

# THE ROLE OF THE CATECHIST IN MYSTAGOGICAL CATECHESIS FOR ADULT BAPTISM

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# THE ROLE OF THE CATECHIST IN MYSTAGOGICAL CATECHESIS FOR ADULT BAPTISM

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## Abstract

*For someone who will reach a certain point in his life, he must have the courage to go through a certain process or dynamic that exists within it. Likewise, people who want to be baptized as followers of Jesus and join the Catholic Church must be open to a formation process and the steps they must go through which are called the catechumenate process. Furthermore, the church is also responsible for caring for and accompanying the person concerned in the early days after baptism. This is what is called the mystagogical period. The process of mystagogy for adult baptism is the fourth period of the entire adult initiation process which can also be said to be a period of strengthening faith. The essence of this mystagogical period is to guide the newly baptized to better understand the meaning of the sacraments and to live them in their daily lives. This study specifically explores the role of catechists in efforts to assist baptized adults in times of mystagogy. It cannot be denied that catechists have a central role in accompanying baptized adults to become more intimate with the Catholic faith and to better understand the customs and rules of worship that apply in the Catholic church. By taking on this role, a catechist is carrying out one of the duties of preaching received from Jesus Christ through the church.*

*Key words: Baptism, catechism, catechumens, mystagogy*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Someone who will be accepted as a member of the Catholic Church needs to understand well the teachings of the Catholic faith. Therefore, before being baptized, they must undergo a period of catechumenate for some time to prepare themselves to receive baptism in the Catholic church. During this preparation period, they will be accompanied by catechists and other pastoral officers to jointly explore the Catholic faith, church teachings and also the rules of worship that apply in the Catholic Church.

Baptism is not merely a ritual activity but is a sacrament that seals a person as a disciple of Christ and a member of the church. Thus, the preparation and performance of baptism should be arranged in such a way that God's grace that prompts belief is understood and experienced. If baptism becomes a social administrative matter, it will have less resonance in the lives of believers. The preparation and celebration of baptism is not primarily a test of faith knowledge but rather confirms faith and expresses it, and helps people to live in the optimism of faith. For adults who request baptism, the catechumenate period is a process of union with the Church. Catechumens are involved in the life of the local congregation so that they can increasingly live

as Christians, namely being able to pray to the Father through Christ and in the Spirit. In the catechumenate, religious knowledge is taught, so that the catechumens will know more about Christ. The catechumen needs to be helped by example and information so that he can live and pray Christianly (Prasetya 2017:39).

After receiving adult baptism, something called mystagogy is needed, which means the fourth period of the entire adult initiation process, or it can also be said to be the period of strengthening faith. Through this period, Catechists or catechumenate facilitators must be able to help those who receive adult baptism to be able to live Christianly and later die Christianly. The author's experience in the field is that some non-Catholics choose to become Catholics, but they do not receive further assistance from the fourth period as an adult initiation process or what is called the Catholic faith consolidation period and finally they dare to choose to become Catholics without understanding the faith Catholic properly. Therefore, Catechists play an important role in guiding newly baptized or baptized adults to better understand the meaning of the sacraments and live them in their daily lives.

## 2. METHOD

This article is the result of a literature review. Where the researcher attempts to study the study of the role of catechists in relation to their duties and responsibilities in the church. Specifically related to his assistance to baptized adults. Apart from that, researchers also studied the study of adult baptism, as well as what they should pay attention to after receiving baptism in the Catholic church.

## 3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### 1) Concept of Catechists and Cateches of Mystagogy

Catechists are all Christian believers, who are called and sent by God to be preachers of <sup>11</sup>the Word of God. In other words, the profession of a Catechist is to teach, proclaim the Word of God and be aware of being a disciple of Christ (Buletin Kateketik dan Pastoral 2017:81). The basis of the catechist's calling is the message of Jesus as stated in the Gospel "Go <sup>2</sup>and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to observe everything that I have commanded you" (Matt. 28:19) . Through the sacrament of baptism and being confirmed again in the sacrament of confirmation, a catechist is called to be a witness to Christ.

