To Embody Christ's Image: Queer Presence in Liturgy

Maggie Nadalin
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by Maggie Nadalin

It is widely known that there are numerous contemporary attempts to deconstruct narratives that have continually produced and reinforced misogyny, homophobia, transphobia, and countless other vehicles of hate within Christian communities. While this work is important, it cannot and must not be separated from the notion of a constructive theology which takes into account the assorted contexts in which individuals of varying backgrounds have their voices heard as our theology is shaped and grows. Visibly prominent at this
juncture are queer individuals who find themselves left behind as their lives intersect with liturgical experiences. Creating liturgical celebrations and spaces in which queer individuals are safe and feel that their lived experiences are honored and create part of the fabric of liturgical worship is essential in not only queer liberation within Christianity but in compassionate pastoring to a community that has been marginalized by the Church for far too long. In her monumental book *Religion and Intersex*, Steph Budwey, echoing Cameron Partridge, contends that “those who are erased in the liturgy tend to also be erased in the world outside of the church.”1 It is unconscionable that the Church has played and continues to play a role in this erasure of vulnerable individuals. However, some Christian communities have made great strides regarding queer inclusion and affirmation and can serve as guides for the Roman Catholic Church. In the liturgical experiences and resources of The Episcopal Church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, and other queer-affirming Churches, bountiful examples of this work can be found. The implementation of queer inclusion and affirmation has been met with varying generally positive levels of success within these liturgical contexts.2

The question of what this queering of liturgy would look like in a Roman Catholic context arises as questions of queer liberation and affirmation within the Roman Catholic Church only continue to come to light and refuse to be silenced, even in the face of backlash and outright hostility from some within the Church. This queering of the liturgy must be understood as a twofold process of both coming to study and experience the liturgy from a queer vantage point as well as considering practical concerns of adapting and creating liturgies able to respond to specific LGBTQ+ pastoral needs. Approaching this task from a synodal perspective is important, as the dialogue in queering liturgy must include all Catholics who identify as queer and wish to have a seat at the Table.

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2 These resources include both denominationally approved liturgies as well as liturgies composed by individuals, both clergy and lay. Denominational examples include “Pastoral Liturgies for Journeys of Gender Affirmation and Transition” from the Anglican Church of Canada (2023), “A Service of Renaming” from The Episcopal Church (2018), and “Trans-Nonbinary-Centered Worship Resources” from the United Church of Christ (n.d.).
of the Lord. In the past, liturgical projects that have had a proto-synodal approach have been met with resistance and termination by the Roman authorities. It is imperative that the proper authorities begin listening to the voices of the People of God, lest the Church become ineffective (one might easily say more ineffective) in its pastoral mission of being open and welcoming to all.

In an age where synodality is heavily emphasized, we reach a new “springtime,” indeed a rejuvenated springtime of the liturgy, where queer inclusion is being brought to the forefront by groups like New Ways Ministry and Outreach, affirming communities of women and men religious, and by individual and ordinary queer Catholics who have a right by virtue of their Baptism to fully participate in the sacramental life of the Church. Most recently, Rome itself has offered a more compassionate approach, even though full affirmation of LGBTQ+ persons lies beyond the horizon. Some might argue that nothing precludes one’s participation in the sacramental life of the Church as a member of the LGBTQ+ community, but many (if not most) queer Catholics can provide heartbreaking accounts of having to hide their personhood to participate in the life of the Church of most parishes, let alone to say anything of feeling visible within the liturgy. By approaching liturgical issues from a queer vantage point, all of God’s children have the opportunity to share their voices and gifts.

A QUEER FOUNDATION

Before forging a path forward in queering the liturgy and queer inclusion, it is helpful to explain what is meant by this term as used in this paper. For many, the use of the word queer might be jarring and even startling, given its use for decades as a slur against the LGBTQ+ community. However, both within and outside academia the use of queer and its

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3 The Congregation for Divine Worship’s refusal of the 1998 ICEL Sacramentary immediately comes to mind as an example of Rome’s heavy-handed approach to contributions from bishops’ conferences and other competent authorities.

