At the dismissal, the neophytes are called forth from the assembly by name. They approach the lighted Easter candle, light their tapers, and
stand before the altar facing the presider.

When all are assembled, the presider imparts a solemn "missioning" or "sending forth" blessing to the neophytes. After receiving the blessing, the neophytes go into the assembly and light the small tapers of all the members of the congregation as they may have done at the Easter Vigil.

When all candles are lit, the presider exhorts the congregation to be open to being filled with the Holy Spirit and to let the light of the Spirit shine forth in service to the community. The presider then blesses the assembly and dismisses everyone.

The closing hymn of the Mass is sung. At its conclusion, the presider and ministers extinguish their candles and process out.
APPENDIX A

Discussion-Starter Questions
(for Participants)
You may wish to duplicate these pages for participants.
CALLED AND CHOSEN

John 15:1-17

Discussion-Starters:

1. What was your predominant feeling during The Remembering?

2. What symbolic action from the Rite of Election/Call to Continuing Conversion spoke most powerfully to you? Why?

3. What did it mean to you to move from the status of catechumen to that of elect? (If some members of the group had already been baptized: What did it mean to you to be called by the Church to continuing conversion?)

4. How do you feel about that designation: elect?

5. In the scripture reading, Jesus describes himself as the vine and his followers as the branches. What do you think he was trying to tell us in that metaphor?

6. Jesus told his followers that they didn't choose him, but that he chose them. Do you feel chosen by the Lord?

7. Who chooses whom?

8. Are there people who never get chosen by Jesus?

9. In the scripture reading, Jesus told his followers that he would call them friends. Is that a word you would use to describe your relationship with Jesus? Why? If not, what word would best describe your relationship with him?

10. What does it really mean in the Church "to love one another"? What do you think is really required of us on a day-to-day practical level?

11. Do you believe that we are required to lay down our lives for each other? What does that mean?
Discussion-Starters:

1. What was your predominant feeling as you remembered the Lenten rites?

2. What specific action from those rites touched you the most? What did it "say" to you?

3. To some people, exorcisms, even the simple ones performed in these rites, seem "out of place" in today's world? How do you feel about them?

4. Some churches today do not require the profession of a specific creed by their members. Yet, the Roman Catholic Church continues to adhere to these ancient formulas of belief. How do you feel about that?

5. If you apply the scripture reading about the man who was born blind to today, who or what would you see in the various roles:
   -- the blind man?
   -- the parents?
   -- the religious leaders?
   -- the neighbors?

6. Some scholars believe that John was saying in this story that Jesus himself is much like the Pool of Siloam. Why do you think this might be so? (Remember, John tells us that Siloam means "one who has been sent."

7. The religious leaders threw out the man born blind (they "ejected" him). Do you think this might mean that they excommunicated him? Has anyone rejected you because of your Christian beliefs or because you joined the Catholic Church?
LIGHT AND LIFE

John 1:1-5; 9:10; 8:12; 28-29; 12:31; 35-36

Discussion-Starters:

1. What was your predominant memory of the Easter Vigil Service of the Light? Why?

2. Did any one symbol or symbolic action from this portion of the Easter Vigil strike you as particularly powerful? Which one? Why?

3. In the scripture reading, Jesus claims to be the light. What do you suppose he meant by using that image?

4. The light is described as life in the scripture reading. How can light be life?

5. How is Jesus light for you?

6. Can you give an example of how Jesus or belief in Jesus has been light in your life?

7. Jesus said that when he is lifted up, he would draw all people to himself. One meaning of "being lifted up" is crucifixion. Do you think there might be other meanings? What might they be?

8. Do you think the Church is generally seen by others as comprising "children of light." If yes, in what ways? If no, why not?
Discussion-Starters:

1. Nicodemus just doesn't seem to understand Jesus' words about baptism. Did you ever wonder why it was so necessary for people to be baptized?

2. Nicodemus comes to Jesus "in the night." Why do you suppose he did that? Did you ever feel as though you were coming to Jesus in the night -- sort of covering your bets in case you decided Christianity wasn't for you?

3. When did you decide to be baptized? What brought you to that decision?

4. What were you feeling at the moment of baptism? Right afterwards?

5. If you were immersed, could you tell the group what that felt like? What did it mean to you?

6. The scripture for this session speaks again of Jesus as the light who has come into the world. Has the light of Jesus caused you to see things differently since your baptism? What things? In what way are they different now? In what ways are you different now?

7. In this translation, there is the phrase, "Whoever does the truth comes out into the light." "Does the truth" seems an unusual phrase? Do you think it has a different meaning than "speaks the truth"?
BREAD AND LIFE

John 6:34-38,44,47-69

Discussion-Starters:

1. Can you describe your feelings the first time you received holy communion?

2. In what ways is the Mass important to you?

3. The Fathers of the Church -- those early bishops of the first seven centuries -- had a very literal understanding of the bread and wine of the eucharist being the body and blood of Christ. That understanding was based upon the parts of the Gospel of John we read at this session and on the accounts of the Last Supper in Matthew, Mark, and Luke. How do you understand the presence of Jesus in the eucharist?

4. What do you think Jesus felt like when "many of his disciples went away and accompanied him no more"?

5. Have you ever been so upset with the Church that you thought you ought to leave, but found that you were with Peter: "Lord, to whom shall we go?" Would you be able to tell the group about that experience?

6. Jesus described himself as "the light of the world" and he said that that light was life. In this session's scripture reading, Jesus calls himself "the bread of life" and "the living bread." What is he trying to tell us?
Discussion-Starters:

1. Why was Jesus always asking difficult questions?

2. Were you ever uncomfortable during the Scrutinies? Can you tell the group about that?

3. Poor Peter. How do you think he felt?

4. What do you think Jesus meant when he told Peter to feed his lambs, look after his sheep, and feed his sheep? Is this a message for the Pope and bishops, or do you think that Jesus might have been talking to all Christians?

5. When Peter became curious about (and maybe a bit jealous of) the Beloved Disciple, Jesus rather bluntly told him: "What's it to you? You are to follow me." What does that say to you for the living of day-to-day life?

