RESOURCES FROM:

www.ccel.org

Exceptional website for the teaching of the early church. It is a treasure trove for background information and comments concerning worship, doctrine and biblical studies. Most information will need careful research by using the name of one of the Fathers of the Church. For instance, the following are extracts from this site by a search under the name of Justin Martyr. They are from “The First Apology of Justin”:

**Chapter LXI.—Christian baptism.**

I will also relate the manner in which we dedicated ourselves to God when we had been made new through Christ; lest, if we omit this, we seem to be unfair in the explanation we are making. As many as are persuaded and believe that what we teach and say is true, and undertake to be able to live accordingly, are instructed to pray and to entreat God with fasting, for the remission of their sins that are past, we praying and fasting with them. Then they are brought by us where there is water, and are regenerated in the same manner in which we were ourselves regenerated. For, in the name of God, the Father and Lord of the universe, and of our Saviour Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Spirit, they then receive the washing with water. For Christ also said, “Except ye be born again, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.”[1894](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf01.viii.ii.lxi.html#fnf_viii.ii.lxi-p1.2)[1894](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf01.viii.ii.lxi.html#fna_viii.ii.lxi-p1.2)    [John iii. 5](http://www.ccel.org/study/John_3:5). Now, that it is impossible for those who have once been born to enter into their mothers’ wombs, is manifest to all. And how those who have sinned and repent shall escape their sins, is declared by Esaias the prophet, as I wrote above;[1895](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf01.viii.ii.lxi.html#fnf_viii.ii.lxi-p2.2)[1895](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf01.viii.ii.lxi.html#fna_viii.ii.lxi-p2.2)    Chap. xliv. he thus speaks: “Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from your souls; learn to do well; judge the fatherless, and plead for the widow: and come and let us reason together, saith the Lord. And though your sins be as scarlet, I will make them white like wool; and though they be as crimson, I will make them white as snow. But if ye refuse and rebel, the sword shall devour you: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.”[1896](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf01.viii.ii.lxi.html#fnf_viii.ii.lxi-p3.1)[1896](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf01.viii.ii.lxi.html#fna_viii.ii.lxi-p3.1)    [Isa. i. 16–20](http://www.ccel.org/study/Isaiah_1:16-20).

And for this [rite] we have learned from the apostles this reason. Since at our birth we were born without our own knowledge or choice, by our parents coming together, and were brought up in bad habits and wicked training; in order that we may not remain the children of necessity and of ignorance, but may become the children of choice and knowledge, and may obtain in the water the remission of sins formerly committed, there is pronounced over him who chooses to be born again, and has repented of his sins, the name of God the Father and Lord of the universe; he who leads to the laver the person that is to be washed calling him by this name alone. For no one can utter the name of the ineffable God; and if any one dare to say that there is a name, he raves with a hopeless madness. And this washing is called illumination, because they who learn these things are illuminated in their understandings. And in the name of Jesus Christ, who was crucified under Pontius Pilate, and in the name of the Holy Ghost, who through the prophets foretold all things about Jesus, he who is illuminated is washed.

**Chapter LXV.—Administration of the sacraments.**

But we, after we have thus washed him who has been convinced and has assented to our teaching, bring him to the place where those who are called brethren are assembled, in order that we may offer hearty prayers in common for ourselves and for the baptized [illuminated] person, and for all others in every place, that we may be counted worthy, now that we have learned the truth, by our works also to be found good citizens and keepers of the commandments, so that we may be saved with an everlasting salvation. Having ended the prayers, we salute one another with a kiss.[1908](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf01.viii.ii.lxv.html#fnf_viii.ii.lxv-p1.3)[1908](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf01.viii.ii.lxv.html#fna_viii.ii.lxv-p1.3)    The kiss of charity, the kiss of peace, or “the peace” (ἡ εἰπήνη), was enjoined by the Apostle Paul in his Epistles to the Corinthians, Thessalonians, and Romans, and thence passed into a common Christian usage. It was continued in the Western Church, under regulations to prevent its abuse, until the thirteenth century. Stanley remarks (*Corinthians*, i. 414), “It is still continued in the worship of the Coptic Church.” There is then brought to the president of the brethren[1909](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf01.viii.ii.lxv.html#fnf_viii.ii.lxv-p2.3)[1909](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf01.viii.ii.lxv.html#fna_viii.ii.lxv-p2.3)    τῷ προεστῶτι τῶν ἀδελφῶν. This expression may quite legitimately be translated, “to that one of the brethren who was presiding.” bread and a cup of wine mixed with water; and he taking them, gives praise and glory to the Father of the universe, through the name of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, and offers thanks at considerable length for our being counted worthy to receive these things at His hands. And when he has concluded the prayers and thanksgivings, all the people present express their assent by saying Amen. This word Amen answers in the Hebrew language to γένοιτο [so be it]. And when the president has given thanks, and all the people have expressed their assent, those who are called by us deacons give to each of those present to partake of the bread and wine mixed with water over which the thanksgiving was pronounced, and to those who are absent they carry away a portion.