4 The responsum ad dubia regarding questions around baptism and individuals of transgender experience as well as the declaration Fiducia Supplicans are both examples of the Vatican’s shifting tone regarding LGBTQ+ persons.
grammatical derivatives has been reclaimed by its proper community as a term of endearment, a critical analysis of cis-heteronormativity, as well as numerous other uses. Citing Marjorie Procter-Smith, Budwey articulates the goal of the contemporary use of *queer* as emancipatory language:

> Emancipatory language has two goals: (1) ‘the reappropriation and reinterpretation of terms of derision or shame as terms of pride and strength’… and (2) “the use of such language to create collective identity for a group which has lacked such an identity and may be divided against itself.”

Joseph Marchal goes on to state that *queer* as “a dense discursive complex with a range of rhetorical, ethical and political trajectories… draws its force and spirit from a reclamation and ethical reversal of the word’s association with the abnormal, strange, perverse or odd.”

Marchal continues, “queer is less an identity and more a disposition, a mode of examining the processes that cast certain people and practices into categories of normal and abnormal and then of interrogating the various effects of such processes.”

### QUEER THEORY IN LITURGICAL THEOLOGY

Ultimately, queering is a method for disrupting the norm. The notion that queering disrupts is what Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza prophetically named *kyriarchy*. Kyriarchy expands upon the notion of patriarchy, noting the interconnected injustices that maleness, whiteness, homophobia, transphobia, and multiple other structures of hate and injustice inflict upon the world. It is precisely this kyriarchy that has prevented the rich and full lives of queer Christians from being celebrated and recognized both within the wider context of the Church as well as its liturgical life for two millennia. Queer systematic theologian Linn Tonstad believes:

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queer theology is not about apologetics for the inclusion of sexual and gender minorities in Christianity, but about visions of sociopolitical transformation that alter practices of distinction harming gender and sexual minorities as well as many other minoritized populations.8

In the end, queering is a matter of justice. This justice is a foretaste of the equity all of God’s children will find in the coming Reign of God.

First, we must consider the question of how one goes about queering. As Christians, we can look to Christ as our queer guide. Rachel Mann is a priest of the Church of England and a woman of transgender experience; her lived experience offers her much fruit for the development of a positive queer theology. Mann argues that Creation is not only an ongoing act but has been renewed by the Paschal Mystery: “God’s making or poiesis is not to be reduced to the initial creation and ongoing sustaining of the world; Christ acts as an icon of remaking and re-creating the world.”9 Christ’s suffering, death, and resurrection have made and continue to make all things new—a disruption to the status quo of the world. Further, for Mann, “the queer is more concerned with metaphor, play and possibility, with going astray from that which is received.”10 Again, this is a disruption of the norm for what is expected for adults; queering turns expected behaviors on their heads. Here, we readily see a connection to the late Joseph Ratzinger’s notion of liturgy as play;11 liturgy prepares us for the Reign of God, and in this Reign of God, we see the justice that will give rise to the equity God has prepared for all of God’s people.

This playful disruption from the norm not only challenges stereotypes but also rends chasms in previously assumed binaries. Within the context of the sacred liturgy, the binary between the human and the divine is simultaneously ruptured and blended together. This is readily seen in many ways: the changing of bread and wine into the Body and Blood of

Christ, the actions of the ordained presider in persona Christi, and, most especially, the momentary joining of heaven and earth. Given the blurring of these binaries, it stands to reason that other binaries are necessarily obscured; that is, the binaries are queered.

Some of this queering occurs in the form of upsetting gender norms. This discussion is particularly fruitful and pertinent as the discussion of the ordination of women once again comes to the forefront within Roman Catholic contexts. How do sex and gender roles play a part in the presider’s celebration of the liturgy? Citing Sarah Coakley, Susannah Cornwall argues that “the eucharistic president’s existence at the boundary between humanity and divinity (repeatedly crossing between them) renders the priest’s presence in Eucharist deeply subversive of gender normativities.” Cornwall does not believe that this erases differences, but rather “the president’s existence in the liturgy signifies humanity transformed not into indistinctness, but into creatures whose creatureliness in particularity is preserved, even as hierarchies based upon it crumble.” Here we see the disruptive force of queering against the evils of kyriarchy; queering in fact bolsters our humanity so that it may flourish.