6. It's easy to say, "Jesus, I love you." Why is it so difficult to follow through with the action which that love implies?

7. How do you think that the Church feeds the lambs and takes care of the sheep today?

8. Jesus' followers are often seen in scripture as lambs or sheep. How do you feel about that image? In what ways is it appropriate? When might it not be appropriate?
Discussion-Starters:

1. Did you have any strong feelings that you remembered about your confirmation?

2. How do you think your confirmation has helped/will help you live out your life as a Catholic Christian?

3. Does it strike you as strange that the disciples did not seem to recognize Jesus at first? Why do you suppose that was?

4. When the disciples finally recognize Jesus, what caused them to do so?

5. What did the Father send Jesus to do?

6. Did Jesus ever receive the Holy Spirit?

7. What did Jesus send the disciples to do?

8. Does Jesus send us to do something? What?

9. Why do we need the Holy Spirit to carry out our mission?

10. How might that Spirit help us?

11. What do you think might be some very ordinary, everyday ways that you can be an apostle (one who is sent) of Jesus today?
APPENDIX B

Model Letter of Invitation
March 1, 198-

Dear Friends:

Although it may be difficult for you to believe now, the next six weeks of Lent will pass very, very quickly, and Easter will be here before you know it. During Lent, many things will be happening to you: lots of ceremonies, lots of prayer, lots of questions (and, we hope, answers), lots of opportunities for you to be touched by the Lord's love and the love of the Christian community of Saint ________.

During the Easter season -- those seven weeks or so between Easter Sunday and Pentecost -- when all the excitement dies down and some peace and calm return to your life, you'll probably have plenty of questions and plenty of insights about what occurred in your life during the final preparation time for baptism or reception into full communion. Most new members of the Church say that they would really appreciate having some people around that they could share those insights with or ask those questions of.

New Christians in the early days of the Church certainly had those feelings, too, and, since human beings haven't changed much in the ensuing centuries, you will probably have much the same post-Easter feelings and needs as did those new Christians of 1,900 years ago. During those early centuries, the time immediately after Easter was used by the new members and their communities as a "savoring time," a time to meditate on the marvelous things the Lord had accomplished in their individual lives and in the life of the community, and a time to help the new members find their places in their new family. They even had an official name for that savoring time: they called it the mystagogia.

At Saint ________ Parish this year we are also going to have a period of mystagogia, a time when you can leisurely gather with other new members and with some "older" members as well to share insights and to ask questions about experiences you had during Lent. We plan to hold these sessions on seven Wednesday evenings (you've been reserving this time for quite a while now!) between Easter and Pentecost in the homes of parishioners. Groups will be small -- perhaps a dozen folks -- and will include a few "old timers." Won't you join us in "the savoring"?

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<th>Session 1:</th>
<th>Wednesday, Month Day</th>
<th>7:30 -- 9:30 p.m.</th>
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<tr>
<td>Session 2:</td>
<td>Wednesday, Month Day</td>
<td>7:30 -- 9:30 p.m.</td>
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<td>Session 3:</td>
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<td>Session 6:</td>
<td>Wednesday, Month Day</td>
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<td>Session 7:</td>
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Please fill out and return the attached registration form by March 8. We hope you'll be able to join us. We look forward to being with you.

Sincerely,
CENACLE SESSIONS
A Modern Mystagogia

_____ Yes, I want to participate.
_____ My sponsor would also like to participate.
_____ Sorry, I won't be able to make it.

Name: _______________________________ (please print)

Please return to _____________ at the St. _____________ Religious Education Office by Sunday, March 8. We will be in contact with you regarding the meeting place.
APPENDIX C

General Background to the Gospel of John
We wish to emphasize once again that Cenacle Sessions is not meant to be a bible study. Mystagogues should resist every temptation of their own and every effort of participants to transform this mystagogia into an academic exercise or into something that it is not intended to be. There is certainly a need for concentrated, guided, academically grounded bible study within the Catholic community. Such study is encouraged. But such study is not the purpose of Cenacle Sessions. Comments here regarding the Gospel of John, therefore, will necessarily be brief.

These comments and notes are intended to give the mystagogue a general knowledge of the Fourth Gospel. They also attempt to anticipate questions about the scripture that might arise among participants during the sessions. Additionally, they are meant to be a means that will enable the mystagogue to enhance the meditation on the scriptural passages as a way of enriching the overriding purpose of Cenacle Sessions: facilitating the "savoring" experience.

The Gospel according to John

Author: Authorship of the Fourth Gospel has traditionally been credited to John, one of the Twelve, a Galilean fisherman, son of Zebedee and brother of James. This tradition dates as far back as the second century to Irenaeus (ca. A.D. 180). The state of scholarship and the information available at this time make this the best conclusion regarding authorship.

Biblical scholars have advanced many other theories regarding the identity of the author of the Fourth Gospel. These include:

- John the Elder (or Presbyter)
- John Mark (the companion of Barnabas and Paul in the Acts of the Apostles)
- the Beloved Disciple (for those who believe that John and the Beloved Disciple are two different persons)
- Lazarus (who some scholars believe was the Beloved Disciple)
 Scholars have identified several purposes of this gospel; each purpose has its own adherents. The choice of this gospel as a mystagogic vehicle for Cenacle Sessions is predicated on the fact that at least one of those purposes was to confirm the brothers and sisters in the faith. John wrote the gospel to assure the believers of the late first century that Jesus continued to be present to them in the community of faith -- that Jesus was present even though the last of the eyewitnesses were dying and even though Jesus had not yet returned in glory.

John, concerned at the shakiness of faith manifest in his new sisters and brothers in the Church, set himself about the task of writing an account of his Lord that would not only light a fire in their hearts but would also furnish them with meditational nourishment that would bring them to a mature and solid faith.

The author of the Fourth Gospel himself states that the purpose of his writing the gospel account was "so that you may continue to believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing this you may have life through his name." (Jn 20:31)

While there is discussion among scholars as to the proper rendering of the verb believe in this verse (if in the present: "you may continue to believe"; or if in the aorist, then: "you may come to believe"), it is generally agreed that John has structured the gospel to serve as a series of catechetical meditations on The Sign (The Sacrament) who is Jesus himself.

