

THE SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM AS PORTRAYED IN SELECTED WORKS
OF SAINT AMBROSE AND SAINT CYRIL OF JERUSALEM,
AND ITS POSSIBLE USE IN THE CLASSROOM
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CURRICULUM STUDIORUM

Sister Mary Geraldine Curran, S.N.J.M., was born on July 2, 1912 in Montreal. She received her elementary and High School education at St. Aloysius School and Hochelaga Convent in Montreal.

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INTRODUCTION

The challenge "to meet the needs of our times" is frequently thrust at educators who are well aware that progress and growth are necessities in the process of educating. But it is one thing to acknowledge the need for progress, and another to be able to draw the line between needs and superfluities. Those of us, however, who are engaged in teaching religion, have the reassurance of being anchored securely in the time-tested principles of Christian education.

To the teacher of religion falls the happy lot of presenting Christ as a leader who is capable of inspiring confidence and love. And when the ideal of working with Christ and through Christ becomes a motivating principle in the lives of the young, they will not have to be coaxed to learn more about Him. In bringing this about, the teacher will be fulfilling the end of true Christian education.

The proper and immediate end of Christian education is to cooperate with Divine grace in forming the true and perfect Christian, that is, to form Christ Himself in those regenerated by Baptism, according to the emphatic expression of the Apostle: "My little children, in whom I am in labour again, until Christ is formed in you" (Gal.4:19).¹

Imbued with the nature of his responsibility, the religion teacher must never content himself with half measures.

¹
Pope XI, Divini Illius Magistri, December 31, 1929
(London: Catholic Truth Society), p.45.

By confining his instruction absolutely to the content of the catechism on hand, he is not even satisfying the minimum. It is incumbent upon him to enrich himself as best he can by serious reading and research in order to be better prepared to impart the true meaning of the Faith. To accomplish this, help may be sought in the method used by Christ Himself, the Apostles and the Fathers of the Church.

It is not an exaggeration to say that the science of faith has undergone a certain obscuratization through false emphases and the incomplete grasp some have had of the basic elements. A return to the core of the great saving truths as primitively held and preached has been part of theology's work in our time.²

How, then, are we to teach? Modern catechetics asserts that the answer lies, at least partially, in the biblical concept of kerygma, literally a heralding. Kerygma means the proclamation of God's acts.

The essential nature of the Christian proclamation of the New Testament kerygma is the heralding of God's saving action in Christ. The heralding of Christ is the heralding of God's action in human history, an action that has its motive in love and its purpose in our salvation. Now the whole Bible deals with the continual proclamation of historical events which are the acts of God.³

Therefore, the Old and the New Testaments cannot be taught

² Gerard S. Sloyan, "Religious Education Today", The Catholic Educational Review Vol. L1V (December, 1956) 580

³ James M. Connolly, "The Kerygma", The Promise Vol. 11 (February, 1963) 27

apart from one another, nor can either be understood without the Church, the community in which they are found and which, still today, mediates God's acts to man. For it is always in the heart of the Church that are to be found the apostolic witnesses with whom Christian education is closely related. It is to be hoped that by the direct means of the Old and the New Testaments, and by the indirect means found in the teaching of the Fathers, we, Christian educators, may instill into the hearts of our students a love for the Church and her work.

Contrary to the misconceptions of many, the Church is not tied to the slavish repetitions of the ceremonies and idioms of the past. She is a living organism and adapts her language, rites, ceremonies and liturgy to the growing and maturing need of her children.⁴

The present thesis is confined to one phase of catechetical teaching, the Sacrament of Baptism. It is an attempt to indicate how instruction on our spiritual adoption can be enriched, that is made more fruitful by helpful recourse to the works of the Fathers of the Church. The writings of St. Ambrose of Milan and St. Cyril of Jerusalem provide basic and essential material. Both these catechists of the past, besides the enlightenment they provide on the Sacrament of Baptism, are of great assistance in their biblical-narrative

⁴ John Lafarge, S.J. and John O'Brien, S.J., "The Language of the Liturgy", America (August 20, 1960) 556

manner of approach. This, in itself, is a significant help as a part of the answer to the catechetical need of our day.

Liturgical and patristic writers point out that the writings of St. Ambrose of Milan and St. Cyril of Jerusalem are rich sources for the study of the sacraments.

Not until the fourth century was there anything like a systematic explanation of the sacred rites; these are the instructions given to the catechumens by St. Ambrose in his De Sacramentis and his De Mysteriis.⁵

The series of twenty-four catechetical lectures, most of which St. Cyril delivered in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, is one of the most precious treasures of Christian antiquity.⁶

It is the purpose of this thesis to consider the writings of these two catechists, particularly on the subject of Baptism, and to see how these writings can be of help as an enrichment to present-day catechetical instruction.

5

William J. O'Shea, S.S., The Worship of the Church (Westminster: The Newman Press, 1957), p.4.

6

Johannes Quasten, The Golden Age of Greek Patristic Literature, Vol. III of Patrology (Westminster: The Newman Press, 1960), p.363.

CHAPTER ONE

SAINT AMBROSE'S CATECHESIS

The word catechesis refers to the handing on of a message of salvation, using as a starting point the history of God's plan which is summed up in the Creed and the mysteries celebrated by the liturgy, Baptism and the Holy Eucharist in particular. It aims moreover, at a kind of permanent training in faith, for the Christian must, at every age, respond to God's call and be converted. If we prefer the term catechesis, it is because it has the merit of inviting us not to stop halfway in our apostolic effort, but to see clearly at what we are aiming in our religious teaching. What must be achieved is a living faith in those we teach. A current catechist states it in this way:

The aim of catechesis is to initiate the new believer into the Mystery of Christ and to assist in the formation of his Christian personality. Faith in Christ is the point of departure.¹

To achieve then, the accepted aims of catechetics as mentioned above, an attempt is being made in this chapter to review summarily the works of St. Ambrose of Milan. It is believed that his teaching on Baptism may serve as excellent

¹Alfonso N. Nebraska, S.J. "The Dynamic Aspect of the Christian Message", The Bulletin (April, 1964) 4

source material on the Sacrament of our re-birth. But, before presenting the works of St. Ambrose as such, it is fitting to give here a brief summary of his life.

LIFE OF ST. AMBROSE

St. Ambrose was born about the year three hundred and forty at Trier. His birthplace was situated on the Moselle River just inside the border of what is now known as modern Germany.

Although his parents were good Christians, Ambrose was not baptized as a child. This is not too surprising since it was customary in the early days of the Church to delay the baptism of a child until a later date.

Tragedy came early to Ambrose's family by the death of his father. For the furtherance of the education of her three children, Ambrose's mother now moved to Rome where her younger son, Ambrose, took up the study of law in view of a political career. Here, his superior qualities and abilities brought about his rapid advancement. In three hundred and seventy-four, at the latest, he was the Governor of Northern Italy, having his residence at Milan.

When Ambrose had been Governor for about a year, the Bishop of Milan died. Since it was the custom in those days

for the people to nominate their own bishop, it was a turbulent as well as busy day on the date appointed for the event. The Governor, accompanying his people to the crowded Cathedral had little idea of what was in store for him.

He moved among the ranks endeavouring to maintain order as names were suggested. But he was suddenly forced to a standstill at the cry of "Ambrose, Bishop!". Historians tell us that Ambrose resisted the honour with all his power:

St. Ambrose did all in his power, (if we accept the statements of his biographer, Paulinus, probably a clerk of Milan), resorting to some questionable expedients to escape the dignity laid upon him.²

Ambrose at first refused saying that he was neither worthy nor ready since he was as yet only a catechumen. But his remonstrances were in vain, and, forced to yield, he was baptized without delay. In a few days he was ordained. He subsequently became one of the most influential bishops the Church has ever known. One writer says of him:

He was the first striking example of the great part that the Christian episcopacy was to play in a world which had been shattered and renewed, and for which, although he did not see it, helped to pave the way. He was preeminently a Doctor of the Church.³

²St. Ambrose, Select Works and Letters, Vol. X of A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church (14 vols.; New York: Christian Literature Co., 1890-1900), p. xv.

³F. Cayré, Manual of Patrology, trans. H. Howitt, Vol. 1 (Paris: Desclée et Co., 1935), p. 528.

St. Ambrose is especially appreciated for the riches he has left the Church in his writings. His catechetical lectures On the Mysteries and On the Sacraments are an asset of deep significance for the development of catechesis according to the needs of our day when there prevails an insistence on biblical knowledge. He is considered by some authorities in catechetics as an example in this area as the following gives evidence:

He goes from Pentateuch to prophets, epistles to gospels indiscriminately. Here the classic form is the oldest catechetical assumption: that the Bible or the oral teaching based upon it is the sourceplate of all doctrine for Christians.⁴

Before becoming a Christian, Ambrose had been an excellent officer; once made a man of the Church, not only did he not lose his superior qualities, but he increased them. He became the perfect statesman who, with his practical mind and his knowledge of the law, tempered justice with charity.⁵

The great bishop's death was as beautiful as his life had been. We are told that he died on Good Friday in the year three hundred and ninety-seven as he was finishing his commentary on the Forty-third Psalm.

⁴Gerard S.Sloyan (Editor), Shaping the Christian Message (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1959), p.17.

⁵J.Bricourt (Editor), "Saint Ambroise", Dictionnaire Pratique de Connaissances Religieuses Vol.1 (Paris: Letouzey et Ané, 1925), col.167.

THE WORKS OF ST.AMBROSE

The two treatises of St.Ambrose, On the Mysteries and On the Sacraments are almost identical in content. They throw much light of the Sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation, and culminate in the reception of the Holy Eucharist as was practiced in the fourth century. The appreciation of one writer is shown in the following:

The work De Sacramentis, besides its importance as a theological and liturgical source, is also an extremely interesting document by its flowing and lively Latin which comes unceasingly to our observation.

However, the authorship of On the Sacraments was the object of prolonged discussion because, although its content is almost identical with that of On the Mysteries, the literary style has been judged to be far inferior. This finding led many critics to believe it to be the work of some altogether different author. From the fourth century onwards the discussion on this matter found repercussions until 1942 when a definitive decision was reached. This was the outcome of two individual studies made simultaneously, one in England under Dom R.H.Connolly, the other, in Austria under Father Otto Faller, S.I. Neither knew about the research being done by his colleague. A Work of St. Ambrose was the published result of

⁶Christine Morhmann, "Le style oral du De Sacramentis de St.Ambroise", Vigiliae Christianae, VI (June, 1962) 168

the inquiry made by Dom Connolly in England, while that of Father Faller was entitled: "Ambrosius de Verfasser von De Sacramentis." It was published in Corpus, a magazine in Austria. Both writers, Connolly and Faller, attributed De Sacramentis to its rightful author, St. Ambrose. They had come to the conclusion that the variance of the literary merit of this treatise was due to the fact of its having been copied by someone who must have been charged with taking down in shorthand the oral teachings of St. Ambrose. Scholars have since accepted their conclusions seeing in them the answer to the investigation.⁷ A patristic writer views the situation this way:

Among the results which patristic science has achieved in recent years, we may now register what we consider one of the most important findings, a restitution to St. Ambrose, his work, De Sacramentis. Since the sixteenth century this work has been doubted as being the work of St. Ambrose just as much by reformers as by educated Catholics.⁸

Closely connected with the people, the Fathers are, above all, pastors who adapt themselves to their hearers. From the known to the unknown they bring their audience to the Christian mysteries. Three steps are followed regularly, sometimes alternately, sometimes simultaneously: explanation of the names, explanation of the rites, explanation of the

⁷Johannes Quasten, The Ante-Nicene Literature after Irenaeus, Vol. 11 of Patrology (Westminster: The Newman Press, 1958).

