

THE SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM IN CYRIL'S MYSTAGOGICAL CATECHESSES I-III

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With the renewal of interest in the process of Christian Initiation today, especially with the restoration of the catechumenate after the Second Vatican Council, there is also a rejuvenated pursuit of the Patristic teaching and influence on such a process. It is with this same interest that I am undertaking in this article to see how Cyril in his time initiated new converts and his method of catechesis for these newcomers of the Church in Jerusalem

In this article I hope to uncover the various liturgical rites of Baptism in the initiation of Christians from the first three Mistagogical Catecheses of Cyril of Jerusalem. Before that, it might be good to put ourselves in the historical context of these Mistagogical Catecheses and the problem of authorship. To understand better the doctrinal content of these catecheses, we should first survey a few of the important terminology that Cyril used which contained specific meanings.

Then I shall draw some conclusions with relation to our situation today.

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Abbreviations:

- AJT *American Journal of Theology*
- EL *Ephemerides Liturgicae*
- HJ *Heythrop Journal*
- JTS *Journal Theological Studies*
- Mus *Le Muséon*
- OCP *Orientalia Christēna periodica*
- RSR *Recherches de science religieuse*
- SP *Studia Pataviana*
- ST *Studi e Testi*
- TS *Theological Studies*

A. Cyril of Jerusalem

The Man and His background

Among the bishops of Jerusalem of the Fourth Century, Cyril, of whom the famous series of catechetical lectures were attributed, is the only one that gained the reputation of being an ecclesiastical writer. His place and date of birth are unknown, but it is generally believed that Cyril was born in Jerusalem about 315.¹ He was ordained deacon by Macarius, Bishop of Jerusalem c. 335, and priest, by Maximus, the successor of Macarius c. 345. At the death of Maximus, Cyril succeeded him as the Bishop of Jerusalem in c. 348. Since it was the Arian bishop Acacius of Caesarea who consecrated him, the reason being that Jerusalem was under the metropolitan See of Caesarea, the suspicion arose early that he obtained it by concessions to Arianism, as Jerome's *Chronicon* mentioned.² But there is no sufficient evidence to sustain such an allegation; reality revealed itself that the following years of his consecration were marked with great tensions between the two Sees, partly because of dogmatic differences, but most probably because of jealousy over the constantly growing importance of Cyril's See. As a result, Cyril was deposed at a council in Jerusalem in 357 and took refuge in Tarsus. The next year, he was restored by the council at Seleucia only to be banished again by Acacius again in 360. It was under Emperor Julian's accession in 362 that he was allowed to return to his See. Even though Acacius died in 366, Cyril's yet another exile, which was the longest, came in 367 when he was removed from Jerusalem by Emperor Valens. He was allowed to return only after the death of the Emperor in 378. In 381, he took part in the Second Ecumenical Council of Constantinople and most probably died on March 18, 386, the day which the liturgical calendars of the East and West have kept as his feast.

1. J. Quasten, *Patrology*, Vol. III, (Christian Classics Ic., Westminster, Maryland 1990) 362.

2. The view of Socrates (*Hist. eccl.* 2, 38), repeated in Sozomen (*Hist. eccle.* 4, 20), that Maximus was removed for his orthodoxy and replaced by Cyril as a promoter of Arianism, is contradicted by Theodoret (*Hist. eccl.* 2, 22) and by the Synodal Letter of the Council of Constantinople of 383 (*Hist. eccl.* 5, 9).

B. His Mystagogical Catechesis

1. Where and when were they preached?

The Catechetical Lectures of Cyril fall into two main groups. All but the last five were addressed to the group of candidates which looked forward to Baptism at the coming Easter. They formed a special class known as the *Photizomenoi* (its Latin equivalent: competentes). The last five, known as the Mystagogical catecheses, were directed to the newly baptized, the *neophotestoi*. The common practice of the time was that the photizomenoi would give their names on the eve of the first Sunday of Lent, and the next day, they would make public profession of their purpose before witnesses. The exorcisms took place the following day, at the same time catecheses which continued daily, would begin till the Lent fast. These catecheses took the form of continuous addresses. Any of the faithful (baptized) who wished were permitted to be present, but catechumens of the earlier stages were excluded.³

If we accept the traditional view of Cyril's authorship of these catecheses, there are twenty four of such catecheses:

- a) An introductory 'Procatechesis'
- b) Eighteen Catecheses directed to the photizomenoi
- c) Five Mystagogical Catecheses to the neophytes after their Baptism, given during the Paschal Octave.