Most scripture scholars today date the gospel as early as A.D. 90 and not much later than A.D. 100. This runs counter to earlier beliefs that set the date of composition much later.

Many scholars also agree today that the Fourth Gospel reflects a tradition as ancient as (though different from) the tradition upon which the Synoptic gospels are founded.

Tradition sets the place of composition at Ephesus in Asia Minor. This belief is based upon other traditions that identify the apostle John as
"bishop" of Ephesus. Many scholars today, notably Raymond E. Brown, S.S., are saying that the gospel was written in Palestine, or at least that it was composed out of the experiences of a Palestinian Jewish Christian community led by the Beloved Disciple.

Liturgical Influences/Sacramentality in the Gospel

There is sharp division among scripture scholars regarding the sacramentality found in John. The disagreements hinge on whether the author was or was not catechizing his readers about the sacraments as found in the first-century Church and retrojecting sacramental practices into the life of Jesus.

There is little disagreement, however, that the Gospel According to John is greatly influenced by the Jewish liturgy and that the author of the gospel paints a powerful picture of a life of Jesus infused with sacramentality. This is a subsidiary reason for choosing the Fourth Gospel as a mystagogic vehicle. The sacramental overtones in the various selections from this gospel ideally lend themselves to The Remembering of the Rites of Initiation.

While many Catholic scholars have seen, perhaps, a sacramentalism in John that is too broad, the vast majority of scholars cannot deny that baptismal and eucharistic images are found in the gospel. Raymond E. Brown, in his Anchor Bible commentary, states that "by associating Baptism and the Eucharist with Jesus' own words and actions, John is once more trying to show the roots of Church life in Jesus himself." (Vol. 29, p. cxi) and "the Gospel's intention [is] to show how the institutions of the Christian life are rooted in what Jesus said and did in his life." (p. cxiv)

Cenacle Sessions mystagogues are urged to do the same.

The "I Am" Statements of Jesus

The Fourth Gospel contains at least 21 instances in which Jesus refers to himself with the words I am (see p. C5 for listing). Four of the seven scripture selections used in Cenacle Sessions contain instances of this usage:

Session I:
• I am the true vine. (15:1)
• I am the vine. (15:5)
Session II:
• I am the light of the world. (9:5)

Session III:
• I am the light of the world. (8:12)
• When you have lifted up the Son of man, then you will know that I am [He]. (8:28)

Session V:
• I am the bread of life. (6:35 and 6:47)
• I am the living bread. (6:51)

In five of the statements, the "I am" is used absolutely, and there is little doubt that John wishes to portray Jesus as having used the divine name (YHWH = I AM WHO I AM, I AM THE EXISTING ONE). One of these absolute usages occurs during Cenacle Sessions (in Session III: "When you have lifted up the Son of man, then you will know that I AM." The New Jerusalem Bible translation that we are using supplies a predicate nominative (He) that is not present in the original Greek.

In the other instances of the "I am" in John, each occurs with an obvious or an understood predicate nominative; in these cases, the "I am" is to be understood by the reader as a figurative usage ("I am the light of the world," "I am the true vine," I am the bread of life," etc.). Its use in John is analogous to the use of parables in the Synoptic Gospels.

Raymond Brown believes that the absolute use of the "I Am" in John forms the basis for the other, figurative uses. All uses, however, seem to be meant to bring to the reader's mind the idea of the divine name found in the Jewish scriptures.
USE OF ἐγώ εἰμι (I AM) IN JOHN'S GOSPEL

†6:20: It is I; do not be afraid.
*6:35,47,51: I am the bread of life (living bread).
*8:12;9:5: I am the light of the world.
8:18: I am one who gives testimony on my behalf.
8:23: I am of what is above.
*8:24: Unless you come to believe that I AM, you will surely die in your sins.
*8:28: When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will realize that I AM.
*8:58: Before Abraham came to be, I AM.
♦10:7,9: I am the [sheep] gate.
♦10:11,14: I am the model shepherd.
♦11:25: I am the resurrection and the life
*13:19: When it does happen, you may believe that I AM.
♦14:6: I am the way, the truth, and the life.
♦15:1,5: I am the [real] vine.
†18:5: I am he [at arrest in the garden].

†predicate understood
♦with a predicate nominative (figuratively)
*absolute
NOTES TO EACH SESSION'S SCRIPTURE PASSAGE
Session I: Called and Chosen -- John 15:1-17

This passage of the gospel deals with the relationship of the individual Christian to Jesus and to the Christian community.

One of John's purposes in his gospel is to show that Jesus is the source of life -- new life now and everlasting life after death. The image of the vine re-enforces this purpose. Please note that Jesus is the entire vine (not just the central stalk); therefore, the branches are part of the vine, i.e., the individual Christian is part of Jesus. This image is close to that of the Pauline image of the Church as the body of Christ.

The image of the vine and branches is an image from the Jewish scriptures. The vineyard and the vine are images of Israel in the Old Testament. In Ezekiel 17, the vine is the Davidic king. Wisdom is also personified as a vine (see Sirach 24:17-21, for instance).

Here, in vv. 1 and 5, is the use of the I AM statement.

(It is interesting to note that the Greek word for branches used in this passage [v. 5 et al.] is κλήματα [klémata], which means grapevines or vines. It is also the word that botanists have used to name the popular flowering vine, the clematis. If you have a clematis vine that happens to be in bloom at the time this session is held, you may wish to use its blossoms in the centerpiece for this session.)

The vine is seen by some scholars as a eucharistic image because the branches feed on and drink from the vine.

In some translations, servants is rendered slaves.

The verses where Jesus called his followers friends formed the basis for the Quakers naming themselves the Society of Friends.

At the root of the English word friend is the connotation of free or freedom, an indication that real friends allow one to be free, to be authentically oneself.