⁸Morhmann, op.cit.

figures.⁹ A good example of this procedure may be observed in St. Ambrose's explanation of the Ephpheta, which ceremony was performed on Easter Saturday. The simplicity of the words and the manner in which St. Ambrose contrasts the effects of Baptism with the healing of the deaf and dumb man by Our Lord in the Gospel carries its own personal significance. "And looking up to heaven, he groaned, saying to him: Ephpheta, which is be thou opened" (Mark 7:34). Having introduced the Gospel text, Ambrose proceeds to explain the details of the contrasting effects, one by one. He remarks that, just as Our Lord touched the ears and mouth of the dumb man, so the priest touches the ears and nostrils of those about to be baptized. The ears, that they may hear the word of God, and the nostrils that they may savour the fragrance of faith and devotion. "For we are the good odour of Christ unto God, in them that are saved and in them that perish" (2 Cor. 2:15). Anticipating the question that would, no doubt arise concerning the touching of the nostrils rather than the mouth, St. Ambrose explained the necessity for the change of action. The deaf and dumb man was cured by Our Lord, he said, and Our Lord was perfect. But,

⁹Bernard Grasset, (Editor), *Le Baptême d'après les Pères de l'Eglise* (Paris: Les Editions du Cerf, 1962), p.15.

in the case of Baptism, since women as well as men are baptized, it is not proper for the priest, who is a man, and not perfect like Our Lord, to touch the mouth of a woman.¹⁰

The instructions of St. Ambrose are clear and to the point. In his endeavours to effect an immediate response, he makes frequent use of examples from the Old and the New Testaments, trying in every possible way to make himself well understood by all. The simplicity of his language as well as the scriptural presentation he uses, could well serve as the model for our present-day catechists. The manner of his approach is described by a modern patristic writer:

The peculiar colouring of the exegetical works of St. Ambrose is owing to his allegorical-mystical interpretation of the Scripture text . . . Under his hand the slightest external details, circumstances apparently insignificant in a biblical event are transformed and made to offer most profound and valuable instructions for the faith and life of the Christian.¹¹

Our whole spiritual foundation is faith. This is the formal teaching of St. Ambrose who repeatedly insists that faith is founded on the Holy Ghost. Instilling this truth into the minds of his neophytes, he makes them reflect on two

¹⁰St. Ambrose, On the Mysteries and On the Sacraments, edited by J.H. Srawley. On the Mysteries 1:3-4 (London: S.P.C.K., 1950), p.123.

¹¹Berthold Altaner, Patrology, trans. Hilda C. Graef (New York: Herder and Herder Book Company, 1960), p.445.

scriptural instances: the descent of the Holy Ghost at the Baptism of Our Lord, and the coming of the Holy Ghost upon the Apostles in the form of tongues of fire at the first Pentecost. But, he reminds them, that at the time of Jesus, signs were necessary, whereas for those who have received the fullness of the Church, faith is sufficient. In this belief and teaching, Ambrose was repeating the message of the Apostle of the Gentiles who taught that our spiritual regeneration is attributed sometimes to faith, sometimes to Baptism, because the act and the rite are mutually dependant and exercise a common causality."¹²

For Ambrose, there was a special depth of meaning as regards our regeneration and the part played in it by the Most Blessed Trinity. The Three Persons act, not individually, as some are prone to believe, but as one single agent. To bring out this truth effectively, Ambrose used the threefold denial of St. Peter, and the subsequent touching scene where Our Divine Lord asks St. Peter three times if he loves Him. Our Lord acted thus to assure Peter that his triple denial was completely absolved. In like manner, St. Ambrose tells us, the Father forgives, the Son forgives and the Holy Ghost forgives. And this accounts for our being baptized not in the names, but

¹²Fernand Prat, S.J. The Theology of St. Paul, trans. John F. Stoddard, Vol. 11 (Westminster: The Newman Press, 1952), p. 260.

in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Ambrose purposely stresses the wording thus emphasizing the fact that the Three Divine Persons act as one. In this teaching, Ambrose resembles earlier catechists such as Ireneaus who did much the same as a passage from the writings of Ireneaus gives proof:

For the Father bears the creation and His own Word simultaneously, and the Word borne by the Father grants the Spirit to all as the Father wills. To some He gives after the manner of creation, to others after the manner of adoption, that is, what is from God, names generation, and thus one God, the Father, is declared, who is above all, through all, and in all, and He is the Head of Christ; but the Word is through all things, and is Himself the Head of the Church; while the Spirit is in us all, and He is the living water (John 7:39).¹³

Imagery is another means which Ambrose employs to help his people visualize the reward which awaits those who have remained faithful to the numerous graces received at Baptism. On one of these instances he says:

Thou didst enter, thou sawest the water, thou sawest the priest, thou sawest a levite. Thou hast seen all that thou couldst see with the eyes of the body and with human vision. Thou hast not seen the things which are effected, because they cannot be seen. The things which are not seen are far greater than the things which are seen; since the things which are seen are temporal, the things which are not seen are eternal.¹⁴

¹³Ireneaus, "Ireneaus against the Heresies", Book 4, chap. XVIII, sec. 2, The Apostolic Fathers, Justin Martyr, Ireneaus of The Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. 1 (8 vols.; Buffalo; The Christian Literature Publishing Company, 1896-), p. 546.

¹⁴St. Ambrose, On the Mysteries and On the Sacraments, op.cit., On the Sacraments 3:10, p. 52.

Ambrose devotes a considerable part of his instruction to the white garment of those reborn in Baptism. His discourses on this topic are interwoven with quotations from the Psalms and the Canticle of Canticles. Here he imagines a dialogue between Christ and the newly-baptized concerning the white garment.¹⁵ We have the custom of wearing the white baptismal garment described by a writer today:

In the ancient Church the newly-baptized went for days in a white garment, rejoicing in the good fortune over becoming God's children. This is a symbol of God's grace which we should bear with us all through life.¹⁶

Baptism imposes obligations. St. Ambrose vigilantly sees that his neophytes, once baptized, become active members of the living Church. But this is not sufficient, for he sees it as an incumbent duty that they not only keep the faith themselves, but that they spread it to those with whom they come in contact. We are bound to be true witnesses of Christ in every sense of the word. "So let your light shine before men that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in Heaven" (Matt. 5:16). In this teaching, St. Ambrose shares the opinion of many before and after his era, as may be seen by the view of a writer today:

It is a traditional tenet of the Catholic Faith that every baptized person shares in the actual priesthood of Christ.

¹⁶Adolf Donders, The Message of Christ, trans. Rudolph Kraus (St. Louis: B. Herder Book Company, 1953), p. 410.

St. Ireneaus, a glorious martyr of Lyons (d.202) says: "All the just have a priestly ordination." St. Chrysostom, the Mouth of Gold, echoes the same thought in the formula, "You were made a priest at Baptism." St. Jerome calls Baptism "the priesthood of the laity", and in his famous City of God, St. Augustine speaks as follows: "Just as we call all 'Christians' because of the mystic chrism, so we call all 'priests' because they are 'members of one Priest'."¹⁷

That Baptism leaves an indelible character on the soul is another truth that may be traced to the Fathers of the Church. To Ambrose, the baptismal seal is the immediate effect of the cross of Christ. Let us see how he explains his theory:

Therefore hath God anointed thee, the Lord signed thee. How? Because thou wast signed with the image of the cross itself into the passion, thou receivedst a sign unto His image and likeness, that thou mayest rise unto His image and live unto His pattern, who was crucified to sin and liveth to God.¹⁸

In this belief, Ambrose is once again preaching the wisdom of St. Paul: "Now it is God who strengthens us with you in Christ, and has appointed us, who has stamped us with His seal and gave us the Spirit as a pledge in our hearts" (2 Cor.1:21-22). The seal is a mark placed indelibly on the soul at Baptism which indefectibly unites us with Christ through a very real participation in His death and resurrection.¹⁹

¹⁷Gerald Ellard, S.J., Christian Life and Worship (Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Co., 1943), p.50.

¹⁸St. Ambrose, On the Mysteries and On the Sacraments, op.cit., On the Sacraments 2:7, p.110.

¹⁹I. De La Potterie, S.J., "L'Onction du Chrétien par la foi", Biblica (Vol.40, 1959) 38.

A prominent theologian writing today refers to the way in which Ambrose spoke of this indelible seal of Baptism:

Very frequent is the comparison to the military branding of tatooing, a mark which soldiers bore as a sign of service or a means of recognition and a precaution against desertion. St. Ambrose speaks of the character of Christ, which Valentinien bore within him, just as slaves are marked with the character or ownership of their masters, or as soldiers with the name of the Emperor.²⁰

The analogy as we have seen, may be of some help to the teacher in explaining the character conferred by Baptism. Ambrose sees the character as a permanent seal which makes the soul conformable to the figure of Christ. And to inculcate the dignity that Baptism has thus conferred on the soul, Ambrose borrows expressions from the Canticle of Canticles: "Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a signet upon thine arm, that is, thou art comely, my neighbour" (Cant. 8:7). Then he reminds all that the character imposes obligations of living up to the status received from the bountiful goodness of the Blessed Trinity in whose Name we have been sealed.

Having been made the adopted children of God and having been strengthened with the new life of grace, Ambrose exhorts his neophytes to think seriously upon the gifts bestowed upon them and to use them to further their eternal

²⁰Bernard Leeming, S.J., Principles of Sacramental Theology (Toronto: Longmans, Green & Company, 1955), p.164.

salvation. "God the Father Almighty, who hath regenerated thee by water and the Holy Ghost and hath forgiven thee thy sins, Himself anoint thee unto eternal life."²¹

Regarding the rites and ceremonies of Baptism, Ambrose is explicit in his explanation of several matters. Thus, when he speaks of the water for the proper conferring of Baptism, he offers a rich scriptural documentation by which he makes it clear to his hearers that Baptism requires or presupposes the death of Christ on the cross, water and the Holy Spirit. This is the way Ambrose had of saying it:

Therefore, read that the three witnesses in Baptism, the water, the blood and the Spirit (1 John 5:8) are one, for if you take away one of these, the Sacrament of Baptism does not exist. For what is Baptism without the cross of Christ, [i.e. without the Blood of Christ], a common element without any sacramental effect. Nor again is there the sacrament of Regeneration without water: "For except a man be born again of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God" (John 3:5). Now even the catechumen believes in the cross of the Lord Jesus, wherewith he, too, is signed; but unless he be baptized in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, he cannot receive the remission of sins, nor gain the gift of spiritual grace.²²

Ambrose, like the other patristic Fathers, saw Baptism prefigured in Old Testament types. Thus, when the

²¹St. Ambrose, On the Mysteries and on the Sacraments, op.cit., On the Sacraments 7:24, p.68.

²²St. Ambrose, "Concerning the Mysteries", Select Works and Letters, trans. H. DeRomestin, Vol. X of A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church (14 vols.; New York: Christian Literature Company, 1890-1900), p.319.

primordial waters covered the face of the earth, "the breath of God moved over the waters" (Gen.1:2), and, at His word, the waters brought forth living creatures. This was a new creation by the power of God. So, too, in Baptism, where the water makes children, who were dead in sin, rise to a new life of grace in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost.

One of the symbolisms most frequently found in the works of St. Ambrose is that in which he likens Baptism to the Death and Resurrection of Our Lord. His analogy of this is brief and very clear:

Therefore, the Apostle cries: 'Whosoever is baptized, is baptized in His death.' What is in His death? It is as Christ died, so thou also wouldst taste of death; that as Christ died unto sin, and liveth unto God, so thou also shouldst be dead unto the former allurements of sins through the Sacrament of Baptism, and shouldst rise again through the grace of Christ. It is a death, therefore, but not a death in the reality of bodily death, but in the likeness.²³

Thus Ambrose makes it evident that we really, though in a mystical manner, die in Christ's death and rise with Him to a new spiritual life in His resurrected Body, which is mystically the Church. The Sacrament of Baptism makes Christ's death in some way present, and incorporates us into it. The 'Mystery'

²³ St. Ambrose, On the Mysteries and On the Sacraments, op.cit., On the Sacraments 5:8, p.59.

in the presence and power of the passion and death of Christ, and in our being assumed into it to rise again in Christ's resurrection.

That our pupils may appreciate and find the personal application of Ambrose's teaching in this instance, it is necessary to describe for them the baptismal font as it was constructed in the early days of Christianity. In the midst of the baptistery was the baptismal basin, usually between two and four feet deep, and surrounded by a low wall. Into this basin the candidates descended to be baptized.²⁴ This description helps us to understand what Ambrose meant when he spoke of "the tomb into which he descends". It is also apparent why the emerging from the font can be compared to the resurrection.