**Chapter LXVII.—Weekly worship of the Christians.**

And we afterwards continually remind each other of these things. And the wealthy among us help the needy; and we always keep together; and for all things wherewith we are supplied, we bless the Maker of all through His Son [186](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf01/Page_186.html) Jesus Christ, and through the Holy Ghost. And on the day called Sunday,[1913](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf01.viii.ii.lxvii.html#fnf_viii.ii.lxvii-p1.5)[1913](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf01.viii.ii.lxvii.html#fna_viii.ii.lxvii-p1.5)    τῇ τοῦ ῾Ηλίου λεγομένη ἡμέρᾳ. all who live in cities or in the country gather together to one place, and the memoirs of the apostles or the writings of the prophets are read, as long as time permits; then, when the reader has ceased, the president verbally instructs, and exhorts to the imitation of these good things. Then we all rise together and pray, and, as we before said, when our prayer is ended, bread and wine and water are brought, and the president in like manner offers prayers and thanksgivings, according to his ability,[1914](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf01.viii.ii.lxvii.html#fnf_viii.ii.lxvii-p2.4)[1914](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf01.viii.ii.lxvii.html#fna_viii.ii.lxvii-p2.4)    ὅση δύναμις αὐτῷ,—a phrase over which there has been much contention, but which seems to admit of no other meaning than that given above. [No need of any “contention.” Langus renders, *Pro virili suâ*, and Grabe illustrates by reference to *Apost. Const.*, lib. viii. cap. 12. Our own learned translators render the same phrase (cap. xiii., above) “to the utmost of our power.” Some say this favours extemporary prayers, and others object. Oh! what matter either way? We all sing hymns, “according to our ability.”] and the people assent, saying Amen; and there is a distribution to each, and a participation of that over which thanks have been given,[1915](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf01.viii.ii.lxvii.html#fnf_viii.ii.lxvii-p3.2)[1915](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf01.viii.ii.lxvii.html#fna_viii.ii.lxvii-p3.2)    Or, of the eucharistic elements. and to those who are absent a portion is sent by the deacons. And they who are well to do, and willing, give what each thinks fit; and what is collected is deposited with the president, who succours the orphans and widows and those who, through sickness or any other cause, are in want, and those who are in bonds and the strangers sojourning among us, and in a word takes care of all who are in need. But Sunday is the day on which we all hold our common assembly, because it is the first day on which God, having wrought a change in the darkness and matter, made the world; and Jesus Christ our Saviour on the same day rose from the dead. For He was crucified on the day before that of Saturn (Saturday); and on the day after that of Saturn, which is the day of the Sun, having appeared to His apostles and disciples, He taught them these things, which we have submitted to you also for your consideration.

For more extracts that might be of help see documents listed under searches for:

# Cyril of Jerusalem – especially his Lectures Number 19 – 22

# Gregory Nazianzus – Orations 39 and 40

# Ambrose – On the Mysteries – nine chapters of his teaching to the newly baptised.

Also available from the ccel.org site are a number of commentaries on the biblical passages. Many of them are to be found in sermons of the particular Church Father but there are some specific commentaries.

In general a search under the names:

# Augustine – will produce his homilies on John’s gospel

# John Chrysostum – also homilies on John

will provide further commentary on the gospel passages in the study.

A number of worship sites have comments on both the actual liturgies of initiation and also concerning the symbols mentioned in the study. For example try:

worship.ca a Canadian Lutheran resource

sarum.ac.uk a liturgical study centre in Salisbury, UK. Mostly actual liturgies but there are some useful comments.

cofe.anglican.org resources for Common Worship

newadvent.org is a Roman Catholic online resource with a wealth of commentaries and liturgical resources

There are plenty of online bible commentaries – a Google search reveals a whole list. They need to be treated carefully. But I have used the following:

biblegateway.com

bible-researcher.com

ancientworldonline.com

ntgateway.com

# Select bibliography

## Bible Commentaries

Volumes 1 and 4 of Sacra Pagina NT Commentary

The Anchor Bible Commentary – Volume on Matthew and the one (actually 2) for John

William Barclay on both gospels

## Other resources

The Awe inspiring Rites of Initiation Edward Yarnold

Sacraments Revisited Liam Kelly

The Journey of Christian Initiation WCC Faith and Order

Living Baptism Clare Watkins

The Study of Liturgy Ed. Paul Bradshaw

Reconstructing Early Christian Worship Paul Bradshaw