Reading this account of gender-bending within the liturgical act, one might immediately think of Galatians 3:28; “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free person, there is not male and female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” Justin Sabia-Tanis believes that this passage was an ancient baptismal formula in which Budwey notes “the hierarchies, divisions, and oppressions that people have experienced as a result of their sex/gender identities and differences will disappear.” This belief points to a certain eschatological vision wherein “difference is celebrated but the limitations and oppressions attached to those differences no longer exist” because “the liturgy is a place that should seek to enact the inbreaking of the kin-dom.” Once again, in the blurring of binaries, this queering is liberative. The preface for the Solemnity

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13 Cornwall, “All Things to All,” 73, emphasis in original.
14 Budwey, Religion and Intersex, 137.
15 Budwey, Religion and Intersex, 170
of Christ the King beautifully states that the Reign of Christ is one of “truth and life; holiness and grace; justice, love, and peace.” It is in this reign of justice, love, and peace that queer Christians find their hope for full inclusion but the affirmation of their identities as God-given. Our participation in the liturgical action helps us not only see but also participate in this eschatological freedom here and now. In short, our lex orandi can and must inform our lex credendi which consequently orders our lex vivendi. When we celebrate liturgy, our lives are ordered towards the good not only for ourselves but our communities around us. It is this ordering towards the good that compels us to ensure that full inclusion of all of God’s children is an essential element of our celebrations.

One element of queering that is already prevalent in liturgical theology is understanding how our choice of words affects the worshipping community. In many instances, cisgender women led the push for inclusive language in liturgy in the wake of the reforms of the Second Vatican Council. This led to many priests opting to say “brothers and sisters” (or even “sisters and brothers” for the more progressive) rather than “brethren” in an attempt to attend to the sensitivities of more people within the Christian community as vernacular translations of the Mass and other rites came into being. From this also arose the discernment of the need for expansive language. How we describe God in liturgy reinforces, even passively, how the average parishioner comes to understand and imagine God. Images of “Father” and “Lord” gave way to more nuanced words such as “Creator;” the more adventurous presider might even say “Mother” when referring to the first Person of the Trinity. Unfortunately, the current official English translations (and indeed other global languages) promulgated by Rome rely heavily on words with patriarchal connotations both for the human person and for God.

These Vatican II Era efforts towards inclusivity were most certainly progress, but as our understanding of gender has evolved—thanks in

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17 The law of prayer informs the law of belief, which orders the law of living.
part to both the social sciences and the lived experiences of gender-
nonconforming or gender-variant individuals—reexamining our
liturgical language, both for the human person and God, has become
a significant point of discussion. In some instances, the use of gender-
inclusive language was found to be unhelpful. In her research, Merete
Thomassen found that “gender-inclusive language risked confirming
patriarchal language rather than challenging it, inasmuch as it had
not become aware of the need to avoid heteronormativity and binary
oppositions.”20 Steph Budwey plainly states that “the use of binary
language for humans leads to the liturgical erasure of those who
identify outside of the sex/gender binary.”21 How, then, does one avoid
this pitfall? Imagination is most certainly indispensable in this task.
With the use of one’s imagination, however, one must first listen to the
individuals for whom this language has the greatest impact. As Budwey
ultimately concludes, “liturgical language [is important], not only as an
act of hospitality to help all feel welcome, but [is also] an act of social
justice, as the church is called to be the Body of Christ on earth, a body
in which all are welcomed and loved.”22

To be certain, this work will not occur by happenstance. Writing from
within the broader context of liturgical renewal, Johan Cilliers believes
that this process requires a major theological reframing. Cilliers notes the
contemporary work of liturgical renewal not flowing from “a perpetual
orientation towards the Christ-event,” but perhaps “from other agendas
and motives.”23 He highlights these other agendas and motives as
“window-dressing, or a mere echo of the prevailing cultural trend, or a
frantic search for success and effect.”24 For Cilliers, “what we remember,
but also how we remember, determines not only our liturgical experiences
in the present, but also our hope for the future.”25

20 Marete Thomassen, “Responding to the Sacred,” International Journal for the Study of
the Christian Church Volume 21, no. 3-4 (2022): 304. https://doi.org/10.1080/147422
5X.2022.2024965.
21 Budwey, Religion and Intersex, 176.
22 Budwey, Religion and Intersex, 178.
24 Cilliers, “As It Is in Heaven,” 513.
25 Cilliers, “As It Is in Heaven,” 515, emphasis in original.
A COMPARATIVE EXAMPLE FROM THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH

Before reimagining inclusive liturgy for Roman Catholic contexts, it is beneficial to briefly study a liturgy designed for a specific queer need. As it is known, the sacrament of Baptism leaves an indelible mark on a person’s soul and is therefore impossible to be repeated. However, in the life of a person of transgender experience, the recognition of one’s given name, that is, one’s Baptismal name giving way to their chosen name, is an important step within the process of gender transition. In 2015, the General Convention of The Episcopal Church (TEC) called for the creation of a liturgy where one’s chosen name could be publicly recognized and celebrated. In 2018, this liturgy was approved for use across TEC and incorporated into the *Book of Occasional Services*. Originating from indigenous Episcopal congregations, where “communities… have long recognized the spiritual significance of names and particularly of taking on a new name later in life,” this liturgy takes place “when an event or experience leads a baptized person to take or be given a new name.” While intentionally vague in order to be used widely in a variety of contexts, this liturgy was compiled by persons of transgender experience primarily for persons of transgender experience. In 2023, the Anglican Church of Canada’s General Synod approved a similar liturgy.

The appendix of this paper includes selections from this liturgy as adapted for use by the author in her own liturgical celebration of renaming. While not exhaustive, there are a few points worthy of mention, especially from the perspective of a transgender individual. In the opening collect of the liturgy, the “you clause” references immediately “God of growth

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26 For the sake of this argument, we presume validity as well as note that a renewal of Baptismal promises is an entirely different subject.
28 Partridge, “God Was There: Open Hearings on D036 & D037.”
and discovery,” highlighting the dynamic activity of God in one’s life. The collect also refers humanity as God’s “new creation,” echoing both Baptismal language and the liturgical recognition of one’s authentic identity. Within the rite of renaming itself, the presider asks how the candidate responds to God’s invitation of becoming a new creation in Christ, “grateful to embody Christ’s image.”32 While every person’s gender journey is unique, many individuals at the intersection of transgender experience and faith articulate their experience in terms analogous to revelation and discernment; the language used in the liturgical rite of renaming acknowledges and affirms these lived experiences.

Indeed, this liturgy’s richness is found in its emphasis on God’s guidance and steadfast companionship in one’s life. It reemphasizes the fact that God has called the transgender person into a new understanding of not only themselves, their local communities, but also God in Godself as well. It is this guidance and companionship that many queer Christians have come to know in varied tangible ways. Thus, it is imperative that liturgies that not only celebrate but also emphasize the work of God in the lives of queer individuals continuing to be crafted and celebrated.

CONCLUSION: MOVING FORWARD IN A ROMAN CATHOLIC CONTEXT

While examples of queer inclusion and affirmation are plentiful outside of Roman Catholic contexts, it is a secret to no one that Rome’s attitude toward the LGBTQ+ community has been less than warm, both in recent history as well as the storied past. Yet, queer Catholics have a renewed hope since the election of Pope Francis in 2013. The last decade has proven that there is a marked difference in how Rome speaks about queer people. Francis’ infamous “Who am I to judge?” comment to reporters in the first months of his pontificate immediately set the Church ablaze in both frenzy and hope that change was coming. The momentous occasion of the Synod on Synodality has further fueled aspirations that Rome will at least listen to the experiences, fears, and dreams of queer Catholics worldwide. In reviewing the Instrumentum Laboris for the October 2023

31 Standing Committee on Liturgy and Music. Book of Occasional Services, 121.
synod session, Robert Shine of New Ways Ministry noted “that LGBTQ+ issues were mentioned by name at all, never mind twice, is significant, and a testament to just how prominently these issues featured in local, diocesan, national, and continental reports.”

How these discussions will affect official liturgical celebrations, texts, and individual presiders’ ars celebrandi is yet to be seen, and much depends on to what extent (if any) the Roman Catholic Church’s official doctrinal positions on LGBTQ+ issues formally changes. However, one must remember the pastoral nature of liturgy and that rites are created to respond to pastoral needs. It is beyond apparent that there is a pastoral need for ministry to and with LGBTQ+ individuals. At the forefront of this is the readily visible reality that there are queer individuals constructing queer-positive theology in the Roman Catholic tradition, and that their lived experience consciously forms their interaction with existing liturgical rites. Dialogue with the queer community must be the starting point for any liturgical work to be accomplished that truly and authentically responds in this propitious moment.