Ambrose introduced "a train of thought" which later exercised a profound interest on later Western theology.²⁵ His method can be used beneficially in catechetical teaching today. He had the idea of explaining the Sacrament of Baptism by contrasting the visible sign with the invisible reality. He tells his neophytes that, although they see the water which

²⁴F.Homes Dudden, The Life and Times of St.Ambrose, Vol.1 (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1935), p.339.

²⁵St.Ambrose, On the Mysteries and On the Sacraments, op.cit., Quoted from the editor's introduction, p.40.

effects baptism, it is not the water that heals, but the water "which has the grace of Christ."²⁶ "The element is one thing, the consecration is another; the work is one thing, the working, another. The water is the work, the working is of the Holy Ghost."²⁷

The effects of Baptism Ambrose also attributes to the Holy Spirit who dwells in the baptized soul. He links the spiritual seal with the perfecting of the soul through the action of the Holy Spirit who has taken His abode in the soul together with His sevenfold gifts. "These are the seven virtues when thou art sealed: for as the Apostle saith, 'The wisdom of God is manifold' (Eph.3:10); so is the Holy Ghost manifold, who hath divers and various virtues."²⁸

All of this teaching may be enlightening for many of our pupils who are under the impression that the Holy Ghost, with His sevenfold gifts, is received only at Confirmation.

Throughout the Christian centuries, we know, the Creed has retained its place in the rite of Baptism as well as in the life of the Church. It has been, at one and the same

²⁶Ibid. On the Sacraments 5:15, p.54.

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸Ibid., p.76.

time, the great formula of faith, and the foundation of systematic introduction in the main truths of religion. Not only was the Creed used by St. Ambrose, but his baptismal teaching he bases a good deal of his preaching on the Christian's act of faith. The title "Apostles' Creed" or symbolum apostolorum, first occurs in a letter sent by the synod of Milan (390) to Pope Siricius, and was probably drafted by St. Ambrose.²⁹

God gives to every age a means of finding Him. Our present-day method of studying about God and His perfections, of making our religion more of a living, breathing experience is being effected by having a more natural and ready recourse to the Scriptures. But our system is not a new one. It is, as history proves, a renewal of what was done in the first centuries of the Church. It is, as may be seen in the works of the Fathers of the Church, the method they used and found fruitful. In the works of St. Ambrose, we come upon whole passages composed of a network, as it were, of Scripture texts:

"My teaching is not my own, but His that sent me"
(John 7:16). "Let Christ wash you that you may see.
Come to Baptism, now is the time; come in haste that
you may say: "I went and washed and began to see"
(John 9:11); that you may say as he, Paul, said when

²⁹J.N.Kelly, Early Christian Creeds (London: Longmans, Green and Company, 1958), p.1.

the light had been shed upon him: "this night is far advanced, the day is at hand" (Rom.13:12).³⁰

Baptism of desire, a belief not known before his time was taught by Ambrose. Valentinien, the Emperor of Milan lay dying. He had previously, in the presence of Ambrose, expressed the desire of being baptized. At the point of death he was heard to regret that he had never been washed with the waters of rebirth. St.Ambrose, who was present at the time, assured him that his ardent desire to be baptized, together with a sincere love of God, purified him. Ambrose thus established the belief in Baptism of desire which belief had never been known before. On this Ambrose was heard to remark "Just as the martyrs are baptized in their blood, so was the Emperor Valentinien baptized in the virtue of his pious desire."³¹

"In all things show thyself an example of good works, in doctrine, in integrity, in gravity, the word that cannot be blamed: that he who is on the contrary part, may be afraid, having no evil to say of us" (Titus 2:7-8). This advice of St.Paul may well have been addressed to Ambrose who as his works summarily reviewed in this chapter give evident

³⁰A.Largent, "Saint Ambroise", Dictionnaire de Théologie catholique, col.949 (Paris:Letouzey et Ané, 1903).

³¹M.L.Baunard, Histoire de St.Ambroise (Paris: Librairie Poussielque Frères, 1872), p.532.

proof. He fulfilled, to the best of his ability, the message of the Apostle and left to his followers the example to imitate as teachers of the word of God. In our own day and age, his message is applicable to all Christian teachers, and in a particular manner to us who are privileged to bear the message of the "Good News" of Christ.

CHAPTER TWO

ST.CYRIL OF JERUSALEM'S CATECHESIS

It was at Jerusalem that the Gospel had its beginning and it was through the medium of the Jewish communities of the Roman Empire that the "good news" reached the pagan world. Hence it is not surprising that source material on Baptism should be found in the works of a fourth-century bishop of that historic city. Indeed, St.Cyril of Jerusalem is now considered a prime source in that matter.

The aim of this chapter is to give a brief and general view of St.Cyril's teaching on Baptism. Before, however, studying the works of St.Cyril, it is right and proper that a short summary of his life be given.

LIFE OF ST.CYRIL

Little is known about the early life of St.Cyril except that he was born in or around Jerusalem in the year three hundred and thirteen or thereabouts. He was ordained by Maximus in three hundred and forty-three.

Cyril's writings have led critics to believe that he had an excellent education. And one writer says of him: "He

must have applied himself above all to the study of the Scriptures, for his catecheses are interwoven with a great wealth of scriptural quotations. And these he preached from the abundance of his heart."¹

Cyril succeeded Maximus as Bishop of Jerusalem, and it is believed by some of his contemporaries, that he won the esteem of his predecessor by the eloquence of his catecheses. But, historical writers, such as Mader, contend that Cyril was already bishop when he delivered his catechetical discourses. It is of little import as to the time when he delivered them for what really carries weight is the content of the theological lectures themselves. As one writer states it, the name of Cyril has become immortalized, not so much because of the theological bearing of his works, but because in delivering them, he portrayed the soul of a true pastor. His zeal for the glory of God and the salvation of souls is seen in every page of his catecheses.²

The episcopate that Cyril lived was not always a peaceful one. There were, however, those that praised him as well as those that blamed him. He was exiled three times, deposed from his episcopal see, and they went so far as to

¹Antoine Paulin, St.Cyrille de Jérusalem Catéchète (Paris: Les Editions du Cerf, 1959), p.20.

²X.LeBachelet, "Cyrille de Jérusalem", Dictionnaire de Théologie catholique (Paris:Letouzey et Ané, 1903), col.253l.

accuse him of never having been ordained. But in spite of the difficulties he encountered, Cyril, by his works and example, won the admiration of many who came in contact with him. Even St. Jerome, who was, for some time, skeptical about Cyril's teaching, has this to say in his favour:

Cyril never lost the admiration of Jerusalem Christians. Three men intruded into his throne by party politics, had in turn to yield place to him as soon as he was able to return to the Holy City. All these facets fit into one explanation, that Cyril represented and conserved a venerable teaching tradition, that of the Church of Jerusalem.³

One of the last significant incidents in the life of St. Cyril is his assistance at the Second Council of Constantinople in three hundred and eighty-one. "This merited for him a magnificent testimony of his faith in a letter to Pope Damasus."⁴ The bishops assembled at that Council found it both fitting and just to add their signatures to the testimony of Cyril's strong adherence to the Church that had been founded by Christ on Peter.

Cyril of Jerusalem died on March sixteenth in the year three hundred and eighty-six.

³Cyril of Jerusalem and Nemesisius of Emesa, Vol. IV of Christian Classics (26 vols.; London: S.C.M. Press Ltd., 1953-1957), p. 63.

⁴The Roman Martyrology (Baltimore: John Murphy Publishers, 1907), p. 82.

ST.CYRIL'S WORKS

Cyril of Jerusalem, best known for his Mystagogical catecheses, can be considered a fourth-century representative catechist. He delivered twenty-four catecheses, or lectures mostly in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, which was built by Constantine in the year three hundred and forty-eight. It was erected over the very place where the Holy Sepulchre lay so Cyril thought that no other place could lend itself more fittingly to the subject of his teaching than the spot where its very Author had been buried.

Apart from the introductory address, the Procatechesis, there were eighteen lectures preached during Lent to the catechumens. The last five, the Mystagogical Catecheses, Cyril addressed to the newly-baptized during Easter week. The main object of these lessons was to give a thorough explanation of the Sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and the Holy Eucharist.⁵

Modern renewal in catechetics has led to the re-discovery of these and other treasures of antiquity. And, just as Holy Mother Church seeks to revive ancient liturgical practices, seeing in them special significance, so presently, men agree that in the ancient Christian writers is to be found

⁵Johannes Quasten, The Golden Age of Greek Patristic Literature, VoléIII of Patrology (Westminster: The Newman Press, 1960) p.363.

the true cultural background for catechetics.

Today, some of our current critics evaluate Cyril in this way: "This fourth-century bishop who is a firm witness to tradition in this matter [catechesis], may be a guide and a light for our twentieth-century catechesis."⁶ And the same writer attributes to Cyril an important part in the liturgical movement of his day: "This liturgical development which took place in the fourth century can be explained in great part by the times and circumstances made historically renowned, but also by the pastoral zeal of its principal bishop, St. Cyril."⁷ Another modern writer commends Cyril's catechetical method, saying: "Cyril was eminently qualified by his manner of teaching which was direct, straightforward, and to the point, to give catechetical instruction."⁸

Not only because of the light they throw on fourth-century religious practices, are the works of Cyril so helpful, but because of the special interest they provide for religion teachers today. Cyril's work, which is centered around the Person of Christ, embraces the principal phases

⁶Paulin, op.cit., p.7.

⁷Ibid.

⁸Ibid.

of Christian living, that is, morals, doctrine, and the Sacraments. His language, both simple and vigorous, is, at the same time, comprehensible, persuasive and penetrating. "He is a simple and clear teacher who does not multiply theological terms, but weaves his homilies into the fabric of the liturgy, which was the sole mode for religious teaching for young and old alike."⁹

The catecheses are Christo-centric and they follow the natural plan which shows our salvation foretold by the prophets: God the Father's will to send His only Son to save us: Christ's death and resurrection as the center of our whole moral life: and our sins forgiven by the cooperation of the Holy Ghost. Cyril's explanation of the definite role of each of the Three Divine Persons in the work of our salvation is in keeping with the thought advanced by modern writers on this subject: "The Father through the Son with the Holy Ghost gives us all things: these things are not some from the Father, some from the Son, and the others from the Holy Ghost; one is actually salvation, one power and the other faith."¹⁰

⁹ St. Cyril of Jerusalem's Catechetical Lectures on the Christian Sacraments, edited by F.L. Cross (London: S.P.C.K., 1950), quoted from the editor's introduction, p. xxxiv.

¹⁰ Gerard S. Sloyan, (Editor), Shaping the Christian Message (New York: Macmillan Company, 1959), p. 11.

St.Cyril shared this belief with many other theologians of his own time such as St.Basil so that a writer of our time speaks of the two, Cyril and Basil, as of sharing like opinions:

This is the view of St.Basil and St.Cyril of Jerusalem. They believe that Christian Baptism makes us God's adopted children and gives us the Holy Ghost. Moreover, these effects are figures in Christian Baptism, for the burying under the water signifies the death of the neophyte to sin, whereas the Spirit imparts life to him and restores to him the principal life which he had lost.¹¹

In the introduction to the catecheses proper, the Procatechesis, St.Cyril reminds his hearers of the greatness of the Sacrament about to be received. Because it is conferred only once, it demands of those who receive it careful preparation. They should neglect nothing that would tend to spoil its God-given effects. Cyril is very definite in his advice on this matter, saying:

The bath of Baptism we may not receive twice or thrice; else, it might be said, though I fail once, I shall go right the next time: whereas if thou failest once, there is no setting things right for there is one Lord, and one Faith and one Baptism.¹²

Before venturing into the detailed explanations of the sacraments, Cyril, by a long and serious preparation, endeavoured to instill into the minds of his listeners the

¹¹J.Tixeront, History of Dogma, Vol.11 (3 vols.; St.Louis: B.Herder Book Company, 1921), p.162.

