

LITURGIES OF CONVERSION IN THE EARLY MIDDLE AGES

1. *The Gelasian Sacramentary* LXXI (L. C. Mohlberg, ed., *Liber sacramentorum Romanae ecclesiae ordinis anni circuli*, *Rerum ecclesiasticarum documenta: Fontes* 4 (Rome, 1960), 93–4; E. C. Whitaker, transl., *Documents of the Baptismal Liturgy*, 3rd edition, Alcuin Club Collections 79 (Bristol, 2003), 192–3).

ITEM AD CATICUMINUM EX PACANO FACIENDUM  
*Gentilem hominem cum susceperis, in primis catacizas eum diuinis sermonibus et das ei monita, quemadmodum post cognitam ueritatem uerere debeat. Post haec facis eum caticuminum: exsufflas in faciem eius et facis ei crucem in fronte; inponis manum super caput eius his uerbis:*

Accipe signum crucis tam in fronte tam in corde; sume fidem caelestium praeceptorum; talis esto moribus, ut templum dei esse iam possis; ingressusque ecclesiam dei euasisse te laqueos mortis laetus agnosce; horresce idola, repue simulacra; cole deum patrem omnipotentem et Iesum Christum filium eius, qui uiuit cum patre et spiritu sancto per omnia saeculo saeculorum.

SEQUITUR ORATIO. Te depraeor, domine, sanctae pater, omnipotens aeternae deus, ut huic famulo tuo, qui in saeculo huius nocte uacatur incertus et dubius, uiam ueritatis et agnitionis tuae iubeas demonstrare, quatenus reseratis oculis cordis sui te unum deum patrem in filio et filium in patre cum sancto spiritu recognoscat atque huius confessionis fructum et hic et in futuro saeculo percipere merea[n]tur: per.

*Inde uero, postquam gustauerit medicinam salis et ipse se signauerit, benedicis eum his uerbis:*

Domine, sanctae pater, omnipotens aeternae deus, qui es et eras et permanes usque in finem, cuius origo nescitur nec finis comprehendi potest: te, domine, supplices inuocamus super hunc famulum tuum, quem liberasti de errore gentilium et conuersione turpissima. Dignare exaudire eum, qui tibi ceruices suas humiliat; perueniat ad lauacri fontem, ut renatus ex aqua et spiritu sancto expoliatus ueterem hominem induatur nouum, qui secundum te creatus est; accipiat uestem incorruptam et immaculatam tibi quoque domino nostro seruire merea[n]tur: per dominum.

*Again, when a pagan is made a catechumen*

*When you receive one of heathen upbringing, first you catechize him with divine words and teach him how he must live after he has come to the knowledge of the truth. Then you make him a catechumen: you blow into his face and make the sign of the cross upon his forehead: you lay a hand upon his head and say these words:*

Receive the sign of the cross, as on thy brow, so on thy heart: take upon thee the faith of the heavenly commandments: live in such wise that ye may become the temple of God: enter the Church of God and joyfully acknowledge that thou hast cast off the toils of death. Let horror turn thee from idols, disgust from images: worship God the Father Almighty and Jesus Christ his Son, who liveth with the Father and the Holy Ghost throughout all ages.

*This prayer follows:*

I beseech thee, Lord holy, Father Almighty, everlasting God, command that this thy servant, who now wanders uncertain and doubtful in the darkness of this world, be shown the way of truth and of the knowledge of thee: that the eyes of his heart being opened he might acknowledge that thou art one God, the Father in the Son and the Son in the Father, and receive the fruit of this confession both here and in the world to come. Through [Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen].

*Then, after he has tasted the medicine of salt, and signed himself, you bless him with these words:*

Lord holy, Father Almighty, everlasting God, who art and who wast and remainest unto the end, whose beginning is not known, and whose bounds no man can measure: we humbly beseech thee, Lord, for this thy servant whom thou hast delivered from the error of the Gentiles and their corrupt communications. Hear him who bows his head before thee: may he come to the fount of the laver that being reborn by water and the Holy Ghost he may strip off the *old man and put on the new, who is created after thee* (Eph. 4.24): may he receive a pure and spotless robe, and be counted worthy to worship thee our Lord. Through ...

2. Rimbart, *Vita Ansgarii* (ed. G. H. Waitz, MGH SS rer. Germ. (Hannover, 1884), p. 53; C. H. Robinson, transl., *Anskar: The Apostle of the North* (London, 1921), pp. 84–5).

Quia libenter quidem signaculum crucis recipiebant, ut catecumini fierent, quo eis ecclesiam ingredi et sacris officiis interesse liceret, baptismi tamen perceptionem differebant, hoc sibi bonum diiudicantes, ut in fine vitae suae baptizarentur, quatinus purificati lavacro salutari, puri et immaculati vitae aeternae ianuas absque aliqua retardatione intrarent.

For they were willingly signed with the cross in order to become catechumens, and that they might enter the church and be present at the sacred [services]; but they deferred the reception of baptism, as they judged that it was to their advantage to be baptised at the end of their life, so that, having been cleansed by water unto salvation, they might without any delay enter the gates of eternal life as those who were pure and spotless.

3. *Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar* L. (ed. Sigurður Nordal, Íslenzk fornrit 2 (Reykjavík, 1933), 128).

Konungur bað Þórólfr og þá bræður að þeir skyldu láta prímsignast því at þat var þá mikill siðr, bæði með kaupmönnum ok þeim mönnum, er á mála gengu með kristnum mönnum, því at þeir menn, er prímsignaðir váru, höfðu allt samneyti við kristna menn ok svá heiðna, en höfðu þat at átrúnaði, er þeim var skapfelldast.

The king asked of Þórólfr and his brother that they should let themselves be prime-signed, as was common custom then, both amongst merchants and amongst those who went into the service of Christian men, because those men who had been primesigned could associate with Christians as well as pagans, and could still believe in whichever faith that pleased them.

4. *Þórvalds þáttir viðförla* (ed. Þórleifur Jónsson in *Fjörutíu Íslendinga-þættir* (Reykjavík, 1904), p. 483).

Á nökkuri hátíð, þá er Friðrekr biskup með sínum klerkum framdi tíðagerð ok guðligt embætti, var Koðrán nær staddr, meirr sakar forvitni enn hann ætlaði sér at samþykkja at sinni þeira siðferði. Enn er hann heyrði klukkna-hljóð ok fagran klerkasöng, ok kendi sætan reykelis-ilm, enn sá biskup vegligum skrudu skrudan, ok alla þá, er honum þjónuðu, klædda hvítum klæðum með björtu yfirbragði, ok þar með birti mikla um allt húsit af fögru vaxkertaljósi, ok aðra hlúti, sem til heyrðu því hátíðarhaldi, þá þóknudust honum allir þessir hlútir heldr vel.

At a certain feast, when Bishop Frederick and his clerics were celebrating the hours and the divine office, Koðrán was standing nearby, more out of curiosity than because he had any intention to agree with their religion at that time. But when he heard the sound of the bells, and the beautiful chant of the clerics, and smelled the sweet scent of incense, and saw the bishop dressed in splendid garments, and all those who served him, dressed in white clothes with bright faces, and the great brightness in the whole building from the beautiful wax tapers, and other things belonging to the celebration of the feast, then all these things pleased him rather well.