Those who are called and chosen (elected) are also to be sent forth to bear fruit. John may wish to show here that the Twelve are to be model Christians for the rest of us and that we are each called, chosen, and sent forth to bear fruit.

"Love one another." The tense and mood of the Greek verb suggests a love that is continuous and lifelong.
Session II: Sight and Insight -- John 9:1-41

Many scholars call this the most brilliant passage in the entire gospel.

The cure of the man born blind is one of the "signs" in the Gospel of John. It is meant to signify the triumph of light over darkness; the gift of physical sight signifies the gift of the sight of faith.

This gospel story also reflects the tension that existed between the synagogue and the Church in John's time. "The Jews" in John's gospel invariably refer on one level to the Jerusalem authorities at the time of Jesus and on another level to the Judaism of the 90s. It was at that time that the disciples of Moses excommunicated the Jewish disciples of Jesus from the synagogues. Is the blind man on trial a type for those Christian Jews who are called upon in the 90s to publicly confess their belief in Jesus -- a confession that will result in their excommunication from Israel and the synagogue?

The story of the man born blind is a baptismal lesson and, during the Patristic Period, served as a reading for the rite of the great scrutiny. When the lector arrived at verse 38 ("The man said, 'Lord, I believe,' and worshipped him."), the reading stopped and the elect then rendered the Creed to the bishop and the community.

Jesus' use of spittle also became part of the Church's baptismal ceremony because of this gospel story. The verb describing Jesus' action of applying the spittle-mud paste is rendered smeared in some translations; it is the same word as anointed. This is the reason we have suggested an anointing ceremony for this session; this is why you are asked to recall for the neophytes the scrutinies and anointings they experienced during Lent.

The name of the pool -- Siloam -- means "one who has been sent." Some scholars maintain that John wished his readers to understand that Jesus (the one who was sent by the Father) was like the pool -- a source of healing, light, sight (both physical and spiritual), and new life. We are baptized into Christ who washes us clean with his blood and gives us new sight.

The parents in the story may be types for those Christians from John's community who waffled in their belief when confronted by the Jewish authorities. The parents are those Jewish Christians who now (in A.D. 90) find themselves in the dilemma of renouncing either Judaism or Jesus.
Session III: Light and Life -- John 1:1-5; 9-10; 8:12; 28-29; 12:31; 35-36

The first part of the reading is taken from the so-called Prologue to the gospel, which is thought to have been an independent hymn used in the liturgy. Note that the beginning of John's gospel echoes the words of Genesis: "In the beginning. . . ."

Light and darkness is a major recurring theme in John's gospel. Jesus was the real, but by-and-large the unrecognized, light. Those who refused to recognize him were those who chose to remain in the darkness.

Elsewhere in the gospel, Jesus refers to himself as life-giving bread and as water that is life-giving. Here it is life-giving light. While we do not usually think of light as living, it is certainly true that light is a source of life itself. Without the sun, there would be no photosynthesis, no vegetation, no food, no life -- human or otherwise. So in a very real sense, light is life.

On the spiritual level, Jesus is light; Jesus is the source of life; Jesus is the Sun of Justice; Jesus is the light that is reflected in believers.

The incident in the passage from chapter 8 occurs during the Jewish autumnal harvest feast of Tabernacles (Booths, Tents, Huts [Sukkōt]), where great fires were lighted in four candlesticks in the Court of the Women in the Temple precincts. This is the scene, then, as Jesus shouts to the assembled worshipers: "I am the light of the world."

The "lifting up" of Jesus occurs several times throughout the gospel: in the Nicodemus story, at the scene during the feast of Tabernacles, and at the theophany when Jesus enters Jerusalem in triumph. The "lifting up" hearkens back to Moses lifting up the bronze serpent in the desert in a healing ritual; it looks forward to Jesus' crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension; it also contains the image or connotation of the exaltation of Jesus by Christians as Lord and Messiah.

In Jn 8:28, we have one instance of the absolute use of an "I AM" statement: "When you have lifted up the Son of man, then you will know that I AM [He]."

"Children of the light" was another title the Quakers used to refer to themselves before they settled on the "Society of Friends." (see notes for Session I)
Session IV: Water and Spirit -- John 3:1-21

Nicodemus is cast in the role of the sincere religious seeker whose questioning allows Jesus the opportunity to expound his teaching. He has been drawn to Jesus by his signs.

Jesus obviously believes Nicodemus is sincere and interested in the truth: he begins three mini-discourses in this short passage with "in all truth I tell you." The word truth occurs four times in the passage.

This passage illustrates a common device of John: to have Jesus speaking on one level while those he has engaged (or who have engaged him) in dialogue think and respond on another level. A useful literary device, but how true to life. How often have you heard the phrase (well on its way to becoming a cliché): "What we have here is a communications problem!"

Nicodemus may have come to Jesus "in the night" not out of fear of being recognized in daylight, but simply because it was a custom of the rabbis to study the scriptures at night. On the other hand, the image of Nicodemus "being in the dark" should not be lost on readers.

Nicodemus appears next in chapter 7, where, although he is not yet a follower of Jesus, he speaks in Jesus' behalf. His final appearance is with Joseph of Arimathea at Jesus' burial, where he seems to be portrayed as one who has become a believer. Perhaps, Nicodemus is a model for the neophytes. They, like him, have come to know Jesus over time; they, like him, questioned; they, like him, came from ignorance to knowledge, from confusion to understanding, from darkness to light.
Session V: Bread and Life -- John 6:34-38, 44, 47-69

The event in this passage takes place following the multiplication of five barley loaves and two fish to feed at least 5,000 men.

This is an obvious eucharistic discourse. It is interesting to note that John tells us that "Jesus took the loaves, gave thanks, and distributed them. . . ." The Greek word for giving thanks is εὐχαριστήσας [eucharístésas], hence eucharist.

We have again in this passage John's device of having Jesus speak on one level while being misunderstood by his hearers who are operating on another level.

Note that the same questions about the living bread here were asked by the Samaritan woman about the living water. Note also that this living bread will completely satisfy those who eat it as the living water would completely satisfy those who drank it.