¹²St.Cyril of Jerusalem's Catechetical Lectures on the Christian Sacraments, op.cit., Procatechesis 7, p.44.

great need of faith. Like St. Augustine, he believed this to be a matter of the mind rather than of the will. This virtue, which he esteems so necessary, he introduces even into his Procatechesis:

Look, I beseech you, how great the dignity presented to you by Jesus. Thou wert called a catechumen, which means, hearing with the ears, hearing hope and not perceiving; yet not understanding: hearing Scriptures yet not understanding nor knowing of their depth.¹³

The immediate object of Cyril's catechesis is the explanation of the Creed. From earliest times, as the Didache (c.100), The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles, gives evidence, those receiving Baptism recited, in some form or other, an act of faith. But Cyril was not satisfied with an act from the lips only: he insisted emphatically that their faith must be understood and lived. He explained this theory in these words: "For God seeks nothing else from us save a good purpose. Say not 'How are my sins blotted out? I tell thee, from willing, from believing; what is shorter than this? But if thy lips declare thy willing, but thy heart is silent, He knows the heart who judgeth thee.'¹⁴

He exhorted all to keep this thought in mind and to listen to Holy Mother Church, to meditate on the Old and the New Testaments, and to avoid transgressing the observances

¹³ Ibid., Procatechesis 6, p.43.

¹⁴ Ibid., Procatechesis 8, p.44

so recently made to them. He repeatedly maintained that the Creed contains our salvation, so those who embrace it must do so with sincerity and thus escape the perdition rightly merited by the sin of Adam. Cyril's teaching on this topic is thus spoken of by a writer of our own times:

St. Cyril of Jerusalem insists that we must receive from the Church herself the canon of the Scriptures; and he adds that, as many Christians cannot, through the lack of learning or leisure, study the Scriptures and thus appropriate its meaning, the Church has summed up that teaching in a symbol of faith, which must be religiously held, and preserved, for she teaches faultlessly,¹⁵ "the doctrine that ought to come to men's knowledge."

According to Cyril's teaching, faith is the foundation virtue of the true Christian. To impress this need of faith on his catechumens therefore, Cyril made use of a setting founded on the Old and New Testaments. He began with the story of Adam and Eve, Abraham, renowned for his faith, and the deliverance of the Jews by Moses. He continued progressively in a chronological fashion emphasizing incidents in which faith was manifested in a particular manner. This he did until he came to the New Testament where he spent considerable time on the Baptism of Our Lord in the River Jordan. Thus, gradually and effectively, he leads his listeners to the aim of his message, that is, that they should hasten and be baptized: "Thou art within the Church's nets, submit to be

¹⁵Tixeront, op.cit., Vol.1, p.16.

taken; flee not, for Jesus would secure thee, not to make thee die, but by faith to make thee live. For thou must die and rise again; thou hast heard the Apostle saying, 'Dead to sin, indeed, but alive unto righteousness' (Rom.6:11).¹⁶

The procedure used thus by Cyril is the ageless one of the biblical setting which has been advocated by popes in our own times as well as in the past. One pope of recent times says in this regard:

Theologians must always return to the source of Divine Revelation; for it belongs to them to point out how the doctrine of the living teaching authority is to be found either explicitly or implicitly in the Scripture and in Tradition.¹⁷

The goodness of God the Son and the wholehearted co-operation of God the Holy Ghost in the work of our salvation is often the theme of Cyril's teaching. His aim seems to suggest that his vocation lay particularly in promoting the traditions of the Church. And, if one could say that he showed any marked preference for stressing some truths or doctrine more than others, the Primacy of Peter, the parallel so often drawn between Christ and Adam, Eve and Mary, hold a special

¹⁶St. Cyril of Jerusalem's Catechetical Lectures on the Christian Sacraments, op.cit., Procatechesis 5, p.43.

¹⁷Pope Pius XI, *Humani Generis*, August, 1950 (New York: The Paulist Press, 1950), p.11.

place in his selection.

The doctrine of the Blessed Trinity, the fundamental mystery of our Faith, Cyril refers to frequently throughout his lectures. But, particular emphasis on the workings of the Most Blessed Trinity on the baptized soul is found in his fourth catechesis. "In the fourth catechesis, he places faith in God the Father among the first necessary steps towards our salvation. He gives a very clear passage regarding the formula of Baptism in which he emphasizes the presence of the Holy Ghost, saying: "We do not preach three Gods, but one God in Three Divine Persons, One hope in God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit."¹⁸

It is in the teaching on Baptism itself, in the explanation of its rites, ceremonies and effects that Cyril excelled. The contrast between the earliest account of the manner of the conferring of Baptism as given in the Didache, and the manner described by St. Cyril is interesting as well as instructive. The following is the description that is given in the Didache:

Regarding Baptism, baptize as follows: after first explaining all these points, baptize in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost: in running water; and if you cannot in cold, then in warm. But if

¹⁸Le Bachelet, op.cit.

you have neither, pour water on the head three times in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.¹⁹

Bearing in mind that Baptism by immersion was the practice of the early Church, let us observe how Cyril's method resembles that of the Didache as described above. Cyril says: "After these things, ye were led to the holy pool of Baptism as Christ was carried from the cross to the Sepulchre which is before your eyes. And each of you was asked whether he believed in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, and ye made the same confession and descended three times into the water, and ascended again."²⁰

From the day of Pentecost, when St. Peter told the throngs: "Repent and be baptized, every one of you" (Acts 2:37), Baptism has been looked upon as the Christian's initiation, the act by which he becomes God's adopted son, and his incorporation into the Mystical Body of Christ. In one of his catechetical lectures, Cyril gives an informative passage on this thought of St. Peter's:

Having been "baptized into Christ" (I Cor. 2:12), and "put on Christ" (Gal. 3:27), ye have been made conformable

¹⁹The Didache, edited by Johannes Quasten (Westminster: The Newman Press, 1948), p.19.

²⁰St. Cyril of Jerusalem's Catechetical Lectures on the Christian Sacraments, op.cit., Mystagogical Catechesis 2:4, p.60.

to the Son of God: for having predestinated us to the adoption of sons (Phil.3:21), made us share the fashion of Christ's glorious body (Eph.1:5). "Being therefore made partakers of Christ" (Heb.3:14), ye are properly called Christs.²¹

St.Cyril, as we have just seen, has built his theory on the teaching of St.Paul. But Cyril dares to go a step farther than St.Paul and calls the newly-baptized "other Christs". This doctrine, though, has been taught consistently through the ages. A quotation from a modern theologian is representative:

It is only by Baptism that the relation of men with Christ becomes an organic union, a union which is outwardly visible to men as well as inwardly existent; by Baptism Christ sets the seal of His proprietorship on them, and thereby confers on them the full possession and enjoyment of the rights and privileges which are theirs as members of His Body.²²

Baptism is called the Sacrament of Re-birth or of Regeneration, yet it is linked very closely with the death of Christ. St.Cyril, in his homily on this truth, speaks of it as "an extraordinary and paradoxical fact".²³ The complete picture is found in the words of St.Paul: "For we are buried with Him by Baptism unto death; that as Christ is risen from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we may walk in newness

²¹Ibid., Mystagogical Catechesis, 3:1, p.63.

²²Matthias Scheeben, The Mysteries of Christianity, trans. Cyril Vollert, S.J. (St.Louis: B.Herder Book Company, 1946), p.375.

²³Cyril of Jerusalem's Catechetical Lectures on the Christian Sacraments, op.cit., Mystagogical Catechesis 2:5, p.61.

of life" (Rom. 8:14). St. Cyril clarifies the meaning of St. Paul's message:

We do not actually die, are not actually buried and brought to life after crucifixion, but all this happens to us in a likeness; yet our healing is actual. It was Christ who was truly crucified and was buried and rose again; but He has given all this to us, so that we, by partaking in the likeness of His passion, might in reality receive its effects. What love beyond measure! . . . Everything actually happens to Christ. But in your case it is a likeness of His passion and death which happens. His salvation you receive, however, not in mere likeness but in fact.²⁴

The significance of placing solemn Baptism and the renewal of baptismal promises within the Easter Vigil may be understood more thoroughly if we remember that the Church, from the earliest times, followed the climactic events of Christ's life in her liturgy. She considered the prolongation of Christ in history as the reason for her existence. In his instructions, Cyril gives a clear explanation of this thought:

Now turn from the ancient to the recent, from the figure to the reality. There we have Moses sent by God to Egypt; here, Christ sent by the Father into the world; there, Moses might lead an oppressed people out of Egypt; here, that Christ may rescue mankind who are 'whelmed under sins. There, the blood of a lamb was a spell against the destroyer; here, the blood of the unblemished lamb, Jesus Christ, is made the charm to scare evil spirits.²⁵

With Cyril, the Fathers of the Church, see in the Exodus the revelation of God's plan for the salvation of all men and for

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid., Mystagogical Catechesis 1:3, p.54.

each individual soul. Integral participation in the Paschal Vigil demands that we see in the Passover of the Jews the figure of our passover from the chains of sin and slavery to a life of union with God. However, this is not possible without Christ. Once man had alienated himself from God, there was no way to bridge the gap until the Word was made flesh. Here was the true liberation from the slavery of sin, through the blood of the Lamb of God, offered in a Paschal meal on Holy Thursday and shed in a New Covenant on Good Friday. And, since through Baptism we are plunged into the passion and death of Christ and His resurrection, it is very fitting that we renew our baptismal promises at this commemorative service, for, St. Thomas tells us that the passion of Christ is communicated to every baptized person so that he is healed just as if he had suffered and died.

It has been pointed out by authorities in catechetics that catechism should stress the teaching of the Bible.²⁶ It will, in that way, show specifically that our Catholic Faith is founded on the Sacred Scriptures. And our teaching on the Sacrament of Baptism may be enriched by referring occasionally to the catecheses of St. Cyril of Jerusalem who based his instructions, for the most part, on the Old and the New Testaments.

²⁶ Josef Jungmann, Handing on the Faith, (London: Burns & Oates, 1957), p.161.

He prepared his candidates for Baptism to expect this scriptural application: "You will now be given proofs from the Old and the New Testaments, first, of course, for the things that were done immediately before your Baptism, and next how you have been made clean from your sins by the Lord 'with the washing with water by the word', then how you have entered into the right to be called Christs in virtue of your priesthood.²⁷

The baptismal font is spoken of by Cyril as the 'Christ-bearing' waters which were enriched by the fragrance of Christ when He Himself was baptized in the River Jordan by St. John the Baptist. Cyril affirms that Christ imparted of His Divinity to the saving waters.²⁸ The water was blessed, according to Cyril's explanation, in the form of an epiclesis. In order to explain the effectiveness of the invocation, he refers to pagan parallels:

Do not think of the font as filled with ordinary water, but think rather of the spiritual grace that is given with the water. For just as the sacrifice on pagan altars are in themselves indifferent matter and yet have become defiled by reason of the invocation (epiclesis) made over them to the idols, so, but in the opposite sense, the ordinary water in the font acquires sanctifying powers when it receives the invocation of the Holy Spirit, of Christ and the Father.²⁹

²⁷St. Cyril of Jerusalem's Catechetical Lectures on the Christian Sacraments, op.cit., Mystagogical Catechesis 3:1 p.64.

²⁸Ibid., Mystagogical Catechesis 3:3, p.66.

²⁹Quasten, op.cit., p.272.

Much of Cyril's teaching is in accordance with the present-day catechetical trend which seeks to correlate catechism with liturgy. Reviewing Cyril's works, a writer says:

The main theological interest of Cyril's catecheses lies in their importance as an invaluable source of information for the history of the liturgy and the sacraments. Here we have for the first time a detailed description of the baptismal and Eucharistic rites and the essentials of a theology of liturgy.³⁰

As a writer, St.Cyril would not have gained renown for his works judged from a literary evaluation. But, from the cursory view that has been attempted, the preceding pages are evidence that Cyril was imbued with a deep religious conviction. "For St.Cyril, catechesis was like entrance into the mystery of salvation."³¹ Applicable knowledge may be gained for the teacher of religion from Cyril's writings which seem to be the realization of the aim of religious instruction as outlined for us so adequately in the Apostolic Constitutions:

Thou shalt honour him that speaks to thee the word of God, and be mindful of him day and night; and thou shalt reverence him, not as the author of thy birth, but as one that is made the occasion of thy well-being. For, where the doctrine concerning God is, there God is present.³²

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Paulin, op.cit., p.70

³² Apostolic Constitutions, Vol.VII of A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church (14 vols.; New York: Christian Literature Company, 1890-1900), p.432.