The pre-baptismal Catecheses are believed to be given in Constantine's great basilica on Golgotha mentioned in Catecheses 16:4, whereas the Mystagogical Catecheses were preached at the Anastasis, that is the small chapel which contained the Holy Sepulchre.

It was the common practice of that time that someone would record Cyril in shorthand as he was speaking. In Egerias's time (ca. 385-396), an interpreter was always present to translate these catecheses from Greek into Syriac and this custom may well go back to Cyril's day. Cyril mentioned that "these catecheses were delivered fully seventy years after Probus, which meant around about 347 or perhaps

3. F.L. Cross (ed), *St. Cyril of Jerusalem's Lectures on the Christian Sacraments*, (St. Vladimir's Seminary Press; New York 1986; 1st pub. 1951 by SPCK, London) xxii.

a year or two later.⁴ Such date had been commonly held to imply that Cyril delivered them when he was still a presbyter, though J. Mader⁵ has argued that Cyril succeeded Maximus as Bishop early in 348 and that the lectures date from the Lent of that year. In any case, it is hard to maintain that the lectures were taken down in one year only, because of the extensive variations in the manuscripts.⁶ It is most probable that the manuscripts reflect the catechizing of more than one year. The advanced theology of the Holy Spirit in Catecheses 16 and 17 also suggests a date considerably later than 350. The one-year view is difficult to harmonize with the various indications of season.⁷ Due to the rule of the secret (attested by the scribal note following the Procatechesis), the catecheses most probably were circulated privately at first, available only to the baptized and the photizomenoi.

II. The Problem of authorship

Here, I do not intend to discuss the whole problem of the authorship of these catecheses⁸ but only to highlight the fact that there are at present two schools of thought as far as the authorship is concerned. The first was upheld until recently,

4. Cross (ed), *St. Cyril of Jerusalem's Lectures*, xxii

5. *Der heilige Cyrillus*, (Einsiedeln 1891)

6. See especially Toutée's two recensions of Catechesis 2; there are two different versions of 2, 16-20. Cfr. Bibliography.

7. Giffors shows that Cat. 18:7 and Cat. 4:30 indicated that the lectures were delivered in the year when Easter fell early, but in Cat. 14:10, spring had already arrived, and not merely official spring, but also the spring flower. Cat. 13:8, as Giffors maintains, has the same problem.

8. For detailed discussion of this problem, the following argue against Cyril's authorship: W.J. Swaans, "A propos des 'Catéchèses Mystagogiques' attribuées à S. Cyrille de Jérusalem", *Mus* 55 (1942); W. Telfer, *Cyril of Jerusalem and Memesius of Emesa*, (Library of Christian Classics; London 1955) 39-40; E. Bihain, "Une vie arménienne de S. Cyrille de Jérusalem", *Mus* 76 (1963) 319-348; A.A. Stephenson, *The works of Saint Cyril of Jerusalem, The Fathers of the Church*, Vol. 2 (Washington 1970) 143-149; A. Renoux, "Les Catéchèses Mystagogiques dans l'organisation liturgique hierolymitaine du IV^e ed du V^e siècle", *Mus* 78 (1965) 355-359; J. Wilkinson, *Egeria's Travels*, (London 1971).

For those who defend the Cyrilline authorship: C. Beukers, "For our Emperors, Soldiers, and Allies" An attempt at dating the twenty third Catechesis by Cyrillus of Jerusalem', *Vig* C 15 (1961) 177-184; K. Deddens, *Annus Liturgicus?*, (Goes 1975); Edward Yarnold, "The authorship of the Mystagogic catecheses attributed to Cyril of Jerusalem", *HJ* 19 (1978). Authors like F.L. Cross, A Piédagnel and P.T. Camelot keep an open mind on the subject.

that is, that the whole catecheses are the work of Cyril, while the other school of thought attributes the first twelve catecheses to Cyril and the rest to Cyril's successor, John, from an analysis of the Greek vocabulary used, a marked difference emerges. In any case, the style, spirituality and theology of the catecheses as a whole is consistent. Hence, the influence of Cyril on these catecheses is beyond doubt.

