

Conclusion

To respond to the vocation to be Catholic we must consider the foundational issues of Baptism and Confirmation which lead to the completion of initiation in the Eucharist where we are nourished for our journey.

From Easter, when we renew our Baptismal Promises, to December 7, I invite the Archdiocese to concentrate on the concept of the vocation to be Catholic. Only when we seriously commit ourselves to being Catholic can we begin to think about specific vocations in the Church and find the clarity of motivation to respond to the three priorities of the Synod.

I also invite the Synod Implementation Team in consultation with the pertinent departments of the Archdiocese and the theologians who serve in the Archdiocese to assist parents, schools, parishes and retreat houses by developing reflection programmes on the vocation to be Catholic, which flows from the Catholic understanding of Baptism and Confirmation.

Points for Examination from the Heart

What do you recall of your Baptism/Confirmation/First Communion?

How have you lived out your call as a Catholic since you received the sacraments?

How important is communicating the Faith to your Catholic vocation?

What are the special benefits of the Sacrament of Confirmation?

For Children

When you were baptised you joined the family of God and became a member of his Church. The minister called your name saying '(N) _____ I baptise you in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit'. At the celebration many items may have been used. Unravel the lines below to reveal four of them:

TRAWE _____
LDACNE _____
SRCHMI _____
WEHIT MTNERGA _____

Draw each item. What do they symbolise?

Praying with the Word

Memory Verse:

"[So] whoever is in Christ is a new creation: the old things have passed away; behold new things have come" (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Towards Transformation

In every parish there are more inactive Catholics than active Catholics. **Identify** some of the 'triggers' that lead active Catholics to become inactive. **Write down** the steps you and your parish can take to build bridges to potential returning Catholics.

Get to know the Mission Statement of the Archdiocese. Find it at www.rcpos.org



Called to be Catholic

REDISCOVERING THE VOCATION

(Adapted from the **Archbishop's Column**, published in the *Catholic News* 29 March 2009)

rediscover
vocation

The Sacred Scriptures are received by believers through a religious tradition. Similarly, the concept of vocation is understood in the context of a religious tradition. The vocation to be Catholic is understood through the Catholic understanding of Baptism and Confirmation and, of course, the final sacrament of initiation, Eucharist.

We spend a great deal of time and pastoral effort on specific vocations e.g. marriage, the religious life and the priesthood. Admittedly, more attention needs to be given to those who have opted for the chosen single life. However, with the exception of the education/formation component of the *Rite for the Christian Initiation of Adults*, there is a gap in many cases between infant baptism and confirmation and then from confirmation to the next level of commitment if there is a next level of commitment.

The catechetical/formation ministry in families, schools and parishes makes serious efforts to address the gap and in more than a few cases they are successful. The Catechetical Office and the Evangelisation Commission have made great strides in addressing the issue of adult catechesis and formation. However, the challenge remains: Too many people do not reflect sufficiently on the meaning and the long-term implications of being baptised and being confirmed.

Baptism

Baptism, the first sacrament of initiation, incorporates us into the Church and into the mystery of Christ. (Remember mystery does not only refer to something that cannot be explained, it also refers to God's loving plan of salvation now revealed in Christ). Ritually, Baptism involves prayer formulas, water (pouring or immersion) and anointing with blessed oil (Oil

of Catechumens) and consecrated oil (Chrism). By removing the guilt of original sin, Baptism confers grace, the priesthood of the baptised and the gift of the Holy Spirit. However, even after Baptism people are experientially aware that the tendency toward evil (the power of darkness) still remains.

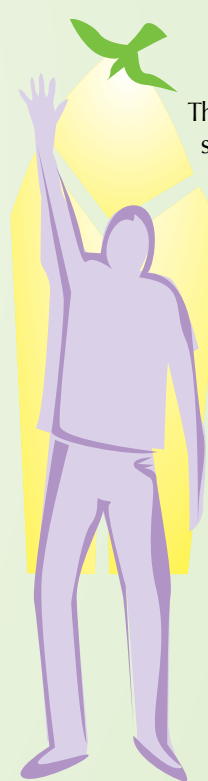
The Challenge

How can the Church help people to be more aware of the meaning and implications of Baptism? How can the Church "form" people (shape their lives) to live their new life in Christ? How can the Church help people to understand that their life in Christ is a lifelong journey?

The general answer is through lifelong catechesis and formation. The more specific answer is that we must find ways: 1) to convince baptised people that catechesis and formation are necessary to avoid falling under the influence of the power of darkness again; 2) to encourage families to educate and form the members of their own families in the faith e.g. by living a Catholic Culture and Identity in their homes (a Synod Priority); and 3) to prepare young family members to enter the larger world of school, parish and community with a strong foundation in the faith.

Confirmation

The second sacrament of initiation, Confirmation, has had a long and rather complicated history. Although the rite itself and the theological understanding have varied over the centuries, the fact of the "post-baptismal laying on of hands" has been consistent in the Catholic Tradition and is understood as perpetuating, in a certain sense, the grace of Pentecost in the Church.



The Second Vatican Council ordered that special attention be given to the sacraments of initiation so they can be more easily understood by the faithful. In response to the call of the Council, Pope Paul VI issued an *Apostolic Constitution on Confirmation*, in 1971, in which he stated: "Through the Sacrament of Confirmation those who have been born anew in Baptism receive the inexpressible gift, the Holy Spirit, by which they are endowed with special strength. They are bound more intimately to the Church, are more strictly bound to spread and defend the faith both by word and deed as true witnesses of Christ."

The Challenge

How can the Church help people who have been confirmed live their confirmation, i.e. manifest that they have accepted a strengthening of the Spirit, and take up their responsibility to spread and defend the faith as true witnesses of Christ? How can the Church lead people who have been confirmed to move beyond their privacy into ministry? How can the Church convince the confirmed that they must grow in their commitment to the Lord all the days of their lives?

The response to the challenge is similar to the response given under Baptism. First of all, a lifelong commitment to growth and development in prayer and pastoral involvement is necessary. Personal study and reflection on the Faith is required. Participation in specialised programmes can help us become more alive in the Spirit and personally experience the Faith community. The *Theology of the Body and Catholicism 201* (a Catholic Follow-up to the Alpha Course) are two such programmes. Finally, the growing practice of recommitting oneself to the Holy Spirit on the anniversary of one's Confirmation each year can be very helpful.