The poignancy of the scene where Jesus is rejected by many of his followers should offer much food for thought and discussion.

Some scholars believe that Peter's profession in vv. 68-69 is John's version of the tradition found in Matthew 16. Peter, like the neophytes, have taken the risk and have thrown their lot with the Lord.
This passage is taken from the final chapter of the gospel, which is regarded as an addition to the original version. It is found in every ancient manuscript of John still in existence, so it must have been added extremely early. It is believed to have been added by one of John's disciples.

This scene is magnificent material for a meditation on reconciliation: how Jesus so readily accepts us back after we have denied him. Here, the breakfast fire serves as a literary link to the charcoal fire in the High Priest's courtyard where Peter denied Jesus. Peter is given the opportunity to profess his love for Jesus, and he is given the opportunity to do so three times -- each time wiping out one of the three denials.

Most commentators see no great significance in the slight differences in Jesus' commands to Peter. "Feed my lambs... tend my sheep...feed my sheep..." represent the same mandate to shepherd the community.

A rumor regarding the Beloved Disciple (John?) is dealt with in this passage. Word had it that the Beloved Disciple would not die before the Lord returned. Apparently, the Beloved Disciple had died; hence, we have one of the reasons this epilogue was appended by one of the disciples of the Beloved Disciple.

Of note is Jesus' rather terse reply to the curious Peter who asks Jesus [about the Beloved Disciple]: "And what about him, Lord?" Jesus more or less suggests that Peter (and all the other Christians in John's community who are upset and confused over the death of the one-who-wasn't-supposed-to-die-until-the-Lord's-return) should perhaps tend to the business of following him. This might be a wonderful discussion topic for the neophytes: When it all gets boiled down, this is what we are about -- following Jesus.
This scene takes place in the Cenacle on the evening of Easter Day.

Note that the disciples did not recognize Jesus immediately. In fact, they did not recognize Jesus until "he showed them his hands and his side." It could be said that the wounds of Jesus were the ultimate sign of his ministry to us. He loved us so much that he gave his all, he laid down his life, for us. And his wounds serve as the sign, the certification, the proof of that love.

As Christians, will others see Jesus in us because of our wounds? Have we laid down our lives sufficiently that our identification with Jesus is evident from our ministry?

Jesus sends us forth ("apostles" us) in the power of the Spirit of Peace. Is he sending us forth to be wounded?

Even the disciples didn't recognize Jesus just because he came among them wishing them peace. Do we expect people to see Jesus in us just because we offer them words of peace? Or is more being asked of us?
APPENDIX D

Scripture Texts Used in the Sessions
Scripture quotations for Cenacle Sessions are taken from The New Jerusalem Bible, copyright © 1985 by Darton, Longman & Todd, Ltd., and Doubleday & Company, Inc.
A reading from the Good News of Jesus Christ according to John:

[At the Last Supper, Jesus told his disciples:]

I am the true vine,
and my Father is the vinedresser.
Every branch in me that bears no fruit
he prunes to make it bear even more.
You are clean already,
by means of the word that I have spoken to you.
Remain in me as I in you.
As a branch cannot bear fruit all by itself,
unless it remains part of the vine,
neither can you unless you remain in me.
I am the vine, you are the branches.
Whoever remains in me, with me in him,
bears fruit in plenty;
for cut off from me you can do nothing.
Anyone who does not remain in me
is thrown away like a branch
-- and withers;
these branches are collected and thrown on the fire
and are burnt.
If you remain in me
and my words remain in you,
you may ask for whatever you please
and you will get it.
It is to the glory of my Father that you should bear much fruit
and be my disciples.
I have loved you
just as the Father has loved me.
Remain in my love.
If you keep my commandments
you will remain in my love,
just as I have kept my Father's commandments
and remain in his love.
I have told you this
so that my own joy may be in you
and your joy be complete.
This is my commandment:
love one another,
as I have loved you.
No one can have greater love
than to lay down his life for his friends.
You are my friends
if you do what I command you.
I shall no longer call you servants,
because a servant does not know
his master's business;
I call you friends,
because I have made known to you
everything I have learnt from my Father.
You did not choose me,
no, I chose you;
and I commissioned you
to go out and to bear fruit,
fruit that will last;
so that the Father will give you
anything you ask him in my name.
My command to you
is to love one another.

This is the Gospel of the Lord. --Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.
Session II: Sight and Insight -- John 9:1-41

A reading from the Good News of Jesus Christ according to John:

As Jesus went along, he saw a man who had been blind from birth. His disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he should have been born blind?"

"Neither he nor his parents sinned," Jesus answered, "he was born blind so that the works of God might be revealed in him.

"As long as day lasts we must carry out the work of the one who sent me; the night will soon be here when no one can work. As long as I am in the world I am the light of the world."

Having said this, he spat on the ground, made a paste with the spittle, put this over the eyes of the blind man, and said to him, "Go and wash in the Pool of Siloam (the name means "one who has been sent"). So he went off and washed and came back able to see.

His neighbors and the people who used to see him before (for he was a beggar) said, "Isn't this the man who used to sit and beg?" Some said, "Yes, it is the same one." Others said, "No, but he looks just like him." The man himself said, "Yes, I am the one." So they said to him, "Then how is it that your eyes were opened?"

He answered, "The man called Jesus made a paste, daubed my eyes with it, and said to me, 'Go off and wash at Siloam'; so I went, and when I washed I gained my sight."

They asked, "Where is he?"

He answered, "I don't know."

They brought to the Pharisees the man who had been blind. It had been a Sabbath day when Jesus made the paste and opened the man's eyes, so when the Pharisees asked him how he had gained his sight, he said, "He put paste on my eyes, and I washed, and I can see."

Then some of the Pharisees said, "That man cannot be from God: he does not keep the Sabbath." Others said, "How can a sinner produce signs like this?" And there was division among them.

So they spoke to the blind man again, "What have you to say about him yourself, now that he has opened your eyes?"
The man answered, "He is a prophet."

However, the Jews would not believe that the man had been blind without first sending for the parents of the man who had gained his sight and asking them, "Is this man really the son of yours who you say was born blind? If so, how is it that he is now able to see?"