POSTSCRIPT

In the intervening months between the first writing of this paper and its publication, two especially important developments were issued by the Dicastery for the Doctrine of Faith (DDF) regarding LGBTQ+ persons in the life of the Roman Catholic Church. Given the topic of this paper, mention of these documents must be made. While an exhaustive investigation of them is not feasible in this moment, due consideration must be given to them and the ramifications they pose for LGBTQ+ individuals who identify as Roman Catholics.

First, on October 31, 2023, the DDF issued a responsum ad dubia regarding issues surrounding receiving and witnessing Baptism and witnessing a marriage pertaining to individuals of transgender experience.

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and homosexual persons. The first and largest section of this document responds in the affirmative that those persons who are of transgender experience are eligible to receive the sacrament of Baptism, "even after undergoing hormone treatment and sex-reassignment surgery." This affirmation is immediately followed by a warning to pastoral ministers about "doubts about the objective moral situation a person is in or about the person’s subjective disposition toward grace." While this admonition is true for any situation in arranging a baptism, the additional moral scrutiny inherently surrounding LGBTQ+ persons in the Church is readily apparent. The responsum concludes this section, however, by ultimately reinforcing the fact that Baptism imparts grace ex opere operato.

Paragraphs two and five continue the document’s treatment of Baptism, answering if individuals of transgender experience and cohabitating homosexual persons can serve as godparents. Paragraph two responds in the affirmative that an individual of transgender experience can serve as a godparent, "even after undergoing hormone treatment and sex-reassignment surgery." Once again, the document admonishes one to call upon their pastoral prudence in these situations, lest scandal occur. Regarding a cohabitating homosexual serving as a godparent, the responsum articulates a number of things. First, a differentiation is made between any person who possesses the “proper ‘aptitude’” to serve as a godparent, those homosexual persons who simply share accommodations, and those who are living more uxorio. Perhaps most interesting is the additional qualification that those who live more uxorio are doing so in a way that is publicly known. Once again, the responsum does not respond with a binary yes/no, but rather offers a nuanced answer, reflecting on

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34 As many have noted since the earliest days of the Synod on Synodality, that the Church has moved toward using “LGBTQ+,” “homosexual persons,” and “transgender persons” rather than “same-sex attraction” is already a major step in a positive direction.


38 DDF, “Answers,” 2.

the true purpose of a godparent. While this response is immensely helpful for those willing to undertake greater discernment and exercise an inclusive approach towards LGBTQ+ persons, it is equally as easy for non-affirming individuals to weaponize this response against anyone whom they deem to be inadequate for this role for any reason, legitimate or not.

Paragraph four responds to the question regarding the parenthood of a homosexual couple when presenting their child for Baptism. It does not answer in the affirmative or negative regarding the question of the parenthood, only stating that “there must be a founded hope that the infant will be brought up in the Catholic religion” in order to be baptized. This caveat is taken directly from the Code of Canon Law and is applicable to any child being presented for Baptism; once again, however, one can easily read a negative, homophobic connotation into this statement. At the same time, by answering in the manner in which they did, the DDF sidesteps the loaded question concerning the parental status of a homosexual couple, giving ample room for further development of this topic to occur.

Paragraphs three and six of the responsum concern themselves with the question of whether or not individuals of transgender experience and cohabiting homosexuals are able to serve as witnesses to a matrimony, which is answered in the affirmative without qualification.

The second major development issued by the Dicastery is the declaration Fiducia Supplicans of December 18, 2023. The issuing of this declaration has created an ongoing frenzy across the world, with media outlets both secular and religious either lauding or condemning the Vatican for taking such a major step. While framed to be a broad discussion regarding the pastoral meaning of blessings, the most obvious ramification is the possibility of extending blessings to persons who happen to be in homosexual relationships. It must be remembered, as has been clarified by both the DDF itself and Pope Francis, that this declaration is a blessing bestowed on persons and not

40 It is helpful to note that this discussion of LGBTQ+ godparents takes place in the wider contemporary discussions—predominantly occurring in Italy—regarding the role of godparents in the life of faith against social connotations that have arisen.
the *relationship* between them. The admonitions that these blessings be done in an *ad hoc* manner in a strictly non-liturgical setting further articulate that this is perhaps a concession more than an affirmation of the love that exists between the people in a relationship.

