

DOCUMENTING OUR MINISTRIES

MINISTRY: THE CATECHUMENATE

DATE OF THIS DOCUMENTATION UPDATE: 28 JANUARY 2009

MINISTRY DESCRIPTION:

At St. Michael's the Catechumenate is both a personal and communal process of faith formation and practice that finds its roots in the early Church and focuses on spiritual development through the disciplines of faith: corporate worship, the study of Scripture, prayer, and living our Baptismal promises. (It is, in fact, a process not a program.) Through the Catechumenate, adults on a spiritual quest are offered an apprenticeship in living the Christian faith, and those already baptized are aided in the deepening of their faith and commitment.

On Advent I each year, the Catechumenal Process begins, as the Formation Team welcomes catechumens (those preparing for baptism), candidates for confirmation, reaffirmation, and reception, and sponsors (one for each of the catechumens and candidates). Typically this group includes about 25 to 30 parishioners. They then meet from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m. almost every Sunday from Advent I until the Bishop comes in May or early June. They also spend two Saturdays on retreat: one just before or after Ash Wednesday, and the other on the day before they will come before the Bishop.

The Catechumenal Process is linked with the parish liturgy in several ways:

- As part of their covenant with one another, sponsors and their catechumen or candidate to sit together during worship services whenever possible.
- The Prayers of the People: Catechumens are prayed for by name throughout Lent, as they prepare for baptism during the Great Vigil of Easter; Candidates are prayed for from Easter until they go before the Bishop.
- The Rites of Admission of Catechumens and Candidates (early in Epiphany) and the Enrolment of Catechumens (early in Lent) are incorporated into the main Sunday liturgies.
- All are invited to share with other parishioners in washing one another's feet on Maundy Thursday.

Each Sunday follows the same pattern or format:

- Meet together to sing a short Taize` piece and a beginning time of prayer, including intercessions for folks in our hearts
- Break into small groups for Check-in and Scripture Reflection (based on the African/South American Method)
- Come back together for snacks and a short social time
- Participate in "Bread for the Journey," a sharing of insights, information, and mainly personal discovery relating to a particular aspect of the Christian journey of faith

- Conclude with a hymn or sacred song and a shared prayer of blessing

Over the past 14 years it has become increasingly clear (especially through participants' evaluations at the end of the process), that the most valuable and formative portion of this process is the Scripture Reflection, when participants reflect of the Gospel for the coming Sunday and respond to the three questions: What word or phrase stands out for me? What is God saying to me in or through this text? What is God calling me to be or do in the week ahead?

During the portion of each session set aside for "Bread for the Journey" participants are invited to engage with specific materials or topics, such as the liturgical year, the mystery of the incarnation, the renunciations and affirmation of the Baptismal Rite, the promises of the Baptismal Covenant, the rite of Reconciliation of a Penitent, discerning gifts and call to ministry both within the worshiping community and in the wider world, Ministry in Daily Life (which is that ministry in the wider world).

The Rector is a member of the Formation Team. The members of the Formation Team – both lay and clergy – take turns facilitating a process of active learning and discovery, based on well-established pedagogical models, augmented by brief presentations to contextualize and provide reflective insights for each week's learning.