CHAPTER THREE

ENRICHING CATECHISM TEXTS BY RETURNING
TO THE SOURCES

The purpose of this chapter is to point out how the religion text, a necessary tool in attaining our end, can be enlivened, that is enriched and made more fruitful. The means proposed for this enrichment is a return to the sources. Inanimate objects cannot, properly speaking, be enlivened, for they had no life in the first place. But, religion can, simply because it has been lived. Our Divine Lord Himself taught moral lessons and rendered them more comprehensible by drawing them from parables, stories regarding persons and things familiar to those to whom He was speaking. In the same manner, our religion texts may be made more applicable to the lives of our students by the addition of practical and enlivening material. These helpful supplementary aids may be found in the Old and New Testaments, and, among other places, in the writings of the Fathers of the Church.

Since the Sacrament of Baptism is the basic theme of the thesis at hand, attention will be focused particularly on the subject of our re-birth or spiritual adoption. Recourse will be made to the first centuries of the Church by means of

the writings of two of the Fathers of the Church of the fourth century. The sermons or instructions of St. Ambrose of Milan and those of St. Cyril of Jerusalem will be reviewed in an attempt to prove that what was taught in the ancient Church can furnish material for a deeper understanding of our faith today, for, we are reminded, the writings of the Fathers belong to the Church. This is the opinion of a current writer:

The role of the Church in assimilating and penetrating the gospel is indispensable when one considers the historical character of Christ's revelation. He gives the message to poor fishermen of Galilee. But He is also the Master of Time. He proclaims His message in such a way as to include successive adaptations and developments for men of all ages.¹

We cannot live in the past, it is true, but we do live in a present shaped by the past and moving towards the future. We must keep this in mind together with the fact that our present has its own indelible character of "nowness", its own personality, as it were. As Catholic educators, we must be particularly mindful of that "nowness" so that we may never fail to accept our students as they are and lead them to what they ought to be. But, our present, especially as far as the Sacraments are concerned, was shaped by the past. So, let us observe how the past helps us to understand the present.

¹G. Dejaive, S.J., "Scripture, Tradition and the Church", Theology Digest VI (Spring, 1958) 69

This look into the past will be done by investigating the writings of two of the Fathers of the Church whose works lead themselves particularly to such a study. St. Ambrose of Milan, a fourth-century bishop, has among his works, two helpful treatises on catechetical instruction which are enlightening as well as useful for the teaching of the Sacrament of Baptism. And, a contemporary of St. Ambrose, St. Cyril of Jerusalem was an active catechist in the East while Ambrose was exercising his zeal in the West. Cyril's twenty-four catechetical lectures are highly informative regarding the Sacrament of Initiation.

Before considering the works of these two catechists, that is, by a closer study, it should be noted at this point, that a remarkable institution for religious instruction, the catechumenate, was gradually developing. It reached its perfection, perhaps, in the fourth century, when it was particularly designated for the instruction and preparation of adults prior to their reception of Baptism. One writer describes it in this manner:

As early as the second century, the increasing numbers of Christian candidates rendered it necessary to systematize the preparation for Christian initiation, to lay down definite rules for its performance and to determine the period of probation. Hence arose the discipline of the catechumenate.²

²L. Duchesne, Christian Worship: Its Origin and Evolution, trans. M. McClure (London: SP.C.K., 1919), p. 292.

The fourth century, a period remarkable for its religious belief and practice, is called "The Golden Age of the Fathers of the Church". Preeminent among those whose works and lives have contributed towards this distinction are St. Ambrose of Milan and St. Cyril of Jerusalem. Their catechetical instructions lend themselves to a parallel study as aids to the teaching of Baptism. Besides the similarities found in their methods of teaching, particular interest is aroused because St. Ambrose and St. Cyril are not only contemporaries, but one is representative of the East, the other, of the West.

Both of these saintly writers focused attention on the Sacraments, and on Baptism in particular. The manner of presentation employed by each is quite similar. So, while Ambrose was preaching daily during the eight weeks of Lent to the catechumens of the West, St. Cyril was doing the same for his neophytes in the East. Both were intent upon preparing the catechumens for Baptism at the Easter Vigil. And both saw fit, moreover, to continue their instructions during Easter week to complement the baptismal teaching with explanatory lessons on the Sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and the Holy Eucharist.

Since the time of Saints Ambrose and Cyril, the teaching of religion has undergone many changes. These various alterations have met with ecclesiastical approval because the

Church, seeing religion not only as something absolutely to be learned, but, rather, something to be lived, makes every effort to make religious instruction understood by everyone. To achieve this, religion must have a general appeal. Although the content of religious instruction conveys a joyful message, this joyful message can lose its savour if too much emphasis is placed on minute details which are not part of the lesson of faith. Faith must, on the other hand, be presented so that it appears in all its forcefulness as a synthesis and is appreciated as a message in all its beauty and supernatural sublimity.³

Religion aims, not only at supernatural content, but also at total decision and at the acquisition of values relevant to Christian living. The message is to be proclaimed in our classrooms not as a segmented religious knowledge, but ultimately the Person of our crucified and Risen Lord. It is through the meaningful presentation of the kerygma that it pleases God to save those of our students whom we bring to belief.

When the Apostles went forth on Pentecost Sunday, they delivered to their hearers the kerygma, the setting forth of the Cross and the Resurrection. Thus, in the first sermon ever preached in the Christian Church, within hours after the

³Josef A. Jungmann, S.J., Handing on the Faith (London: Burns & Oates Ltd., 1959), p.36.

Holy Spirit has descended upon the Apostles, Peter preached: "Therefore, let all the house of Israel know most assuredly that God has made both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified" (Acts 2:36).

The teaching of the early Church follows and builds upon the basic preaching of the essential message of the Christian, God's act in the Cross and Resurrection of Jesus. And this preaching-teaching distinction is a crucial prerequisite to understand the New Testament; the preaching and teaching are basic forms in which the New Testaments are cast. So, this is where the teaching of Saints Ambrose and Cyril can be used as supplementary aids in our religion classes today. From what we have discovered above to be the kerygmatic approach, and having presented already a summary of the catecheses of Saints Ambrose and Cyril, it is now our aim to show how the works of these fourth-century catechists can be a fulfillment in part, of one of the suggested means of enrichment, a return to the teachings of the Fathers of the Church.

This efficacious enrichment deals with the Sacrament of Christian Baptism, which Sacrament finds preeminent treatment in the writings of both these two Fathers of the Church, Saints Ambrose and Cyril.

To explain the early Christian liturgy of Baptism, Cyril expounded the sixth chapter of St. Paul to the Romans,

saying that the sinner is submerged in the water just as Christ was buried in the grave, and, following the example given by Our Divine Lord, the baptized person comes out of the water and rises to a new life, the life of grace. Cyril says: "After you were led to the holy pool of divine baptism, as Christ was carried from the cross to the Sepulchre which is before your eyes. And each of you was asked if he believed in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. And you made the same confession and descended three times into the water and came up again, here also recalling by a symbol the three days burial of Christ."⁴

In this teaching alone, Cyril affords us a threefold return to primary sources. First, we have Cyril's own interpretation, a return to the Fathers. And Cyril based his teaching on the analogy based on St. Paul: therefore, the New Testament is used. Thirdly, Cyril referred to the ancient form of Baptism found in the Didache, The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles (c.100).

Modern catechisms are, for the most part, enriched by the addition of Scripture references. This biblical movement is, undoubtedly, one of the most outstanding of our times;

⁴St. Cyril of Jerusalem's Lectures on the Christian Sacraments, op.cit., Mystagogical Catechesis 2:4, p.59.

it appears as both the cause and the effect for the great thirst for the word of God in our times. It has already exerted a decisive influence on the renewal of religious teaching by directing it back into the biblical path that it should never have left. For, it is in the Bible that catechesis finds its nutrition, God's own way of teaching.

In baptismal instruction, the matter and the form of the Sacrament are now commonplace matters of interest even to children of the lower grade level. But the significance of the matter and the form can be made to have much greater bearing if recourse be made to Cyril's Mystagogical Catecheses where he speaks of the baptismal font as the "Christ-bearing" waters.⁵ He explains that Christ imparted His Divinity to the waters when He was baptized in the River Jordan.⁶

That the Holy Ghost acts with special power in the newly baptized soul is another truth which St. Cyril signifies in his instructions. He says that, once anointed with the "Mystical Chrism, ye put on the whole armour of the Holy Ghost. Now you are ready to vanquish the world, saying: 'I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me' (Phil.4:13)." This anointing with chrism to which Cyril refers as wearing armour

⁵Ibid., Mystagogical Catechesis 3L2, p.64.

⁶Ibid.

of the Holy Ghost" is a strengthening and stimulating thought. Its implications may be very useful in teaching if the comparison is made with the anointing of the muscles of the ancient warriors preparing for battle. Cyril inferred that we, too, are anointed at Baptism to prepare us for the battle of life.

Not only does Baptism incorporate us into the Mystical Body of Christ, but it makes us the children of God. We become, in a very real sense, the brothers and sisters of Christ. Cyril's explanation of this truth may be used effectively as additional material for the explanation of the sacramental effects of Baptism. Cyril says that the privilege of addressing God as "Our Father" is, in itself, a gift of His loving generosity. He, who is God, has transformed us by His omnipotence from servants to sons. And this, Cyril is insistent, comes "through the Son and the Holy Spirit."⁷

Natural water of any kind may be used in the valid administration of Baptism. But the Church does, in her liturgical practices, use water which is blessed on Holy Saturday. And, Saint Ambrose speaks of this water by referring to it simply as a kind of warning, for, he reminds us that:

⁷Cyril, "The Father", Catechetical Lectures, Vol.VII of A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church (New York: Christian Literature Company, 1890-1900), p.319.

"water without Spirit does not cleanse."⁸ It is true that any natural water may be used for Baptism and the Baptism will be valid. It is no less true that special water is blessed for the liturgical administration of the Sacrament. These two facts, apparently contradictory, are confusing for children unless they are given the required explanation. The application of Ambrose's teaching that the water must be accompanied by the Holy Ghost to have any effect, may be compared to our present method of conferring the Sacrament in the liturgical administration, as it is used in the Church for solemn Baptism. The Church, it may be explained, desires that there be a first solemn blessing of the water by which it is prepared for the solemn function.

"Look, O Lord, upon the face of thy Church, and multiply in her thine acts of regeneration." These words are the opening words of the prayer of blessing over the baptismal water. At the conclusion of the entire prayer, the water is divided in the form of a cross. A threefold sign of the cross is then made over the water. And, St. Ambrose states that, the water, by the sign of the cross, receives the power to regenerate the souls of men. The expression of Ambrose on this point

⁸ Ambrose, "On the Mysteries", Select Works and Letters, Vol. X of A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church (New York: Christian Literature Company, 1890-1900), p.46.

is marked with simplicity: "For what is water without the cross of Christ? A common element without any sacramental effect. Nor again is there any sacramental effect without water."⁹

The complete explanation of the blessing of the water and the symbolism which it implies, may readily be seen in reviewing the baptismal ceremony as it was performed under the guidance of St. Ambrose. The catechumens were led, one by one, to the "sacred pool of Baptism", where, after making a formal profession of faith, were immersed three times in the water of Baptism. The three immersions, Ambrose tells us, symbolize the Redeemer's three-day sojourn in the grave.

Application of the ceremony of Baptism according to the teaching of St. Ambrose serves as an enlightenment in imparting a more helpful understanding of the Easter Vigil service, much of which is concerned with Baptism.