His parents answered, "We know he is our son and we know he was born blind, but how he can see, we don't know, nor who opened his eyes. Ask him. He is old enough: let him speak for himself."

His parents spoke like this out of fear of the Jews, who had already agreed to ban from the synagogue anyone who should acknowledge Jesus as the Christ. This was why his parents said, "He is old enough; ask him."

So the Jews sent for the man again and said to him, "Give glory to God! We are satisfied that this man is a sinner."

The man answered, "Whether he is a sinner I don't know; all I know is that I was blind and now I can see."

They said to him, "What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?"

He replied, "I have told you once, and you wouldn't listen. Why do you want to hear it all again? Do you want to become his disciples yourselves?"

At this they hurled abuse at him, "It is you who are his disciple; we are disciples of Moses: we know that God spoke to Moses, but as for this man, we don't know where he comes from."

The man replied, "That is just what is so amazing! You don't know where he comes from and he has opened my eyes! We know that God doesn't listen to sinners, but God does listen to men who are devout and do his will. Ever since the world began it is unheard of for anyone to open the eyes of a man who was born blind; if this man were not from God, he wouldn't have been able to do anything."

They retorted, "Are you trying to teach us, and you a sinner through and through ever since you were born!" And they ejected him.

Jesus heard they had ejected him, and when he found him he said to him, "Do you believe in the Son of man?"
"Sir," the man replied, "tell me who he is so that I may believe in him."

Jesus said, "You have seen him; he is speaking to you."

The man said, "Lord, I believe," and worshiped him.

Jesus said:

"It is for judgment that I have come into this world, so that those without sight may see and those with sight may become blind."

Hearing this, some Pharisees who were present said to him, "So we are blind, are we?"

Jesus replied:

"If you were blind, you would not be guilty, but since you say, 'We can see,' your guilt remains."

This is the Gospel of the Lord. --Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.
A reading from the Good News of Jesus Christ according to John:

In the beginning was the Word;
the Word was with God
and the Word was God.
He was with God in the beginning.
Through him all things came into being,
not one thing came into being except through him.
What has come into being in him was life,
life that was the light of men;
and light shines on in the darkness,
and darkness could not overpower it.

The Word was the real light
that gives light to everyone;
he was coming into the world.
He was in the world
that had come into being through him,
and the world did not recognise him.

When Jesus spoke to the people again, he said:

I am the light of the world;
anyone who follows me will not be walking in the dark
but will have the light of life.

When you have lifted up the Son of man,
then you will know that I am He
and that I do nothing of my own accord.
What I say
is what the Father has taught me;
he who sent me is with me,
and has not left me to myself,
for I always do what pleases him.

And when I am lifted up from the earth,
I shall draw all people to myself.
The light will be with you only a little longer now.
Go on your way while you have the light,
or darkness will overtake you,
and nobody who walks in the dark knows where he is going.
While you still have the light,
believe in the light
so that you may become children of light.

This is the Gospel of the Lord.        --Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.
Session IV: Water and Spirit -- John 3:1-21

A reading from the Good News of Jesus Christ according to John:

There was one of the Pharisees called Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews, who came to Jesus by night and said, "Rabbi, we know that you have come from God as a teacher; for no one could perform the signs that you do unless God were with him."

Jesus answered:

"In all truth I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above."

Nicodemus said, "How can anyone who is already old be born? Is it possible to go back into the womb again and be born?"

Jesus replied:

"In all truth I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born through water and the Spirit; what is born of human nature is human; what is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not be surprised when I say: You must be born from above. The wind blows where it pleases; you can hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit."

"How is that possible?" asked Nicodemus.

Jesus replied: "You are the Teacher of Israel, and you do not know these things!

"In all truth I tell you, we speak only about what we know and witness only to what we have seen and yet you people reject our evidence. If you do not believe me when I speak to you about earthly things, how will you believe me when I speak to you about heavenly things? No one has gone up to heaven except the one who came down from heaven, the Son of man;"
as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert,
so must the Son of man be lifted up
so that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him.
For this is how God loved the world:
he gave his only Son,
so that everyone who believes in him may not perish
but may have eternal life.
For God sent his Son into the world
not to judge the world,
but so that through him the world might be saved.
No one who believes in him will be judged;
but whoever does not believe is judged already,
because that person does not believe
in the Name of God's only Son.
And the judgment is this:
though the light has come into the world
people have preferred
darkness to the light
because their deeds were evil.
And indeed, everybody who does wrong
hates the light and avoids it
to prevent his actions from being shown up;
but whoever does the truth
comes out into the light,
so that what he is doing may plainly appear as done in God."

This is the Gospel of the Lord. --Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.
A reading from the Good News of Jesus Christ according to John:

[Jesus told the crowd]:

"I am the bread of life. No one who comes to me will ever hunger; no one who believes in me will ever thirst. But, as I have told you, I will certainly not reject anyone who comes to me, because I have come from heaven not to do my own will, but to do the will of him who sent me.

..."

"No one can come to me unless drawn by the Father who sent me, and I will raise that person up on the last day.

...

"In all truth I tell you, everyone who believes has eternal life. I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate manna in the desert, and they are dead; but this is the bread which comes down from heaven, so that a person may eat it and not die. I am the living bread which has come down from heaven. Anyone who eats this bread will live for ever; and the bread that I shall give is my flesh, for the life of the world."

Then the Jews started arguing among themselves, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?"

Jesus replied to them:

"In all truth I tell you, if you do not eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Anyone who does eat my flesh and drink my blood has eternal life, and I shall raise that person up on the last day. For my flesh is real food,
and my blood is real drink.
Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood
lives in me
and I live in that person.
As the living Father sent me
and I draw life from the Father,
so whoever eats me will also draw life from me.
This is the bread which has come down from heaven;
it is not like the bread our ancestors ate:
they are dead,
but anyone who eats this bread will live for ever."

This is what he taught at Capernaum in the synagogue. After
hearing it, many of his followers said, "This is intolerable
language. How could anyone accept it?"

