

# What IS Mystagogical Reflection?

Don't let the title scare you! Mystagogical reflection is a very natural response to any heightened experience. Whenever a person—of any age—has an “aha!” experience, there is a need to tell someone about it. Some examples include:

- ✿ Getting a perfect score on a big test
- ✿ Seeing the ocean or the mountains for the first time
- ✿ Passing a driver's test and getting your driver's license
- ✿ Graduating from high school or college
- ✿ Getting engaged to be married
- ✿ The birth of your first child

The above are examples of experiences that a person often wants to share with others—not just telling the story of the experience one time, but sharing it with anyone who will listen. An “aha!” experience can be life changing. Sometimes, true understanding of what the experience means will not happen until a much later date. Heightened experiences—“aha” experiences—often need to be debriefed in order to come to such understanding.

In the RCIA process, each of the major rites celebrated well is a heightened experience. It is important to provide the opportunity for the participants and their families to gather to prayerfully and verbally unpack their experience of the rite. This means taking the time to name the experiences, and to reflect on their meaning for our lives and for our journey of faith. The following is offered as a suggested process.

### *How to Lead Mystagogical Reflection*

Invite the group to quiet themselves, close their eyes, and remember the celebration of the rite. Begin by singing a refrain that was sung during the liturgy.

- ✦ Lead the group through a brief, prayerful reflection on the liturgy and the rite that was celebrated. Include words and phrases from the Scripture readings, the prayers, the participants' responses to questions, and some of the refrains of the music sung.
- ✦ Following the reflection on the liturgy and the rite, ask these or similar questions, and invite responses.
  - What did you see, hear, or touch during the rite?
  - How did you feel during the celebration of the rite?
  - What do you remember most from the liturgy?
- ✦ Ask the entire group to respond to the following questions.
  - As you took part in the celebration of the rite, what did you see, hear, or feel that told you something about faith in God? About the Catholic faith?
  - (If the rite involved the use of a symbol) If the symbol could speak, what would it tell you?
- ✦ Conclude by giving participants time to draw a picture of their favorite memory of the liturgy. Consider playing instrumental music during this time to facilitate quiet and reflection.
- ✦ Invite volunteers who wish to share what they drew, and if possible display the drawings in the parish hall or in your meeting area.

## KEY SYMBOLS

### *Rite of Acceptance*

- The cross
- The signing of the senses
- Receiving the Bible
- Being welcomed by the assembly

### *Rite of Election*

- The calling of names
- The writing of names in the Book of the Elect
- The celebration of the rite at the Cathedral

### *Scrutiny*

- Hearing the litany spoken or sung
- The laying on of hands
- Experiencing the assembly praying for me

### *Easter Vigil*

- The fire
- The stories of the Bible proclaimed
- Being baptized
- Being confirmed
- Receiving First Holy Communion