Uncovering the rites of Baptism according to Cyril's Catechesis

From the first three Mystagogical Catecheses, we can reconstruct a clear picture of the contemporary Baptismal rite:

A. Renunciation of the Devil

After all had assembled in the vestibule of the Baptistry (*ho proanlios tou baptisterion oikos*⁹; also *ho exoterios oikos*)¹⁰, the candidates, facing West and with hands stretched out, made a formal renunciation of the devil. Why did the candidates have to face West to renounce Satan? St. Cyril maintained it was necessary to do so, "since the West is the region of sensible darkness, and he being darkness, has his dominion also in darkness."¹¹ Hence, the candidates, looking towards the West with a symbolical meaning "renounce that dark and gloomy potentate."¹²

B. Profession of faith

After renouncing the Devil, the candidates then turned to the East and solemnly professed their faith in the one Baptism of Repentance with a trinitarian formula. What was the significance of turning to the East in order to profess one's faith? St. Cyril explained that the symbolic turning from the West to the East, which is the

9. Cat. Myst. 1:2, Cross, *Lectures* 13. Note: All English and Greek quotations of the Mystagogical Catecheses, unless otherwise stated, are taken from F.L. Cross's.

10. Cat. Myst. 1:11, Cross, *Lectures*, 17

11. Cat. Myst. 1:4, Cross, *Lectures*, 54-55

12. Cat. Myst. 1:4, Cross, *Lectures*, 55

place of light, signified a complete break with Satan and a decision to put one's faith in the trinitarian God.

C. Anointing with the exorcized oil

Passing into the inner chamber (*ho esoterios oikos*)¹³, they next took their clothes off (in complete nakedness), and were anointed with the exorcized oil. The stripping of the garment, for Cyril, was 'an image of putting off the old man with his deeds.'¹⁴ Such action was done in 'imitating Christ, who hung naked on the Cross, and by his nakedness spoiled principalities and powers, and openly triumphed over them on the tree.'¹⁵ St. Cyril described the anointing with the exorcized oil as being "made partakers of the good olive."¹⁶ The candidates were seen as being "cut off from the wild olive tree, and grafted into the good one and were made to share the fatness of the true olive-tree."¹⁷

D. Baptism by immersion

The candidate, then, were led by hand one by one to the font, where after again making their formal profession of faith, were immersed three times in the blessed baptismal water to symbolise the Redeemer's three-day sojourn in the grave. Being led into the baptismal font was seen as being "carried from the Cross to the Sepulchre."¹⁸ Hence, for Cyril, the water of salvation was at once for the candidates, "your grave and your mother."¹⁹

13. Cat. Myst. 1:11, Cross, *ibid.*, 18

14. Cat. Myst. 2:2, Cross, *ibid.*, 59; also cf. Col 3,9

15. Cat. Myst. 2:2, Cross, *ibid.*, 59; also cf. Col., 2, 15

16. Cat. Myst. 2:3., Cross, *ibid.*, 60

17. Cat. Myst. 2:3, Cross, *ibid.*, 60

18. Cat. Mys. 2:4, Cross, *ibid.*, 60

19. Cat. Myst. 2:5, Cross, *ibid.*, 61

E. Baptismal chrismation

After baptism by immersion, the candidate was, then, anointed with the oil of Chrism. Cyril compared this anointing with that of Christ after his own baptism in the river Jordan. As Christ was anointed with the Holy Spirit, the neophytes (*neophylisioi*), through the anointing with the oil of the Chrism, were anointed with the Holy Spirit.²⁰ Cyril continued to speak of this chrism as "a spiritual perservative of the body and safeguard of the soul"²¹ and the importance of keeping it "unspotted and unblemished."²² Though in his Mystagogical Catecheses, St. Cyril did not explicitly mention the rite of putting on new garments, the above exhortation seems to imply the symbolic meaning of putting on the new garments before the neophytes were led into the Church for communion.