Jesus was aware that his followers were complaining about it and
said, "Does this disturb you? What if you should see the Son of
man ascend to where he was before?

"It is the spirit that gives life,
the flesh has nothing to offer.
The words I have spoken to you are spirit
and they are life.

"But there are some of you who do not believe." For Jesus knew
from the outset who did not believe and who was to betray him.
He went on, "This is why I told you that no one could come to me
except by the gift of the Father." After this, many of his
disciples went away and accompanied him no more.

Then Jesus said to the Twelve, "What about you, do you want to
go away too?"

Simon Peter answered, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the
message of eternal life, and we believe; we have come to know
that you are the Holy One of God."

This is the Gospel of the Lord. --Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.
A reading from the Good News of Jesus Christ according to John:

[After Jesus had been raised from the dead, he appeared to his disciples at dawn on the shore of the Sea of Tiberias where he fixed them a breakfast of bread and grilled fish.] This was the third time that Jesus revealed himself to the disciples after rising from the dead.

When they had eaten, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these others do?"

He answered, "Yes, Lord, you know I love you."

Jesus said to him, "Feed my lambs."

A second time he said to him, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?"

He replied, "Yes, Lord, you know I love you."

Jesus said to him, "Look after my sheep."

Then he said to him a third time, "Simon son of John, do you love me?"

Peter was hurt that he asked him a third time, "Do you love me?" and said, "Lord, you know everything; you know I love you."

Jesus said to him, "Feed my sheep.

"In all truth I tell you, when you were young you put on your own belt and walked where you liked; but when you grow old you will stretch out your hands, and somebody else will put a belt round you and take you where you would rather not go."

In these words he indicated the kind of death by which Peter would give glory to God. After this he said, "Follow me."

Peter turned and saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following them -- the one who had leant back close to his chest at the supper and had said to him, "Lord, who is it that will betray you?" Seeing him, Peter said to Jesus, "What about him, Lord?"
Jesus answered, "If I want him to stay behind till I come, what does it matter to you? You are to follow me."

This is the Gospel of the Lord. --Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.
A reading from the Good News of Jesus Christ according to John:

In the evening of that same day, the first day of the week, the doors were closed in the room where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews. Jesus came and stood among them.

He said to them, "Peace be with you."

And, after saying this, he showed them his hands and his side. The disciples were filled with joy at seeing the Lord, and he said to them again, "Peace be with you."

"As the Father sent me, so am I sending you."

After saying this, he breathed on them and said:

"Receive the Holy Spirit."

This is the Gospel of the Lord. -- Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.
APPENDIX E

The Role of Memory
THE ROLE OF MEMORY

The ability to remember is one of the truly magnificent powers that human beings possess. Through memory, we can cause to be present those persons and events that exist only in the past. Through memory, places and people that we have once known can become present for us even though we might be separated from them by several thousand miles. "Memory," as musician-composer-poet Carey Landry has said, "is the sacrament of presence."

Memory is a hierophany, a door to the sacred. It has the ability to transport us into a sacred space that is different from the space we occupy, into a sacred time that is different from ordinary time, into a world of sacred meaning through which the ordinary becomes enwrapped in profound extraordinariness.

Memory, because of its sacramentality, serves a valid and vital function in religion. Christianity, for example, employs the power of memory in a special way in its central sacrament, the eucharist. "Do this in memory of me," Jesus told his disciples. Through this anamnesis -- this sacred memorial remembering -- those actions that Jesus performed at the Last Supper are made present to us. We not only remember them, but we remember them in such a way that they become really present to us. Ordinary time becomes sacred time; ordinary space becomes sacred space; ordinary meaning becomes sacred meaning. Such is the power of memory.

In Cenacle Sessions, the use of memory is central to the mystagogic process. Since we have defined mystagogia as a savoring time, we call upon our power of memory to re-call, to re-collect, to re-capture, to enable us to re-live those important sacramental moments of initiation -- moments that we wish to bring out of storage in the past, as it were, and re-experience. We do this so that those moments may, in fact, be savored.

For this reason, it is imperative that the mystagogue has witnessed the sacramental moments that she or he will call forth during The Remembering at each session. If the mystagogue has not been present, The Remembering should be facilitated by one who was there.

The actual facilitation of The Remembering will, of course, reflect the personality and approach of each mystagogue. The following suggestions are offered, however, as an aid to that facilitation:

• Make every attempt to see that the participants are
"centered" and interiorly quiet before beginning The Remembering. The use of music should greatly facilitate this phase. Do not rush the music. Spending five or even 10 minutes with the music is recommended.

• Speak in a quiet and unhurried manner. Do not disrupt the quiet centeredness achieved by the group.

• Employ detailed and descriptive language. The more accurately you can portray the event, the more vivid will be the memories. You are painting a picture here. Paint with the colors, sights, sounds, smells, mood, and tone of the event.

• Try to walk through the event orally in an orderly and chronological manner. If you remember the event in a similar sequence as the participants do, it will aid their memory of it.

The Remembering calls upon all your gifts as storyteller/-poet/guide. Use those gifts freely.
APPENDIX F

Suggestions for Music
MUSIC SUGGESTIONS

If possible, the mystagogue should work with a good liturgical musician in choosing the music for, and executing the music during, Cenacle Sessions.

Generally speaking, it is always preferable to "do" the music rather than to use recorded music. However, if the music that is appropriate for the occasion calls for gifts beyond those possessed by you or by others involved, then, by all means, use recorded music.

Music is vital to this process. Do not dispense with the use of music just because you yourself do not have musical abilities, or because a pastoral musician is not available, or because arranging for music seems to be too much trouble. In addition to its general function of setting the tone, establishing a prayerful atmosphere, and aiding in/being prayer, music is an irreplaceable element of Cenacle Sessions because it is a powerful memory trigger that will facilitate the effectiveness of The Remembering.

The music suggested here is anything but exhaustive; it has been chosen because it is familiar to American Catholics and should be easily accessible to most parishes. Most of the selections are also able to be rendered simply, generally with guitar accompaniment. You are encouraged, however, to make the music your own.