Catechists are preachers of <sup>10</sup> the Word of God. As a proclaimer of the Word of God, the Catechist is always present and alive, living in and working according to the Word of God. In their service, Catechists are expected to put forward or show themselves as true preachers. A true herald means always being steadfast in faith, tough and persistent in voicing the truth, loyal in service, willing to make sacrifices, living in God's grace and love, not grumbling, not following the negative current of changing times, following/learning from God's way of life. The true preaching teacher is Christ. A true reporter also does not complain about his duties but is ready whenever and wherever he is sent. True heralds always live with sharing, solidarity, love of duty and the people they serve and live with the people as Christ did, living and living together with His disciples in an atmosphere of brotherhood (Kotan 2005:70).

One of the duties of a catechist is to deliver a mystagogical catechism. Mystical catechesis is post-baptismal assistance given to the newly baptized during Easter week <sup>4</sup> to explain to the newly baptized the spiritual and theological meaning of the various signs, symbols, gestures of the rite of initiation (baptismal liturgy), which they had experienced at the Easter Eve celebration. The Easter season is the final stage of Christian initiation, during which the newly baptized are received into the life of the community as a sacrament. The basic place of mystagogy after baptism is in the Sunday Eucharistic celebrations during the Easter season (O'Collins dan Farrugia 1996:200-201).

## 2) Adult Baptism

<sup>1</sup> The apostle Paul uses baptism as a pedagogical sign at several points in his letters. That is, he uses baptism to teach his readers about specific realities, especially their union with Christ and its implications for sanctification and the Christian life (e.g. Gal 3, Rom 6, Col 2-3) (Watson 2018:3). In the Catholic Church, the sacrament of baptism is one of the seven sacraments that need to be understood and lived as "signs and means that express faith, offer honor to God, and produce human sanctification" (Watson 2018:3). Baptism in the Catholic Church is accepted for babies or children, as well as adults who wish to join the Catholic Church, who believe in the Trinity of God and accept the teachings of the Catholic faith. This second group is categorized as adult baptism.

Adult baptism is the sacrament of washing performed for those who become Christians or who believe in the Lord Jesus. Adulthood is meant here both in a physical and spiritual context. In other words, he is old enough and is responsible for his faith and beliefs. Every person who has decided to believe in Jesus means they have become a Catholic believer. Here,

they are expected to be able to become new people, namely leaving the old way of life to lead themselves to a truly new life, leaving behind the old spirit to live with new enthusiasm and commitment as disciples of Jesus (Prasetya 1999:9-10).

People who have received adult baptism and been accepted as Catholics certainly cannot act as they please but do something with full awareness and sincerity in order to see <sup>3</sup>the Kingdom of God, as Jesus said to Nicodemus, "Truly, I say to you, unless a person is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3). Becoming a Catholic believer should not be defined as just joining a new religion and accepting new teachings, namely the Catholic religion, but becoming a new person in everything. They may receive the gift of new life given by God, namely becoming children of God and being included in His divinity. Becoming a Catholic believer means completely believing and surrendering oneself completely to Jesus in order to become a new creation (Carswell 2018:432).

### 3) The Purpose of Catechesis Mystagogy

Mystagogy catechesis is given to adults who have recently been baptized in the Catholic Church. They are usually called neophytes, meaning new baptism. Their faith is still new or in other words just growing, still in bud form and like a flower that has not yet bloomed. So, care and guidance is needed to bring the experience of faith so that it enters deeply into the life of faith and mission of the community of believers. The main goal of mystagogical catechesis is to help neophytes to internalize the sacraments in their lives and guide them into the community of believers or join the Church. Internalization of the sacraments includes lived experience of faith, knowledge and active participation in the Holy Eucharist. The newly baptized acquire a new, complete and useful knowledge of the mystery of the faith which they experience from the fruits of the sacraments which have been received in the catechetical guidance given. They still have a new faith in how their hearts behave in listening to the Gospel message and living more intimately with the Word of God and how they enter into fellowship with the Holy Spirit and experience how good God is (Konsili Vatikan II 1993:64).

Apart from helping *neophytes* to internalize the sacraments in their lives, mystagogical catechesis also aims to accompany neophytes to deepen the Catholic faith on an ongoing basis, equipping them with the procedures for worship, rites of worship, Catholic treasures and a way of life that reflects their identity as a person. followers of Christ in the Catholic Church. they need to continue to be accompanied in order to receive confirmation that they are not alone on the path of faith they have just received. In this way, they will love the church community even more and especially love Jesus, whom they accept as Lord and Savior.