A. The Terminology of Cyril

In order to comprehend better the doctrinal content of the three mystagogical catecheses of Cyril on Baptism, we must come to grip with the terminology he used. Like other Church Fathers, Cyril sets up a typological relationship between the Old Testament and the New, and then, applies this relationship to the explanation of the liturgical rites. However, Cyril did not absolutize typology. In fact, typology is only one component of his method of theologizing and he uses such typological argument only twice in the first three of his Mystagogical catecheses: one for his commentary on Baptism and the other when discussing the anointing with oil. Cyril did make clear distinction between the two Testaments in that the saving events of the New Testament do not belong to the Old. The Old Testament contains in fact not the events, but their *typos*.²³ "This, you must understand: that this figure (*typos*) is found in the ancient history."²⁴ The Old Testament events are related, one by one, to their New Testament correlatives in a real and proper learning process:

20. cf. Cat. Myst. 3:2, Cross, *ibid.*, 64

21. Cat. Myst. 3:7, Cross, *ibid.*, 66-67

22. Cat. Myst. 3:7, Cross, *ibid.*, 67

23. Enrico Mazza, *Mystagogy*, (translated by Matthew J. O'Connell) (Pueblo; New York 1989) 162.

24. cf. Cat. Myst. 1:2, Cross, *Lectures*, 51

"Now turn from the ancient to the recent, from the figure (*typos*) to the reality."²⁵ For Cyril, there is no question of seeing the one reality present in the other, but of passing from one reality to another. If this is to be done, there must be a correspondence between the events of the two Testaments: this correspondence is ensured by a likeness between them, in according with the method usual in typology.

In his Mystagogical catecheses, Cyril uses four terms to express his typology, namely:

- I. Symbol
- II. Imitation
- III. Likeness
- IV. "Antitypos"

For us, who are so much set in our own definition of these terms, it would not be easy to put ourselves into Cyril's time and try to see things from his point of view. But, it is essential that we do so, otherwise it is impossible to penetrate his thought. Hence, to help us in this venture, we shall take a close look at each of these four terms in greater detail.

I. Symbol

According to Cyril, liturgical rites belong to the order of symbols, but not in the modern sense of the word. Rather, they refer to the external, ritual and visible aspects of the Liturgy. Hence, when the candidates turn to the West and renounce Satan, it is because the West is the place of the visible darkness. Facing the West 'symbolically'²⁶ vivifies the connection between darkness and Satan. Likewise, the action of turning towards the East is a symbolical action, but we cannot give such action a sacramental significance. In fact, such an "orientation" or turning toward the East amplifies the importance and nobility of the East because, according to Cyril, it is there that God had placed paradise.

25. Cat. Myst. 1:3, Cross, *ibid.*, 54

26. cf. Cat. Myst. 1:4, Cross, *ibid.*, 55

The same idea of symbol can be found when Cyril explains the oil for anointing: "For as the Bread of the Eucharist, after the invocation of the Holy Ghost (*epiklesis*), is mere bread no longer, but the Body of Christ, so also this holy ointment is no more simple ointment, nor (so to say) common, after the invocation, but the gift of Christ."²⁷ Hence, since it is sacramental, "it is symbolically applied to thy forehead and thy other senses; and while thy body is anointed with visible ointment, the soul is sanctified by the Holy and life-going Spirit."²⁸ The oil that has been exorcized is a symbol of the abundance of Christ, the true olive tree in which the candidates now participate.²⁹ Therefore, 'symbol' is to be understood not in a sacramental sense, but simply as having an indicative meaning and an explanatory power, despite the fact that the anointing and the oil do as such have sacramental value and efficacy.

Hence, we can conclude that the term 'symbol' according to Cyril indicates only a representative function of rites and does not imply any sacramental efficacy. The liturgical rite has a representative and didactic capacity and sheds light on the contents of the celebration; however, it does not play a constitutive part in the sacramentality of the rites, but stands alongside it in a purely accessory and nonconstitutive role.