In the ancient Church, Psalm Forty-two and its antiphon were chanted by the newly-baptized at the Easter Vigil as they were led in solemn procession from the baptistery to the altar where they took part in the celebration of the Mysteries and received for the first time, Our Lord in Holy Communion. Hymns have always been considered by the Church an

⁹Ambrose, "On the Mysteries", Select Works and Letters, op.cit., p.319.

efficacious means of spreading a knowledge of the Faith and principles of moral living.¹⁰ Ambrose, in his sermons on Baptism, informs us that Psalm Forty-two was used as a baptismal hymn in the liturgy of the Church in the fourth century. He says: "The cleansed people rich with these adornments, hasten to the altar of Christ, saying 'I will go to the Altar of God who maketh glad my youth.' For, having laid aside the slough of ancient error, renewed with eagle's youth, it hastens to approach the heavenly feast."¹¹ At the font of baptism, the neophyte was born again, this time in sanctifying grace. In the Eucharist, the grace of youth is nurtured and strengthened. Sin has been cast away from his soul making room for the Divine Indwelling. From the teaching of St. Ambrose, Psalm Forty-two derives a new significance. It is a reminder for us at the beginning of the Mass that we are the true adopted children of God.

The work of the Holy Ghost in the baptized soul is brought out by St. Ambrose by an opportune analogy which could be applied with helpfulness to our religion lesson on the Sacrament of Baptism. Just as Mary conceived of the Holy Ghost and brought forth Christ, Ambrose says, so are we, at

¹⁰Daniel J. Donahue, Early Christian Hymns (New York: The Grafton Press, 1908), p.17.

¹¹Ambrose, "On the Mysteries", Select Works and Letters, op.cit., p.323.

the holy font of Baptism, regenerated by the Holy Spirit. "If the Holy Spirit coming down upon the Virgin wrought the conception, and effected the work of regeneration, surely we must not doubt that coming down upon the font or upon those who receive Baptism, He effects the reality of the new birth."¹²

Baptism washes away all sin. Profitable application may be drawn from the way in which Ambrose teaches this truth by basing it on an incident from the New Testament with which he was most familiar. He remarks, in this case, how St. Peter, in deep humility, refused at first to have his feet washed by His Divine Lord. But, when His Master said that such a refusal would mean the severing of all ties with Him, Peter answered: "Not only my feet, but my hands and my head" (John 13:9). To Peter's act of complete dedication, Our Lord answered: "He that hath washed needeth not to wash again, save to wash his feet only" (John 13:10). So, Ambrose concludes, in Baptism there is an effacing of all guilt. He connects the washing of Baptism with the removal of all actual, personal sin, and regards the washing of the feet as having a similar efficacy with regard to transmitted or hereditary sin. The incident, moreover, is an excellent occasion for the practice of obedience,

¹²St. Ambrose, *On the Mysteries and On the Sacraments, On the Mysteries* 59. Edited by J.H. Srawley (London: S.P.C.K. 1950), p.151.

for faith and humility, for Ambrose says: "At the same time recognize that there is a mystical meaning in the actual ministry of humility; for he says: 'If I your Lord and Master have washed your feet, how much more also ought you to wash one another's feet' (John 13:14). For since the 'Author of salvation' (Heb.2:10) Himself redeemed us through obedience, how much more ought we, His poor servants, to display the service of humility and obedience!"¹³

The whole Bible, New and Old Testaments, the Church, the liturgy, all the essential elements of our Faith tell us that God the Father has called us to Himself through His Son. This is the message that has been emphasized in the teachings of the Fathers of the Church and which has been representative in the works of both Saints Ambrose and Cyril. We have reviewed the writings of these two Fathers with the specific aim to illustrate how their teaching can be of help to enrich and strengthen our catechetical teaching today. To strive to enumerate all the possible means of enriching our catechism texts with the works of Saints Ambrose and Cyril would be futile, if not impossible. The few examples that have been brought to the forefront are sufficient indication that a wealth of helpful material may be obtained from a

¹³ Ibid., On the Mysteries 32-33, pp.136-137.

serious study of the Fathers of the Church. This may be applied with benefit to our catechetical teaching.

If our catechism is thus enriched and properly correlated with Sacred Scripture and the Liturgy, the student will come to see himself as an individual part in the stream of grace and love which was set in motion by God since the very beginning of the world.

CHAPTER FOUR

FOURTH CENTURY CATECHESIS__AN AID
TO TWENTIETH CENTURY RENEWAL

The particular aim of the present chapter is to show the correlation that can be profitably made between patristic catechesis and that which is sought as the answer to the needs of today. And since the catechetical instructions of Saints Ambrose of Milan and Cyril of Jerusalem provide the subject of research for this thesis, our patristic sources will be drawn from these two Fathers of the Church.

In the New Testament we are faced with faith as the basic or first virtue. It is not, from an analytical point of view, the greatest virtue, but it is the basic virtue. Without faith, without the ultimate acceptance of what God does in Christ, there can be no hope of confidence, and still less, no charity. Faith opens the door; it is the initiation of man into the Divine Plan and into the Mystery hidden from all eternity. Sometimes, our educational conditions block the whole view of faith. We think of it as a rational assent, an action of the mind, or as the mental or verbal articulation of belief. This concept of faith then, since it is the purpose of religious education, must be clarified. Our first

resource is the New Testament. And, this is followed by the works of the Fathers of the Church. Nowhere is faith and its need for Christian living more clearly portrayed than in the instructions of Saints Ambrose and Cyril.

St. Ambrose reminds the newly-baptized of their distinctive mark of "faithful". He says: "for in the Christian man, faith is first. Therefore, at Rome the title of faithful is given to those who have been baptized."¹ But, to emphasize the need of faith, and to convince his neophytes of the graces bestowed on them by Baptism, Ambrose, in his familiar biblical fashion, reverts to the miracle of the Pool of Bethesda. The remarkable contrast made between the recipients of Baptism and the man miraculously cured, clearly portrays the great condescension of Our Divine Lord towards His unworthy creatures. His convincing parallelism drawn between the few who were privileged to be cured by the God-sent angel, and the many who are baptized in faith is a significant lesson on the fundamental virtue of faith. Ambrose states it clearly so that all may understand: "For a sign the angel descended, the water was troubled because of the unbelieving. For them, the sign, for thee, faith; for them an angel descended; for thee, the Holy

¹ St. Ambrose, On the Mysteries and On the Sacraments, Edited by J.H. Srawley. On the Sacraments 1:1 (London: S.P. C.K., 1950), p.47.

Spirit; for them the created element was troubled; for thee, Christ acts, the very Lord of creation."²

Our Divine Lord spoke of the ties that, of necessity, exist between faith and Baptism. "He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved" (Mark 16:16). One can be saved by faith without the sacramental sign of Baptism, but one who refuses to believe, even though he be baptized, will be condemned.³

Education of a living faith. This is the program of the religion teacher who really takes to heart the work that has been committed to his care. If we would find out just what is meant by this, let us estimate the importance of the key-words in their evaluated terminology. That is, what do we understand by education ? And what do we derive from living faith ? Even from the purely human point of view, education implies a good deal more than teaching or instruction. An educator, while instilling a great variety of learning, aims all along at very much more; namely, to train judgment, taste, the feelings, and to develop growing liberty to a sense of its responsibilities. The catechizing of children is likewise an education for, while it ensures doctrinal knowledge, it also

²Ibid., On the Mysteries 4:22, p.131.

³P.Th.Camelot, O.P., Spiritualité du Baptême (Paris: Les Editions du Cerf, 1960), p.18.

tries to awaken in the child an awareness of the Christian meaning of things and to form the personality of the child of God. This is the education of faith. It is also, as we have seen, the aim that was the thought behind the teaching of Saints Ambrose and Cyril. For both these Fathers required a further refinement: the education of a living faith, that is, faith illumined by charity and buttressed by the hope of heaven. In other words, it means being trained to one's baptismal life, the life that will blossom into eternal life.

An ancient custom exists in the Church by which the water used for baptism is solemnly blessed after the Litany of the Saints on Holy Saturday. A beautiful prayer accompanies the blessing invoking the intercession of Almighty God and all His Saints on those to be regenerated by Baptism in the sacred water. The prayer has an historical setting which recalls many of the events of any importance connected with water from the beginning of the world when the Holy Spirit hovered over the water (Gen.1:2), to the Baptism of Our Lord in the River Jordan.

It was a strong belief among ancient peoples that water was an evil element having sinister spirits dwelling in its depths. But, after the Baptism of Our Lord by John the Baptist, Christians began to believe that Jesus, having won the victory over Satan, sanctified the waters. It is not too difficult then, for us to imagine the state of the soul of the newly

baptized Christian who was baptized in the name of the Blessed Trinity in the waters that were sanctified by the Son of God. Ambrose and Cyril spend much time in developing this truth which is also the firm teaching of theologians today, as the following excerpt shows:

Water, by reason of its moisture, cleanses; by reason of its coolness, refreshes and tempers superfluous heat; and by reason of its transparency, is susceptible to light. Fittingly then, water signifies spiritually the spiritual effects of cleansing from sin, a temperance of the concupiscence of the flesh and an enlightening by the giving of a supernatural faith.⁴

Ambrose sees the waters of Baptism prefigured in Old Testament texts: "In the beginning when God made heaven and earth, the Spirit moved over the waters" (Gen.1:2).⁵ And, together with St. Peter, Ambrose derives from the story of the flood the symbol of Christian Baptism: "Is not the flood the same thing as Baptism, whereby all sins are washed away; only the mind and grace of the righteous is revived?" (Peter 3:20).⁶

Whereas Cyril constructs his baptismal theory mainly on the teaching of St. Paul, he does lead up to his main idea

⁴Philip O. Hanley, O.P., The Life of the Mystical Body (Westminster: The Newman Press, 1901), p.144.

⁵St. Ambrose, On the Mysteries and On the Sacraments, op.cit., On the Mysteries 3:9, p.126.

⁶Ibid., On the Sacraments 2:1, p.58.

by a relevant story from the Old Testament, the story of Lot's wife, who, because of her depraved will, was turned into a pillar of salt. This is how Cyril warns those about to be baptized: "When therefore, thou renouncest Satan, utterly breaking all covenant with him, that ancient league with hell, there is opened to thee the paradise of God."⁷

Our Baptism, Cyril teaches, is a contrast to the death and resurrection of Christ: "Know you not that as many of you as were baptized into Jesus Christ, were baptized into His death ?" (Rom. 6:3). And, "For if we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection" (Rom. 6:3). And Cyril then comments on the word planted as it is used by St. Paul, for he sees in it another proof of our union with Christ in His Mystical Body: "For if the true Vine was planted in this place, we also by partaking in the Baptism of death, have been planted together with Him."⁸ And after Baptism, we rise to the new life of sanctifying grace. That the view of St. Cyril of Jerusalem was shared by men of his day may be seen from the inscription found on a

⁷ St. Cyril of Jerusalem's Lectures on the Christian Sacraments, edited by F. L. Cross, Mystagogical Catechesis 1:8-9 (London: S.P.C.K., 1950), p. 57.

⁸ Ibid., Mystagogical Catechesis 2:6-7, p. 62.

baptistery of the fourth century: "I received an old man: I sent forth a new man." Theologians today make the same touching contrast between death and life, sin and grace. One of these same theologians says very openly: "And in every Baptism, even that of an old man on his death-bed, someone is born again; the new man. Something is born. A new life is inaugurated and begun, which will be eternal life; the life of the Risen Christ, who has conquered sin and death."⁹

The religion lesson on Baptism could be made to have more personal and lasting effects were the rites and ceremonies explained with clarity. Since the greater number of our Catholic students were baptized in their infancy, they may be to considerable extent, unaware of the graces their baptism brought. Consequently, the lesson could be enlivened by the application of the catechetical instructions of St. Cyril. For instance, he speaks time and again of "illumination". But, why such emphasis on light unless there existed previous darkness? Cyril's catechesis is a definite and clear response to the question as well as to the reason for the exorcisms that are performed at Baptism: "Let thy feet hasten to the catechizings, receive with earnestness the exorcisms; for whether thou art breathed upon or exorcized, the Ordinance is to

⁹Jean LeClerq, O.S.B., "The Sacraments of the Easter Season", Worship XXXIV (4 April, 1960) 296

salvation."¹⁰ For "Through faith in Christ Jesus you are all now Christ's sons" (1 Cor.12:4). Having now been delivered from the power of Satan and washed in the saving waters, God has adopted us as His own children. The idea of dying to sin and rising to a new life with God is no longer a vague reality which we believe but cannot understand.