This immediately leads one to ponder what, if anything, has changed. In an age where social media has amplified photos of clerics blessing farm animals and quotidian inanimate objects, it does seem incomprehensible that permission was seemingly necessary. The hysteria from pundits, especially in Anglophonic regions within the Church, reveals the outright hostility with which some of the world received *Fiducia Supplicans*.\(^{42}\) It is important to note, however, that Rome itself is partially responsible for the confusion surrounding the introduction of this declaration, as “there do not seem to have been any earlier attempts at spin control. That is, it appears that no friendly bishops received talking points in advance, and many—if not most—were caught off guard amid Christmas preparations and festivities when the document first appeared.”\(^{43}\) While *Fiducia Supplicans* can and should be seen as a positive development, it must not remain the only development in the incorporation of LGBTQ+ lives and issues within the Church. One commentator posited that it is “a big small step forward.”\(^{44}\)

The initial efforts of the Synod on Synodality gave much hope to the LGBTQ+ community within the Church, but the Fall 2023 synthesis report failing to make mention of queer issues, let alone queer individuals, has taken the proverbial wind out of the sails of many people. The lackluster support of the Synod on Synodality from a considerable number of bishops in the United States cannot be ignored, especially in light of somewhat positive developments from Rome concerning LGBTQ+ individuals and the issues they encounter.


\(^{44}\) Brian Flanagan (@BrianPFlanagan), “And the form and manner of the blessing should be spontaneous and up to the ordained person offering the blessing. Nevertheless, it’s a big small step forward. 2/2”, Twitter, December 18, 2023.
What the future—both immediate and distant—holds for queer Catholics remains to be seen. As we have identified, any modicum of progress is met with phobia and contempt, institutional and personal, passive and active. And yet, there is hope.\textsuperscript{45} This addendum is a testament to the fact that attitudes are indeed changing towards the inclusion and affirmation of LGBTQ+ persons within the Roman Catholic Church, and rapidly so. Further development and celebration of liturgies that are inclusive of, designed by, and intended for the LGBTQ+ community is an essential step in the continued work of bringing God’s love to the entire world.

\textbf{Appendix – Maggie’s Renaming Liturgy}

\textit{Book of Occasional Services 2018, p. 120-124}

\textbf{Opening Acclamation}

\textbf{Presider} Blessed + be the God of Sarai revealed as Sarah, Jacob who became Israel, and Simon called Peter.

\textbf{People} Blessed be the God who comes among us, reconciles us, and sets us free.

\textbf{Collect for Purity}

Almighty God, to you all hearts are open, all desires known, and from you no secrets are hid: Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you, and worthily magnify your holy Name; through Christ our Lord. \textit{Amen.}

\textbf{Hymn of Praise}

\textit{A Song of Our True Nature} \textit{Julian of Norwich}

\textit{Enriching Our Worship Canticle S}

Christ revealed our frailty and our falling, our trespasses and our humiliations.

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Christ also revealed his blessed power, his blessed wisdom and love. He protects us as tenderly and as sweetly when we are in greatest need; he raises us in spirit and turns everything to glory and joy without ending. God is the ground and the substance, the very essence of nature; God is the true father and mother of natures. We are all bound to God by nature, and we are all bound to God by grace. And this grace is for all the world, because it is our precious mother, Christ. For this fair nature was prepared by Christ for the honor and nobility of all, and for the joy and bliss of salvation.

Collect

Presider The Lord be with you.
People And also with you.
Presider Let us pray.
Blessed are you, God of growth and discovery; yours is the inspiration that has altered and changed our lives; yours is the power that has brought us to new dangers and opportunities. Set us, your new creation, to walk through this new world, watching and learning, loving and trusting, until your kingdom comes.

Amen.

Liturgy of the Word

First Reading Isaiah 43: 1-7
Psalm Psalm 139
Second Reading I John 3: 1-2
Homily

Rite of Renaming

Presider Hear the invitation of God.
From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh; even
though we once knew Christ according to the flesh, we know him no longer in that way. So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us. So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.