II. Imitation

Parallel with their symbolism, the rites have a sacramental dimension, for which Cyril uses the expression: 'Imitation'. Speaking of the candidates immersing in the baptismal water three times as a symbol of Christ's three days in the tomb, Cyril continues: "so you also in your first ascent out of water, represented the first day of Christ in the Earth, and by your descent, the night."³⁰ Until here, the significance of the word 'imitate' does not carry the sacramental sense. But the sacramental sense comes immediately after with such words: "And at the self-same moment, ye were died and were born; and that water of salvation was at once your grave and your mother... and one and the same season brings about both of these, your birth went

27. Cat. Myst. 3:3, Cross, *ibid.*, 65

28. Cat. Myst. 3:3, Cross, *ibid.*, 65

29. cf. Cat. Myst. 2:3, Cross, *ibid.*, 60

30. Cat. Myst. 2:4, Cross, *ibid.*, 61

hand in hand with your death.”³¹ Therefore, we can say that insofar as the immersions and emergencies are three, they are symbolic; insofar as they are actions that imitate what happened to Christ, they are conferred with sacramentality.

Concerning the nudity before the anointing with the oil that has been exorcized, the same point is being made. As Christ “by his nakedness spoiled principalities and powers, and openly triumphed over them on the tree,”³² likewise, the candidates stripped themselves and gave an image (*eikon*) of disengaging from the ‘old man’. The fruit of ‘imitation’ (*mimesis*) is ‘likeness’ or an ‘image’. Because of this ‘imitation’ of Christ, the candidates regained the original justice of the first human being: “ye were naked in the sight of all, and were not ashamed, for truly you bore the likeness of the first-formed Adam, who was naked in the garden, and was not ashamed.”³³

Cyril’s thought becomes even clearer when he puts in contrast the words ‘image’ and ‘truth’: “We did not really die, we were not really buried, we were not really crucified and raised again, but our imitation (*mimesis*) was but in a figure (*eikon*), while our salvation is in reality. Christ was actually crucified, and actually buried, and truly rose again; and all these things have been vouchsafed to us that we, by imitation communicating in His suffering, might gain salvation in reality.”³⁴ This paragraph makes a distinction between two phases: the phase of the history of salvation, that is characterized with two words: ‘actually’ (*lates*) and ‘truly’ (*alethos*, *en aletheia*); and the sacramental phase, which is conveyed by two other words: ‘imitation’ (*mimesis*) and ‘figure/image’ (*eikon*). The object of this ‘imitation’ is the passion of Christ, because by imitating Christ, we participate in it: “by imitation communicating in His sufferings.”³⁵

Thus, we can conclude by saying that the sacramentality of the liturgical rites is represented by two words, ‘image’ and ‘imitation’, in their ontological sense and not in the sense of their ritual representation.

31. Cat. Myst. 2:4, Cross, *ibid.*

32. Cat. Myst. 2:2, Cross, *ibid.*, 59; also cf. Col 2, 15.

33. Cat. Myst. 2:2, Cross, *ibid.*, 60; also cf. Gen 2, 25.

34. Cat. Myst. 2:5, Cross, *ibid.*, 61

35. Cat. Myst. 2:5, Cross, *ibid.*

III. Likeness

In his commentary, the Paradise word 'likeness' has the same significance as 'image' and 'imitation'. Explaining the letter of St. Paul to the Romans 6,5, he says: "He has not said, 'For if we have been planted together in His death', but, **in the likeness of His death**. For upon Christ death came in reality, for His soul was truly separated from his body, and His burial was true, for His holy body was wrapt in pure linen; and every thing happened to him truly; but in your case only the likeness of death and sufferings, whereas of salvation, not the likeness, but the reality."³⁶ The 'likeness' (*homoïoma*) here is used in contrast with the word 'truth', exactly as image (*eikon*) is contrasted with 'truth' in his Mystagogical Catechese 2:5. Thus, we can safely conclude that the two words 'likeness' and image' carry the same significance for Cyril.

IV. "Antitypos"

The word 'antitypos' is not an alternative word for the three words that we have discussed above. The baptismal usage of the word 'antitypos' can be directly connected with the word 'likeness' (*homoïoma*). In responding to those who claim that Baptism is only for the forgiveness of sins or for the adoption as God's children, Cyril asserts that baptism is also an "'antitypos' of the suffering of Christ."³⁷

When Christians receive 'the sacrament' (*to antitypon*) of the Holy Spirit, they become the images (*eikon*) of Christ, because the anointing with Chrism that followed the baptismal bath is the "'antitypon" wherein Christ was anointed; and this is the Holy Spirit."³⁸ Here, we can see the sacramental significance of 'antitypos', which ensures the identity between the descent of the Holy Spirit on Christ and the sacramental descent of the Holy Spirit on Christians. By giving such determined meaning to the word 'antitypos', Cyril is able to emphasise both the identity of the liturgical rite with the fundamental events and the difference between the two,