Christian life is, after all, the example of the fulfillment of the life of Christ. For it is Jesus who provides a weak human soul with the love to will and to act as a true son of God. Through His vital touch, the Person of Christ lives again in millions of men and women "whom He is not ashamed to call His brethren" (Heb.2:11).

CATECHISM AND THE BIBLE

The aim of the religion teacher is to work with grace in the awakening of that grace of faith which justifies us. "See how faith comes from hearing: and hearing through Christ's word" (Rom.10:17). It is Christ who has brought the final word of teaching and definitive act of salvation. He is the climax of the long history of salvation, which is the Bible. It is for this reason that the catechetical renewal is a

¹⁰ St. Cyril of Jerusalem's Lectures on the Christian Sacraments, op.cit., Procatechesis 9, p.45.

biblical catechesis, as one of our contemporaries points out:

It is a catechesis made up of deeds and events; therefore it is the return to the concrete. The teaching given in the Bible is not given in an abstract form. When the Lord speaks, He does it in a concrete way . . . Whether it is the message of the Books of Wisdom, the language of the prophets, the teaching of Christ, or the teaching of the parables, the whole of the Bible is marked by the same concrete character and the same care to remain close to concrete reality.¹¹

The Church has been the custodian of the Bible down through the centuries. She was also the recipient of the apostolic teaching which she has faithfully preserved and guarded. And since she has received the assurance of the special assistance of the Holy Ghost, she is able to give us the true interpretation of the apostolic doctrine. Let us see the opinion of a present writer on the frequent use of the Bible:

The Bible is not a teaching outline; it is a presence which expresses itself through events, deeds, acts. It is the special dwelling place of revelation; it is the word of God. It is God drawing near to man, approaching him in order to speak to him. What we cannot dispense with in catechetics is the biblical method which is respectful of the very mystery of God that it is to transmit and of the human being who is to be united to this mystery.¹²

St. Augustine maintained that all Holy Scripture written before Christ, was written to foretell His coming, and that all subsequent Scripture concerned his message of love. Even the beginners, St. Augustine insisted, should be instructed

¹¹François Coudreau, "The Bible and the Liturgy in Catechetics", Bulletin (April, 1960) 3

¹²Ibid.

by means of an historical-biblical narrative with Christ as the very climax of man's long period of expectation. The teaching of each new development should be accompanied by a scriptural text illustrative of what is being presented. And, that the lesson may be fruitful, it must bear some personal application. What St. Augustine declared to be the only profitable way of catechizing, the only successful means of heralding the "good news" of Christ, is precisely what twentieth-century renewal is endeavouring to bring about. One author writing today says:

Faith, the fruit for which we strive in religious instruction, is the acceptance of a message and its effects on one's whole life. The message is not drilled and memorized, but takes possession of the whole man, gradually transforming him into a new man.¹³

The bible is the history of the people. To live the Bible is to live with the Church, sharing with others the same faith, the faith that Christ promised would never be broken: "And behold, I am with you all days even to the consummation of the world" (Matt. 28:20).

Our participation in this faith may be brought out effectively by a close study of the Easter Vigil ceremony, much of which is connected with Baptism. The special liturgy of Holy Saturday has for its purpose to show how life and

¹³Joseph Goldbrunner, "Catechetical Method as Handmaid to Kerygma", Worship XXXV:4 (March, 1961) 198.

grace flowed for us from the death of Christ. And St. Ambrose relates the death of Christ to our Baptism which, he states, was especially devised by Christ to save us: "Man died, but Christ found the resurrection, that is, a way to restore the heavenly benefit which had been lost by the serpent's guile. Each, therefore, is for our good, since death is the end of sins, and the resurrection is the refashioning of our nature. Nevertheless, the craft or guile of the devil might not prevail in this world because Baptism was devised."¹⁴

The paschal candle which symbolizes Christ is prominent in the Easter Vigil. As it is lighted with the new fire, the celebrant pronounces the prayer: "May the light of Christ rising in glory scatter the darkness of heart and mind." From the paschal, are lighted in turn, the candles of the celebrant, the clergy, and then, those of the people. Thus, the social significance of our Faith is demonstrated by our active participation in this liturgical action. All other lights in the church are extinguished so as to emphasize "the light of Christ" by which the darkness of our sins is dissolved and our souls are filled with the flow of grace.

Our active participation in the Easter Vigil is thus summarized by a current writer:

¹⁴St. Ambrose On the Mysteries and On the Sacraments, op.cit., On the Sacraments 7:17-18, p.66.

When we celebrate Christ's Resurrection, the paschal candle is brought into the dark Church. Then we sing "Lumen Christi", "Deo Gratias". And then we all light our small candles from the paschal candle. Each of us now holds a candle in his hand and knows: this flame, this light comes from the paschal candle which represents the "risen One. In just the same way the grace life together with its resurrection forces comes to me from Christ. And so we belong together Christ and the Christian."¹⁵

In solemn Baptism, the liturgical candle is lighted and handed to the one baptized, or, to the godparents, with the injunction to be faithful to the graces just received: "This is an impressive exhortation to the child of God and to its godparents . . . never to let the light be extinguished by the storms of life, never to stain the white garment . . . to walk ever in the light."¹⁶ The Church has most fittingly ordained to have, whenever possible, a solemn Baptism at the Easter Vigil. One can readily perceive why this ceremony fits in so well with our renewal in our liturgical teaching. It is the procedure followed by Ambrose and Cyril who were of one mind in stating that "Baptism is a Sacrament of Light." And Christian antiquity referred to it as "illumination".¹⁷ In fact, it is believed by many that the prayer of praise of the

¹⁵Goldbrunner, op.cit., p.201.

¹⁶Adolf Donders, The Message of Christ, trans.Rudolph Kraus (St.Louis: B.Herder Book Company, 1953), p.71.

¹⁷Camelot, op.cit., p.18.

light that is Christ, the Exultet, was composed by St. Ambrose. It glorifies the light because of its victory over death and darkness, which is sin. Theologians today are agreed that this active participation in the liturgy is the only way to really derive benefit from the Easter Vigil. One of these theologians writes:

The significance of placing Solemn Baptism and the renewal of baptismal promises within the Easter Vigil, can be grasped in its deepest significance and implications only if we attend to the way in which the Church in the beginning, as still in its liturgy, understood the climactic events of Christ's life and her own existence as the prolongation of Christ in history.¹⁸

To impress upon his neophytes the riches of Baptism, St. Cyril contrasts historical events from the Old and New Testaments. We become sons of Adam, he says, by our sameness of faith; he contrasts the deliverance of the Jews by Moses with our deliverance from the very clutches of Satan by the saving grace of Jesus Christ. The former, he calls a figure, the latter, a reality. In this way, Cyril strives to make his neophytes more fully aware of the power which Christ exerts over Satan when we are baptized:

In former times death was mighty and devoured; but at the holy Laver of regeneration, God has "wiped away every tear from all faces" (Is. 25:8). For thou shalt no more mourn

¹⁸Matthew O'Connell, "Waters of Re-birth", The Way, Vol. 11 (April, 1962) 105

now that thou hast put off the old man; but thou shalt keep holy-day, clothed in the garment of salvation, even Jesus Christ.¹⁹

The procedure followed by Cyril, who bases his teaching on the Old and New Testaments, is in accordance with the methodology recommended as one of the better means of catechetical approach today. Contrasting the writing of a recent author with what we have seen in the writings of Saints Cyril and Ambrose, it is seen that the Fathers of the Church find their place in current catechetics. This statement finds its foundation in the thought of a writer of today who says: "Baptism unites all those to whom it is given into one people, just as the Jews at the Exodus were all centred around Moses. From now on the baptized form a new people, or rather, a group of religious men who are separated from the rest of mankind."²⁰

It is to be remarked and duly emphasized in the imparting of religious instruction that the duty of the Christian is not completed as soon as the sacraments are received, nor are the effects restricted to the time of their reception. Both Saints Ambrose and Cyril were conscious of this as may be observed in the way in which they devoted themselves to the

¹⁹Cyril of Jerusalem's Lectures on the Christian Sacraments, op.cit., Mystagogical Catechesis 1:10, p.58.

²⁰L.Cerfaux, The Church in the Theology of St. Paul, trans. G.Webb and A.Walker (New York: Herder and Herder Book Company, 1959), p.170.

instruction of the newly-baptized after their Baptism at the Easter Vigil. For another complete week, instructions were given them on the explanations of the rites and ceremonies of the Sacraments they had so recently received.

The Sacraments are dynamic realities in the conferring of sanctifying grace on the worthy recipient. They are dynamic realities also as they furnish the power to act in conformity with the new life of grace. The duty of the faithful, therefore continues after the reception of the Sacraments in cooperation with the special grace each of these Sacraments gives to attain the particular purpose for which Christ instituted it. To bring these truths to life in the students, our teaching must be done in a manner to assure, not only the interest of the students, but one which will give a deep-rooted conviction motivating them to make these values their own in everyday life.

LITURGY IN CATECHETICS

The present trend in the catechetical field is called a renewal. It is not an innovation, but a restoration, for, with the Church, we return to the source of her tradition, the roots of her catechetical heritage. There, we find the essential good news of our salvation which we impart to others in a biblical narrative style and in a liturgical setting. In so acting, we are following the advice of authorities in the catechetical field, one of whom sums up our teaching in this

way:

As a result of the catechetical movement in recent years, it is now generally admitted that catechetics, when dealing with the truths of the Faith, should transmit to the children, not merely a considerable number of formulae to be retained, but should rather provide an attractive picture of the history of salvation, a living image of the Figure of Christ, Who has come into the world in the fullness of time, has proclaimed the Word of God to man, achieved our redemption on the cross, and collected around Him a new people of God.²¹

What God has revealed in the concrete events of sacred history, the Church now enables us to re-live in the meaningful events of the liturgy. In prayerful, dramatic, concrete ways, these saving happenings of the past become present to us in the liturgy, not merely as commemorative acts or events but as living events here and now. Biblical catechesis is geared in a special way towards liturgical catechesis. The idea of an active participation is the underlying thought of writers on catechesis today. "Today's approach to catechetics is based upon the idea of "doing" as a result of learning. For God's love of man caused Him to do something for man; man's love for God must cause him to do something for God".²²

How did our predecessors go about to teach the liturgy?

²¹Josef A. Jungmann, S.J., "Liturgy and the History of Salvation", Lumen Vitae (April-September, 1955) 261

²²H. Guyot, "The Kerygmatic Approach in Catechetics", St. Louis Review, August 17, 1962, p.15.

How did they fully explain all that takes place within a small portion of that liturgy? The Easter Vigil service offers an opportune example. This, the Fathers made a theoretical as well as a practical lesson by having the neophytes brought to the ceremony and making them be partakers of it. Many of them, according to the custom of the times, were baptized at the Vigil service.

Our students, for the most part, were baptized in their infancy, but that does not prevent them from participating in a wholehearted manner in the Easter Vigil. We can, by encouraging this assistance at the Easter Vigil, help them to re-live their Baptism, and thus learn to appreciate the graces then received by indicating and explaining the true meaning of the ceremony, its effects and the gratitude they owe to Almighty God for this signal gift. Their presence at the Easter Vigil and their renewal of the baptismal promises could serve as an avowal of their complete commitment.

The Christian atmosphere in a school is greatly favoured by an understanding of the liturgy. Intelligent participation in it presupposes appreciation of our initiation as Christians through the Sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and the Holy Eucharist. The work in the religion class provides this knowledge, but mere teaching is not sufficient. In their day, Saints Ambrose and Cyril did just that, as their works are a sufficient evidence. They conducted their neo-

phytes to the Easter Vigil where they received the Sacraments of Initiation. The Fathers thought that time and circumstances lent themselves to the explanation of the Death and Resurrection of the Saviour, and in a very appropriate setting. The Sacraments of Initiation are founded on these acts of the Redemption.

The imitation of the admirable example of the early Fathers, we, likewise have the opportunity of using with our students wherewith we may make them active participants in the liturgy. Singing at Mass, taking part in the Offertory procession, and placing the host in the ciborium before Mass, are but a few of the ways that allow for this very active and real participation. And, young people must be given these opportunities if our teaching is to have the results which the Church expects that we have in our religious training of youth.