#### 4) Parties Participating in the Implementation of Mystagogy

The person responsible in this mystagogical period is not just one or two people, but the entire congregation as one unit in the Church communion. So, in this case the individuals involved are referred to according to their respective functions and responsibilities, as follows (Sudarso [tanpa tahun]:2-3):

##### 4.1. Believers

The faithful have the responsibility to receive newly baptized people into their community, greet them, attend celebrations of the sacraments they receive, invite them to meetings in the area or neighborhood and so on. So with this, it is hoped that the newly baptized will increasingly feel accepted as members of the Church and feel themselves as an integral part of the Church community.

##### 4.2. Godparents

Godparents have the responsibility to provide assistance to newly baptized persons. Because as new members of the Church they still have to grow and develop in their faith and need mentoring. Godparents need to improve and invite them to always be faithful to Christ and live out their faith in their daily lives. Godparents must demonstrate an attitude of life that can be an inspiration and good example for the newly baptized.

##### 4.3. Catechists

Catechists have an important role and high responsibility during the formation process for newly baptized people because they most often meet face to face with them and must teach good and correct teaching content. So, they are also required to be role models both in the field of knowledge of the faith and daily practice as followers of Christ. Likewise with community leaders who are often present at celebrations for the catechumens. They are also responsible for providing support through a good way of life for the newly baptized.

##### 4.4. The Priests

The priests who shepherd the people in their respective parishes and as assistants to the bishop have a high and general responsibility in the process of Christian initiation. Pastors of the people must know about the formation process for new baptizers. They should really get to know the personality of each of these newly baptized people. With their unique functions and responsibilities, the pastors of the congregation should monitor, provide correct teaching, lead

celebrations, provide support and provide examples of the appreciation of the faith for new baptizers during the mystagogical period.

#### 4.5. The Bishop

The bishop is responsible for the implementation of Christian initiation throughout his diocese. Practically speaking, there are certain obstacles to being able to provide special attention to newly baptized people. However, even though the bishop cannot be present at the celebration of baptism, he should arrange time to meet with the newly baptized and preside over a Eucharistic celebration for them and for them to receive the Eucharist in two forms.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Catechists are believers who are involved in activities to proclaim the Good News and the person of Jesus. Catechists are sent to proclaim God's work of salvation as seen in the person of Jesus. Catechists not only work to prepare people to receive various sacraments, especially initiation, but also bring Catholic believers to a deep and firm faith. Catechists are Christians who truly live their Christianity as part of God's efforts to realize communion. In proclaiming his vision, he plays a role in proclaiming Jesus Christ to both people who do not yet believe and those who already believe in Him. A catechist who is aware of his vocation will certainly also be aware of his role in the Church. The first role of the Catechist is catechesis, meaning proclaiming the vision of communion that God desires for humanity. Proclaiming Jesus Christ means proclaiming the Good News to everyone from the teaching stage to the maturity stage so that they feel helped to get to know, love and know Jesus Christ more (Prasetya 2017:15).

For someone who will reach a certain point in his life, he must have the courage to go through a certain process or dynamic that exists within it. Likewise, people who want to be baptized as followers of Jesus and join the Catholic Church must be open to a formation process and the steps they must go through which are called the catechumen process. After that, the final step he must go through is what is called the mystagogy period. Mystagogy related to Christian initiation is a time or period used to guide and accompany newly baptized people so that they enter more deeply into the mystery of Christ. The process of mystagogy for adult baptism is the fourth period of the entire adult initiation process which can also be said to be a period of strengthening faith. The essence of this mystagogical period is to guide the newly baptized to better understand the meaning of the sacraments and to live them in their daily lives. As a newly baptized Catholic, you still need assistance and guidance to deepen your life as a



Catholic. After baptism, it does not mean that the Catholic person has understood all the secrets of the Catholic faith and is also not fully established as a Catholic. So, it is still necessary to provide a number of further materials for the mystagogy period process (Putranto 2020:3).

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