36. Cat. Myst. 2:7, Cross, *ibid.*, 62-63

37. Cat. Myst. 2:6, Cross, *ibid.*, 62

38. Cat. Mist. 3:1, Cross, *ibid.*, 61

since the two are never on the same plane. In Cyril's terminology, therefore, 'typos' has the same meaning as 'antitypos'.³⁹

B. Baptism: The Phase of Antitypos

For Cyril, the history of salvation consists of three main phases:

- a. The phase of *typos* : The Exodus
- b. The phase of *alétheia* : The Paschal Mystery of Christ
- c. The phase of *antitypon* : Baptism

The liberation prefigured in the Exodus is fully realized in the Mystery of Christ. Every created being through the ages finds its personal salvation in a mysterious way in the paschal mystery of Christ. The catechumens who after Baptism become neophytes, enter for the first time in the dynamism of the Paschal Mystery, that is, they die with Christ to sins and become children of the Divine family.

The life of Christ remains the paradigm of life for everyone that believes in Him. Thus, all that is fulfilled in the Saviour should be realized in a progressive manner in each believer in the sacrament, in such a way that the Baptised become totally *summorphos kai metachos*⁴⁰ of the Risen Christ. For this reason, even in the phase of *antitypon*, salvation is considered as a passage from death to life through the Divine Intervention.⁴¹

39. see e.g. Cat. Myst. 4:3 – "For in the figure (*en typo*) of Bread is given thee His body, and in the figure of Wine His Blood; that thou by partaking (*metabolon*) of the Body and Blood of Christ, mightest be made of the same body and the same blood with Him."

40. Roberto Tura, "Battesimo e storia della salvezza nelle catechesi di S. Cirillo di Gerusalemme", *SP* 17 (1970) 567.

41. cf. Tura, *ibid.*

I. Death dominates the World

The necessity of Baptism is affirmed by Cyril with one specific phrase, that has the abrupt style of a Tridentine Canon: *Ei tis me labe to baptisma, sotérian ouch echei*.⁴² The fundamental motive for such necessity is explained clearly in all three catecheses on Baptism: every created being born into the world is under the domination of sin and death, from which he must be freed. Christ was sent by the Father to the world to free those who are under the oppression of sins in the world (*hina rhustitai tous ento kosmo hupo tes hamartias kataponpoumenous*).⁴³ In the Greek understanding, the weight of oppression diminishes one's ability to do good, Jesus rescues and frees us precisely from that.⁴⁴

St. Cyril used a few terminology that characterized the situation of Death which preceded Baptism. The first of which is *hamartia*: this word indicates the original sin instigated by the Devil (*arthehos hamartias*),⁴⁵ and the personal sin which resulted from the free will of mankind. The destruction of sin makes intervention of Jesus necessary (*eis monos anamartetos*),⁴⁶ that by his passion and by his blood, he has freed us.

Cyril describes the sinner (*douleia*) as under the complete will of Satan and there lays the definite awful spiritual slavery (*kakiste*). Jesus' victory over sin brings to light the 'doctrinal' falsity and the moral vileness of the Devil. Sins and death under the dominion of the Devil generates total death (*thanatos*) in a sense, in that the physical death of the sinner marked the definite end for he has no hope of the glorious resurrection. Death swallows one's up and none can escape from it, if the Saviour does not intervene.

Describing sin with such terminology concerning the situation of the sinner, St. Cyril calls the attention of his hearers to the wickedness and trickiness of the Devil. Most probably the catechumens in Jerusalem, majority of whom were pagan converts, understood the words and imagery which their Master, Cyril, was using to describe the disastrous situation under the dominion of the Devil. They knew

42. Cat. 3:10; PG 33, 440B: "Si quis baptisma non recipiat, salutem non habet."

43. Cat. Myst. 1:3; PG 33, 106B: "ut laborantes in mundo sub onere peccati liberaret."

44. cf. Tura, "Battesimo e storia salvezza", 568.