Our Christian living is a witness: liturgy is the source. It is the late Cardinal Suhard who said: "To be a witness does not consist in engaging in propaganda nor even in stirring up people, but in being a living mystery. It means to live in such a way that one's life would not make sense if God did not exist." Another writer, commenting on the same matter, says: "The teacher must always remember and get across to her pupils that the soul of every liturgical event is the sacrificial idea, realized in a perfect manner

in the self-surrender of Jesus Christ to His heavenly Father, whereby the whole Mystical Body and every separate member are offered up with Him. However, to this passive oblation there ought to be added at all times an active self-offering on the part of the individual.²³

In recent years, much has been written about the Mystical Body of Christ, and of our participation in it. Our fourth-century catechists used some very constructive means to make this doctrine well understood by their catechumens. Enrichment may be derived from the writings of St. Cyril on this important topic. He founded his explanation on the words of Our Divine Lord when He said: "And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all things to myself" (John 12:32). All the teaching of the Church, Cyril was convinced, were centred around the cross. Christ's sacrifice on Calvary is our sacrifice to God. He explains, as did St. John in his Gospel, that Christ is the true Vine. But, just as a branch grafted on a healthy tree will flourish on condition that the tree send sap into the branch, so, too, will we grow spiritually on condition that the true Vine incorporate us into Himself by Baptism.²⁴

²³ Guyot, op.cit., p.4.

²⁴ St. Cyrille de Jérusalem Catéchète edited by Antoine Paulin (Paris: Les Editions du Cerf, 1959), p.234.

Help on the subject matter of the Mystical Body may be obtained also from the writings of St. Ambrose who taught that when Christ rose from the dead, He walked in newness of life. Christ was different because He had different powers. So, when we have done that which signifies His death and resurrection, that is, when we have been baptized, we also walk in newness of life in the supernatural order. This all means that we are living with the Christ-life of grace. It means as well, that we have now new powers for we are, as St. Paul says, "conformed to Christ." So Baptism is an incorporation, making us members of the Mystical Body of Christ. And, when Christ acts through His Mystical Body, He acts through us, for His action is our action.

Catechesis and preaching are the two principal ways by which the Church exercises her teaching office. The Church, from its very foundation, has encouraged catechesis. We encounter its basic meaning as understood in the modern sense even in the New Testament: "And let him that is instructed in the word, communicate to him that instructed him, in all good things" (Gal. 6:6). And St. Luke reiterates the same thought at the commencement of his Gospel: "That thou mayest know the verity of these words in which thou hast been instructed" (Luke 1:4).

Present-day catechesis places increased emphasis on descending chain of revealed doctrine, God, Christ, the Church,

divine life through the Sacraments, and the ascent of the Christian through union with God. Kerygmatic teaching presupposes a psychological methodology based on the natural way we learn, and consequently, must teach.

There is much that is old and much that is new in the kerygmatic approach in catechetical education. It has its roots deep in the teaching of St. Augustine's De Rudibus Catechezandis wherein the great Doctor of the Church explained to a zealous young catechist how he should proceed in imparting religious instruction.

Until recently, it seemed as though different and more interesting methods of teaching religion were all that were needed to meet the requirements of the long-sought change in catechetical needs. So, religious educators have been infinitely resourceful in working out such methods, with all the assistance of visual aids, workbooks and so on. But, it is becoming increasingly more clear that the real problem is on another entirely different level. Far too much of our religious instruction has been, however ingeniously given, aimed at teaching children about religion, but it has not been directed towards putting them into personal contact with God's own revelation and self-giving in the Church in such a way as to arouse their personal response and self-commitment. It has not unfolded to them the plan of salvation in such a way as

to bring it home to them and make them responsive to God's invitation to take part in it.

The present catechetical renewal is striving, therefore, to bring about the reordering of all religious instruction so as to attain the goals that have been recommended. Its aim is to work out and to put into effect a threefold program which would give due place to formal, orderly intellectual instruction, but in proper subordination to a biblical-liturgical formation opening out God's designs in wider and wider contexts, putting children in contact with the word of God proclaimed in the Church, training them in Christian prayer formed by the Word, and awakening them to the need for a personal response to God's love in worship and in Christian living.

Correlation can be made between the teaching of the Fathers and the approach now being made which is known as the kerygma. The more we consider the two, the more we are convinced that they are closely related. Catechesis today does not demand something entirely new; it asks, rather, for a renewal, for a return, in part, to the content of what was taught in the beginning. And, because experience shows that the method is excellent. It also asks that the manner of presentation be that used by our predecessors as is suggested by a writer who comments on today's catechetics:

In the Old Testament, as in the New, there is present a kerygma, a unifying and common core of events whose proclamation constitutes the essential nature of the Old Testament. The Old Testament is not, as we shall see, unrelated to the New Testament kerygma, but both are identical as essential proclamation of God's saving acts. ²⁵

The renewal that is being studied and aimed at, then, can be helped by a return to the sources. The homilies of St. Cyril of Jerusalem and the treatises of St. Ambrose of Milan are sources that can be of great assistance in the development of the Sacrament of Baptism. Besides the value of St. Cyril's lectures in themselves, there is the additional qualification by which they are marked by coming, as they do, from Jerusalem, the cradle of Christianity. They thus form part of Tradition, touched by the memory of apostolic times. But, regardless of their historical value, or their place among treasures of antiquity, Cyril's lectures are an invaluable help in our catechetical renewal. They tend to make Christian morality that joyful response to the Divine call because of the overall motivation which St. Cyril gives to the understanding of the Faith which, as the following excerpt shows, he found in the Church:

It is from the Church that we must learn the books of the Old and the New Testaments. Meditate with care the books which we read with all security in the Church:

²⁵Sister Mary Luke, C.S.J., "The Liturgical Method in Religion Teaching", The Catholic Educational Review, Vol. XLVI (June, 1948) 375

those who brought them to you, the Apostles and the ancient bishops, chiefs of the Church, were much more prudent and holy than you. You are a child of the Church don't transgress her laws and meditate on the twenty-two books of the Old Testament, as I have told you. We must insist on the vivid manner of presenting Tradition: it is the Church actually presented as a mother whose children should obey her through love. It is she who communicates the Faith. Embrace and preserve the Faith which was brought to you by the Church and which is strengthened by the Holy Scripture.²⁶

God unfolded His merciful designs to us in a series of historical events. This is Divine Action, and it is noteworthy that all the great teachers of the Church couched their message in this framework. In modern catechetics, this is termed salvation-history. It is the Faith examining God's action with man, and learning humbly from the way in which God taught us. It is the oldest and simplest form; the one used by Christ in His own teaching; it is also the method used by the Fathers of the Church. It is, as we have seen, moreover, the means used by our two noteworthy catechists of the past, Saints Ambrose and Cyril.

Thus, modern catechetics stresses the framework of the history of salvation, God's plan for the salvation of the world, with Christ as the centre. God has not revealed His

²⁶St. Cyril of Jerusalem's Lectures on the Christian Sacraments, op.cit., Mystagogical Catechesis 4:33-34, p.69 and Mystagogical Catechesis 5:13, p.73

plan to men in a series of abstract definitions. Rather He has revealed in events.²⁷ We have, therefore, a God-given methodology when we teach according to God's plan, showing always the relation to Christ. The writings of the Fathers are, to a great extent, an application of this method. Using patristic writings, particularly patristic catechesis such as that of St. Ambrose and St. Cyril, can foster as well as enrich the kerygmatic method advocated by present-day catechists.

²⁷ Gerard S. Sloyan, (Editor) Shaping the Christian Message, (New York: Macmillan Company, 1959), passim.

CONCLUSION

This dissertation has in view the teaching in a clear and thorough manner the Church's doctrine concerning the Sacrament of Baptism. The religious instruction teacher often finds it difficult to choose effective material with which to enrich the textbook lessons. It has been pointed out that helpful material may be found in two works of St. Ambrose of Milan, On the Mysteries and On the Sacraments and in The Mystagogical Catecheses of St. Cyril of Jerusalem.

A survey study was first made of the works of these two Fathers of the Church, after which it was concluded that both these fourth-century catechists were so impressed with the importance of the initial Sacrament of our re-birth that much valuable help may be derived from their teaching.

The various rites and ceremonies of Baptism as they are practiced today were compared with what was taught by the early Fathers. It was seen that much profitable and enlightening application may be made by referring our teaching to the methods used in the early Church.

Doctrinal and theological developments since the time of Saints Ambrose and Cyril have been considered. Practical

reference has been made to ecclesiastical documents, particularly to papal encyclicals and the writings of modern theologians.

Conclusions are such that maintain that the teaching of our patristic Fathers help the faithful to be a personal fulfillment of the true Christian as described by Pope Pius XII:

By the waters of Baptism, as by common right, Christians are made members of the Mystical Body of Christ the Priest and by the "Character" which is imprinted on their souls, they are appointed to give worship to God.¹

¹Pope Pius XII, Mediator Dei, November 20, 1947
(Washington: National Welfare Conference), p.34.

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ABSTRACT OF A THESIS ON ENRICHING CATECHISM TEXTS
ON THE TEACHING OF BAPTISM BY A RETURN TO
THE SOURCES

In the prologue of the Fourth Gospel, St. John writes that Christ "came to what was His own and they who were His own, welcomed Him. And these, He empowered to become the children of God . . . their birth came . . . from God." There is the relationship of cause and effect between this and verse thirteen, "And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us." In the beautiful comment of St. Augustine, "man can be born of God because God was born of man." And, to be born of God is to receive the Sacrament of Baptism in which God initiates the dialogue that should constitute the life of the Christian. Such is the whole substance of what has been studied in this thesis.

The study of Baptism as found in the Fathers is studied with a view of enriching our catechism texts with appropriate material derived from the research into the writings of two of these Fathers, Saints Ambrose of Milan and Cyril of Jerusalem.

The two treatises of St. Ambrose, On the Mysteries and On the Sacraments are reviewed in Chapter One. Here it is found that the victory of Christ, the Source of our Baptism,

has been considered by St. Ambrose as dividing time into two parts: the Old Testament, the time of longing for "Him who was to come", and the New Testament, the time of fulfillment, a victory in the Redemption by which all men are saved. The rites and ceremonies of Baptism as taught in the fourth century by St. Ambrose were commented upon and contrasted so as to see in what ways they might apply to present-day catechesis.

The Mystagogical Catecheses of St. Cyril of Jerusalem were reviewed in Chapter Two. It was discovered that these enlightening lectures on the subject of our re-birth may be said to have particular connection with our Easter Vigil service much of which is connected with Baptism. For, Cyril considers that, on this night the history of God's dealing with man is revealed; as one by one, the lessons tell of the great work of God the Father and His wonderful act of creating all things for us: of His leading Moses and the Israelites out of Egypt, symbolizing that God has freed us, His new people from sin: of His protecting His people who have been saved by Christ, His Son. And of the importance of salvation to keep His law of love. This salvation is given to us at Baptism, our first step towards conformity to the life of Christ.

The teaching of religion in our schools is frequently hampered by inadequate textbooks which do not reflect the essential nature of the kerygma. (Chapter Three). It is here that the ingenuity, patience and grasp of Christian truth of

the teacher is tested, for it is the teacher alone who must present the manifold truths of the central core of religion. With this in mind, the writings of Saints Ambrose and Cyril were analysed with a view to determining how their writings could have possible application to our current catechism texts. Chapter Three shows how much valuable enrichment may be found in the works studied, and how this enrichment can be used in the classroom.

A synthesis to help students to understand the Plan of God and their role in it, is attempted in Chapter Four. The nature of God and His Plan of Salvation are revealed in the acts which He performs throughout history. He has acted in the past and has established a bond, a covenant with men: He continues to act for His people. The acts of the past are the buttress of the believer's hope, the realization of what God has done makes us more conscious of the meaning of what He continues to do. Salvation-history is the account of the intervention of God in our world, drawing mankind to Himself, communicating His Divine Life, and bringing about His universal reign.

No catechist, truly biblical in his approach can avoid being liturgical in his catechesis. Unique as salvation-history is, its events continue here and now in the Church's liturgy through the seasons. (Chapter Four). For this

reason, Father Jungmann refers to the liturgy as the "classic religion course for a lifetime.