Selections for General Use:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Selection</th>
<th>Composer/Editor</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>We Remember</td>
<td>Haugen (G.I.A. Publishing, Inc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Come, Holy Ghost</td>
<td>Traditional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gather Us In</td>
<td>Haugen (G.I.A.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This Day God Gives Me</td>
<td>Traditional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We've Been to the Mountain</td>
<td>McAllister (World Library)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abba! Father!</td>
<td>Landry (NALR)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amazing Grace</td>
<td>Traditional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are Not Our Hearts</td>
<td>Landry (NALR)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dwelling Place</td>
<td>Foley (NALR)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For You Are My God</td>
<td>Foley (NALR)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peace Is Flowing Like a River</td>
<td>Traditional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sing a New Song</td>
<td>Schutte (NALR)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sing to the Mountains</td>
<td>Dufford (NALR)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father, We Adore You</td>
<td>Coelho (Maranatha Evangelical Assoc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hallelujah, Our God Reigns</td>
<td>Garratt (Scripture in Songs Recordings Ltd)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Our God Reigns  
Let Us Sing  

Smith (Leonard E. Smith, Jr.)  
Holtz (The Word of God)

Session I: Called and Chosen

By Name I Have Called You  
We Are the Branches  
Anthem

Landry (NALR)  
Miffleton (World Library)  
Conroy (NALR)

Session II: Sight and Insight

Lay Your Hands  
Pardon Your People  
Veni, Sancte Spiritus

Landry (NALR)  
Landry (NALR)  
Berthier (Taizé)

Session III: Light and Life

Christ Our Light  
Let There Be Light!  
Let Us Walk in the Light

(from the Easter Vigil)  
Traditional (Italian Hymn)  
also known as Come, Our Almighty King  
Haugen (G.I.A.)

Session IV: Water and Spirit

Born Again  
You Have Been Baptized

Fortunate (J. S. Paluch Company, Inc.)  
Landry (NALR)

Session V: Bread and Life

Give Thanks and Remember  
I Am the Bread of Life  
In Memory of Jesus  
One Bread, One Body  
We Remember

Miffleton (World Library)  
Toolan (G.I.A.)  
Landry (NALR)  
Foley (NALR)  
Haugen (G.I.A.)

Session VI: Love and Commitment

Here I Am, Lord  
Make Us True Servants  
Do You Really Love Me?  
Be Not Afraid  
City of God

Schutte (NALR)  
Traditional (Paluch)  
Landry (NALR)  
Dufford (NALR)  
Schutte (NALR)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session VII: Power and Peace</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Veni, Sancte Spiritus</td>
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<tr>
<td>Come, Holy Ghost</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Spirit Is A-Movin'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Let There Be Light!</td>
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<tr>
<td>Make Us True Servants</td>
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<tr>
<td>City of God</td>
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</table>
Participant Questionnaire

Please duplicate the following questionnaire and have each participant in Cenacle Sessions complete it at the end of the mystagogia.
Your frank evaluation of our gatherings during this Easter season will help us improve this new program for those who follow you next year. Please take a few moments to respond to these questions. You need not sign this evaluation. The time you spend filling out this questionnaire will be your gift to members of the next group. Thank you.

OVERALL EVALUATION

Overall, how helpful were these sessions to you...

1. In your personal spiritual growth?
   - Not Helpful
   - Somewhat Helpful
   - Definitely Helpful
   - Extremely Helpful

2. In your intellectual growth?
   - Not Helpful
   - Somewhat Helpful
   - Definitely Helpful
   - Extremely Helpful

3. In helping you to feel a part of the Church/parish?
   - Not Helpful
   - Somewhat Helpful
   - Definitely Helpful
   - Extremely Helpful

SATISFACTION

1. Overall, how satisfied were you with the sessions?
   - Not Satisfied
   - Somewhat Satisfied
   - Definitely Satisfied
   - Extremely Satisfied

2. Please name one thing that you think contributed to/detracted from your satisfaction the most.
SPECIFIC SESSIONS/ACTIVITIES

1. Which session or activity was most helpful to you (spiritually, intellectually, for community-building)? What made it most helpful?

2. Which session or activity was least helpful to you (spiritually, intellectually, for community-building)? Why do you think it was least helpful?
ORGANIZATIONAL FEATURES

Please rate each of the following aspects of our sessions by checking as appropriate.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Excellent</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Fair</th>
<th>Not Adequate</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Place</td>
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<td>Room Itself</td>
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<tr>
<td>Number of Sessions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Length of Each Session</td>
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OTHER COMMENTS
Attendance/Involvement Report

Following is the report to be completed by the mystagogue/-facilitator at the completion of the process.
CENACLE SESSIONS
A Modern Mystagogia

Attendance Record/Involvement Report

Number of Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Participants</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of Neophytes</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Number of Parishioners</td>
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<td>Total:</td>
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</table>

Number of Groups (if more than one):   

Attendance by Session

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Neophytes</th>
<th>Parishioners</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Session 1:</td>
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<td>Session 7:</td>
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Attendance at Activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Activities (other than regular weekly sessions):</th>
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<tr>
<td>Average Attendance at Each Activity:</td>
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Involvement Report

Please fill in on or shortly after Pentecost:

The purpose of the mystagogia is not to sign-up new members for various ministries in the parish. However, integration into the everyday life of the parish is one of the goals of Cenacle Sessions. Therefore, if neophytes become involved because of the mystagogia, it would be helpful if such involvement were documented.

Participants indicated interest/have volunteered for these ministries/parish activities as a result of Cenacle Sessions:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Ministry/Activity</th>
<th>Neophyte</th>
<th>Parishioner</th>
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Evaluation by Mystagogue

1. What, in your opinion, was the strongest aspect of this process?

2. What would you add, delete, or change to improve Cenacle Sessions?
3. Do you believe that Cenacle Sessions helped the neophytes fit more easily/quickly into the daily life of your faith community? Why or why not?

4. Do you plan to use Cenacle Sessions with your next group of neophytes?

Thank you.