45. cf. Cat. Myst. 2:4; PG 33, 385B: "Primus auctor peccati est diabolus."

46. Cat. Myst. 2:10; PG 33, 396A: "Est solus abque peccato".

very well that by their own power, it was insufficient to overcome such desperate situation. Such salvation – the ability to be raised up and walk uprightly, the recovery of the spiritual sight and restoration to new life – can only come from outside oneself. Cyril's answer to this is that the liberation can only come from the intervention of him whose blood was poured out for our salvation because we did not abandon ourselves to desperation.

II. From Death springs life

Baptism produces marvellous and mysterious effects for those who receive it. The environment itself in which the catechumens find themselves suggests a series of images; Cyril tries to make them understand that a new life has just begun in Spring time. The flowers, the brightness and the freshness of Spring gives us a glimpse of the extraordinary mystery of the baptismal regeneration. The sacrament signifies the explosion of an infinite supernatural life which is much superior than the nature order of Spring time: from the state of spiritual death, the soul is inserted mysteriously into the everlasting life of God.⁴⁷

The first word that characterizes the first state of Baptism is *hamartia*. With Baptism comes the passage *ex hamartion eis dekaiousunen*.⁴⁸ *Dikaiousune* signifies justice, holiness, righteousness of the spiritual nature. Only God is completely 'just' and wish to share his sanctity with his creature. In the catecheses of Cyril, this term expresses a hint for reconciliation, since *dikaiousune* signifies returning to peace, friendship and intimacy with God, thanks to the Blood of Christ. While sin means the participation in wickedness of the Devil, Baptism initiates the participation in the sanctity of God. Sin carries with it the spiritual faith; but the baptismal font purifies, where the candidates come out splendidly cleansed by God.

From the distressed spiritual slavery under the heavy burden of the dominion of Satan, the catechumen enters through Baptism into the wonderful service of God: *ten men ton hamartion katisten douleian apothemenos, ten de tou Kyriou makeriotaten douleian Ktesamenos*.⁴⁹ The adjective *makarios* is a qualitative usage

47. cf. Tura, "Battesimo e storia della salvezza", 570

48. Cat. Myst. 1:4 PG 33, 373B: "ex-peccatis in justitiam".

49. Cat. Myst. 1:2; PG 33, 372: "ac felicissimam Domini servitutum consecutus, regni coelestis haereditate potiunda dignus censeatur"

of the Father who brings salvation to mankind. Therefore, it is attributed to God, to Christ, to the Church, to the sacraments from which salvation is actualized, and also to the new life received through Baptism. The *douleia*, now under the reign of God, decide to respond in a service that gives value to their own human existence. Such a service generates happiness because it brings salvation. Hence, it is radically opposed to that of the devil which was burdensome and desperated, whereas now, so much lighter and salvific is the service of God. With eyes fixed at the 'revolt' at the Easter Vigil, Cyril assured his *photizomenoi* that in the service of God, no one is a slave anymore, because one lives in the climate of friendship and in a profound love.

If the situation before Baptism is qualified by the word *thanatos* (death), the successive stage is much more definitely to be described by the term *Zoe* (life). The point of departure is signified by the baptismal regeneration because *dia tou baptismatos luetai tou thanatou to kentron*.⁵⁰ The baptismal water at once becomes the sepulchre and the mother's womb for those who descend to death that the catechumens rediscover life. The sacrament is the *kairos*, established by God for the salvation of each believer through a mystical rebirth.

In these three contrasts, (sin-sanctity, slavery that ruins – service that saves, death-life), St Cyril adds two beautiful ideas for a better understanding of the effects of Baptism: youth and joy. The passage from death to life consists in a radical renewal. Baptism is the sacrament that rejuvenates all mankind. It is the Pauline idea of 'new man'⁵¹ that re-emerges under various hints. Already in the first Mystagogical Catechese, the Bishop of Jerusalem has invited the catechumens to begin the work of taking off the 'old man' that ruined one's life by wicked desires and lust of this world, in order to put on the 'new man' that is remoulded according to the knowledge of God. The sacrament signifies the passage from the old age to that of spiritual youthfulness. St. Cyril offers his audience another beautiful imagery from the invisible reality that is at work in their soul. For Cyril, Baptism also signifies the passage from a climate of desperation to an existence of joyous hope. The 'old man' carries within himself the helpless lamentation of an oppressed slave whose life is without any opening except unto death. This luminous horizon that Christians have a glimpse of at baptism allows them to put on again the 'tunic of joy',⁵² the

50. Cat. Myst. 3:11; PG 33, 441B: "per baptismum enim solvitur mortis stimulus" The physical death remains, but has produced the significance of a curse and a death in the Christian sense.