The Presider turns to the candidate, asking: How do you respond to God’s invitation?

Candidate  I am a new creation, grateful to embody Christ’s image.

Presider  We are here to affirm the name of Maggie. This name expresses who Maggie is and she is becoming, through the grace of God. We honor the name given to her by her parents and acknowledge that the time has come to declare a new name. We honor the name she has chosen and acknowledge those loved ones who have made holy space for a new name to be spoken. This new name is the culmination of a journey of discovery and, at the same time, a new beginning.

Turning to the gathered community, the Presider asks,
Will you do all in your power to assist Maggie to embody Christ’s message of reconciliation?

People  We will.

Presider  Will you honor Maggie in name and in spirit as she continues on her path?

People  We will.

Presider  Dynamic and holy God, we remember how you changed the names of Abraham and Sarah, as they set out to follow you. We marvel that you changed the name of Jacob, after a long night of wrestling with you. We recall our ancestors in the faith who were given new names as their vocations to serve you
were revealed. We now declare publicly and affirm the name you have bestowed upon Maggie.

All lay hands upon the head of the candidate, or upon the shoulders of those around the candidate.

Maggie, receive the blessing of God, the Holy and Undivided Trinity. Walk in the Spirit, this day and always, knowing that God has made an everlasting covenant with you that shall never be cut off.

_Amen._

Presider  Jesus said, “Rejoice that your names are written in heaven.”

People  Amen. Alleluia.

**Prayers of the People**
The Leader and People pray responsively.
In peace, we pray to you, Lord God.

For all people in their daily life and work;
*For our families, friends, and neighbors, and for those who are alone.*

For this community, the nation, and the world;
*For all who work for justice, freedom, and peace.*

For the just and proper use of your creation;
*For the victims of hunger, fear, injustice, and oppression.*

For all who are in danger, sorrow, or any kind of trouble, especially those who live in fear because of their sexual orientation or gender identity;
*For those who minister to the sick, the friendless, and the needy.*

For the peace and unity of the Church of God;
*For all who proclaim the Gospel, and all who seek the Truth.*

For Francis, the Bishop of Rome, Justin, the Archbishop of Canterbury, all bishops and other ministers;
*For all who serve God in the Church.*

For the special needs and concerns of this congregation.
Silence

Hear us, Lord;

*For your mercy is great.*

We thank you, God, for all the blessings of this life.
We will exalt you, O God our Ruler;

*And praise your Name for ever and ever.*

We pray for all who have died, that they may have a place in your eternal kingdom.
Lord, let your loving-kindness be upon them;

*Who put their trust in you.*

Presider Holy One of blessing, you created us in your image and pronounced us good. We give you thanks for the gift of life itself. We thank you for our individual names, which connect us to the One who spoke all creation into being. We rejoice in our shared calling to the ministry of reconciliation. Hear our prayers for your entire Church, and for our sister, Maggie. May they be a source of strength and comfort, and may they stir up in us the strength to do your will. We ask this through Christ, Our Lord.

*Amen.*

**The Peace**

Presider The peace of Christ be always with you.

People And also with you.

**Eucharistic Prayer** Enriching Our Worship

Eucharistic Prayer I

**The Breaking of the Bread**

**Canticle of Thanksgiving** Magnificat

**Post-Communion Prayer**

**Blessing and Dismissal**

Presider The Lord be with you.
People And also with you.

Presider Let us bow our heads and pray for God’s blessing.

May the God who has redeemed you and made you adopted children through the resurrection of his only Son bless you and fill you with joy.

Amen.

May the God who has bestowed on you the gifts of redemption and lasting freedom make you heirs of eternal life.

Amen.

May the God who joined you to Christ’s resurrection by faith and baptism lead you to live justly and so bring you to your home in heaven.

Amen.

May the blessing of almighty God, the Source of All Life, the Eternal and Incarnate Word, + and the Sustainer of All That Is, come upon you and remain with you for ever.

Amen.

God of transformations, you set us free to change and grow, even while you hold us close in love and grace. Send us forth to love and serve you, in Christ’s holy Name.

Thanks be to God.
Bibliography


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