

Lent I - Enrolment for the Catechumenate

These rites would normally form part of the liturgy during the First Sunday of Lent in the year when the catechumens begin their 15 month journey to baptism.

In years where catechumens are being enrolled for baptism, the enrolment for the catechumenate may take place at Lent 2.

GATHERING RITE: PRESENTATION OF INQUIRERS

This part of the rite precedes the first hymn of praise or gathering. The congregation, along with the inquirers and their sponsors, gather at the church door. A church member carries the book of the Gospel.

A pastor says:

Friends, we are gathered at this door
to welcome these sisters and brothers
who have been called by God's Spirit
to inquire into the life of faith we practise in this congregation.
Let us together welcome them.
Let us clasp them to our hearts with warmth and thanksgiving.

A sponsor presents each inquirer, saying:

I present N to be welcomed to our community.

When all have been presented, the inquirers kneel before the Gospel book, still being carried by a member of the congregation.

The following dialogue is exchanged by a pastor with each inquirer in turn:

N, what do you seek?

To hear God's word with you.

What do you seek from God's Word?

Faith and fullness of life.

A pastor then continues:

Grace and mercy are given to all who call upon God's name.
As a people of the Spirit, we pray God to take you by the hand;
may God lead you to be joined to Christ in baptism.
For now, you are invited to join with us to hear the word of God.
Will you be faithful and diligent in learning the way of Christ?

Each Inquirer responds:

I will, and I ask God to help me.

The inquirers rise to their feet.

A pastor then addresses the sponsors, as well as the congregation.

N and N, you have presented these inquirers to us,
And agreed to be their mentors and friends along the way to Christ.
Yet you are not called to bear this responsibility alone.
All who assemble here as members of Christ's church are called
to share your burden and support your ministry.
So I ask all of you now, both mentors and congregation:
will you help these inquirers to hear the gospel of Christ,
and will you encourage them, in word and deed,
to find their home in the household of faith?

We will, and we ask God to help us.

A pastor prays, with arms stretched over the whole congregation:

Lord Jesus Christ,
we give you thanks for these your servant(s), for N & N,
whom you have sought and summoned to your cross.
You called, and today they have answered you in our presence.
We praise you, O God, and we bless you.

The congregation responds:

We praise you, O God, and we bless you.

The pastor continues:

Now, N & N, come into the church to hear the word of God with us.

All enter the church and take their places, and the first hymn is sung. The sponsors remain with their charges amongst the catechumens. The gathering rites (possibly in an abbreviated form) continue.

SIGNING WITH THE CROSS & GIVING OF CATECHUMAL JOURNEY-BAGS.

This part of the rite occurs immediately following the Affirmation of Faith. The catechumens and their sponsors gather around the communion table, on which the Gospel book has been laid.

A pastor says:

You have heard the precious gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.
Now receive the sign of that gospel on your body and in your heart,
that you may know the Lord and the power of his resurrection.

The pastor then marks each catechumen with the sign of the cross, saying:

N, receive the sign of the cross of Christ;
be assured of his great love for you,
and learn to know and follow him with joy.

The congregation responds:

***Praise be you, Lord Jesus Christ,
the wisdom and power of God!***

The sponsors then turn to their catechumen and trace the sign of the cross on each part of their bodies as it is named by the pastor in the following litany:

Receive the cross on your ears,
that you may hear the gospel of Christ, the word of life.

***Praise be you, Lord Jesus Christ,
the wisdom and power of God!***

Receive the cross on your eyes,
that you may see the light of Christ, illumination for your way.

***Praise be you, Lord Jesus Christ,
the wisdom and power of God!***

Receive the cross on your lips,
that you may sing the praise of Christ, the joy of the church.

***Praise be you, Lord Jesus Christ,
the wisdom and power of God!***

Receive the cross on your heart,
that God may dwell there by faith.

***Praise be you, Lord Jesus Christ,
the wisdom and power of God!***

Receive the cross on your shoulders,
that you may bear the gentle yoke of Christ.

***Praise be you, Lord Jesus Christ,
the wisdom and power of God!***

Receive the cross on your hands,
that God's mercy may be known in your work.

***Praise be you, Lord Jesus Christ,
the wisdom and power of God!***

Receive the cross on your feet,
that you may walk in the way of Christ.

***Praise be you, Lord Jesus Christ,
the wisdom and power of God!***

The catechumenal journey-bags are given with these words:

The journey ahead is long and difficult. You will need to travel light. Take this journey-bag, then, and use it to carry only those things that Christ will give you. Rid yourselves of every other weight—that sin that so easily entangles—and run with perseverance the race that is set before you, looking only to Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of your faith.

Heb 12. 1-2

BLESSING OF THE CATECHUMENS

The catechumens kneel. Any who wish to may come forward and lay their hands upon the catechumens as a sign of blessing. A pastor prays with the following words:

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Merciful and loving God

You have called your people from darkness into your glorious light,
from error into truth, from death into resurrection life.

We ask you now: fill N & N with your grace, and bless them.

Raise them by your Spirit.

Revive them by your word.

Form them by your hand.

Bring them to the water of life and to the bread and cup of blessing,
that they, with all your people, may bear witness to your grace
and praise you forever;

for Jesus sake and for his glory.

Amen.

Another pastor says:

God bring you in peace and joy to fullness of life in Christ,
and call you, in time, to the waters of baptism.

Amen.

The candidates rise and return to their seats. The service continues with a baptismal hymn and the Prayers of the People.

Prepared for the South Yarra Community Baptist Church
by Garry J. Deverell

© 2003 South Yarra Community Baptist Church
12 Surrey Road, South Yarra, Victoria 3141, Australia.
church@laughingbird.net