51. cf. Eph 4, 24; Col 3, 10.

52. Isaiah 61, 10

symbol of the 'new man', and to begin a new existence that is illuminated by the light of Christ and supported by the hope of a true life. The white garments which the neophytes put on after coming out of the baptism by immersion, have, therefore, the significance not only of being purified and renewed interiorly, but also a profound sense of eschatological hope.

III. Salvation as the fruit of Divine Intervention

Our God who is a God of love, has taken the initiative to save us from the very beginning of the world. He offers salvation to Adam who refused it by sinning. There are then, he promised to all mankind the coming of the Saviour. In Baptism, God fulfils his promise by giving again what Adam had lost for all, because now between the catechumens and Adam stands Christ. It is through this Glorious Redeemer that the Neophytes receive the forgiveness of sins and a new life through baptism.

For Cyril, there are two reasons for the divine intervention through Baptism: the omnipotence and loving mercy of God. The striking thing is that God by offering the new life, has come to pull man out of the death of sins and walk with him in this new existence. Such power is amazingly real because now the baptismal re-creation is immensely greater than the creation of the world.

But what really moves Cyril to express his admiration is above all the love which, humanly speaking, is incredible and which God has demonstrated to his created beings in Baptism. To define such love, Cyril uses the Pauline term *philanthropia*, which means the loving kindness of God to mankind, a friendship that moves God himself to give more and more to the extent that he even overlooks justice. Hence, we can find such friendship that expresses mercy, clemency and boundlessness.

The two components, omnipotence and loving mercy, can be found united in one single acclamation in the second Mystagogical Catechese 2:5 - "O strange and inconceivable thing!... O surpassing loving kindness!" (*O xenou kai paradou pragmatos... o philanthropias hyperballouzes*)⁵³ In Baptism, the might and love of God receives a new and unprecedented success. According to Cyril, what is to be admired in Baptism is not only the might and loving mercy of God, but also the liberation of mankind that is imprisoned by the forces of evil.

53. Cat. Myst. 2:5, Cross, *Lectures*, 20 and p. 61

Conclusions

1. What we have is the teaching of a bishop on the mystery that the neophytes had experienced in Baptism at the Easter Vigil. The sacrament gives rise to a new life for the neophytes. It was through the rite that they participate sacramentally in the paschal mystery of Christ, which was also prefigured in the liberation of the Jewish people from slavery in Egypt.
2. It is with such background that we comprehend why Baptism was a solemn rite even in Jerusalem where the Jewish Paschal was still a prevailing event at the time of Cyril. The reason for such coincidence is theologically profound: The paschal mystery of Christ, thanks to the liturgy of the Church, is a salvific event that is always present and everyone can participate in it everyday. But the moment that is symbolically rich and much more operative in the course of the year appears to be at the dawn of Easter.
3. The baptismal rites that were used in the Jerusalem Church are very close to those we are using today since the restoration of the catechumenate after Vatican II, except the manner in which the rites were being carried out. For example, during the rite of anointing with the exorcized oil and the baptism by immersion, the candidates stripped naked in front of everyone in the time of Cyril. But today, such action is no longer to be accepted, because it is offensive. The practice of this rite in some case is reduced to putting on the shoulder of the baptized a piece of white cloth. As a result, our present day baptismal rites lack such typology that demonstrates forcefully the significance of baptism.
4. In order to understand well the doctrinal content of these Mystagogical Catecheses, we must comprehend correctly the significance of the terms Cyril used, especially his typology. We must never use our manner of theological thinking to interpret his catecheses.
5. Cyril used the things from daily living which his people were familiar with in order to explain the mystery of Christ. We must reflect deeply upon our contemporary situation and try to use the same method in explaining the significance of our baptismal rites by using things and experiences with which the people of God today are accustomed.

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