

“The third step of Christian initiation, the celebration of the sacraments, is followed by the final period, the period of postbaptismal catechesis or mystagogy. This is a time for the community and the neophytes together to grow in deepening their grasp of the Paschal Mystery and making it part of their lives through meditation on the Gospel, sharing in the Eucharist, and doing works of charity...Since the distinctive spirit and power of the postbaptismal catechesis derive from the new, personal experience of the sacraments and of the community, its main setting is the...Sunday Masses of the Easter season” (*Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* 244, 247).

The Sunday Masses of the Easter season have long held a special place in the Church’s calendar. They focus on the risen Christ and his appearances to his disciples, preparing them for their mission by deepening their understanding of the mystery of his death and resurrection, the Paschal Mystery. In these appearances, Christ not only teaches his disciples, but he often shares a meal with them. Every meal that Christ shares with others in the Gospels reflects the ultimate meal he shares with us in the Eucharist, and that connection is certainly intended by the evangelists in their accounts of the risen Christ’s meals with his disciples. The combination of teaching and meal forms the two-fold structure of every Eucharistic celebration, as we hear God’s Word proclaimed in the Scriptures and eat the Word made flesh in the Eucharist, but this pattern takes on special significance in the Sunday Masses of the Easter season as the newly baptized deepen their understanding of the saving mysteries they received at Easter and are strengthened by heavenly food for their new mission as disciples of Christ. This period of postbaptismal Eucharistic instruction, or mystagogy, is carried out within the supportive presence of the entire community of faith into whom the newly baptized have been incorporated, and together both the newly baptized and those baptized long ago grow into more faithful and more passionate witnesses of the risen Christ.

Our community was not blessed with any newly baptized members this Easter (which is something we will have to work extra-hard for next year!), but the unique opportunity for growth afforded by the Easter season is something that we cannot let pass without taking advantage of it. Toward that end, we at St. Boniface will utilize the Sunday Masses of this blessed season to reflect more deeply on the mystery of the Eucharist itself, particularly on how we celebrate the Eucharist at Mass. Deacon Tim and I will expound on that mystery through our Sunday homilies and other opportunities for instruction during the Masses. I will also put a question box in the gathering space. If you have any particular questions about the Mass, please place them in the box. While it will not be possible to answer all of them, I will try to answer as many as space permits in this weekly column throughout the Easter season. Finally, I encourage you to do some personal spiritual reading on the Eucharist and the Mass; as always, a good place to start is the website for the United States Bishops under the tab for “Prayer and Worship” (www.usccb.org/prayer-and-worship/the-mass/index.cfm). In these ways and more, may the risen Christ enlighten us, as he did his disciples long ago, with the truth of the great sacrament of his Body and Blood and make our celebration of this sacred mystery at St. Boniface ever more fruitful as we continue Christ’s mission today.