

A GUIDE TO THE RITES THAT BELONG TO THE PERIOD OF PURIFICATION AND ENLIGHTENMENT

As catechumens and candidates enter into the final period of preparation into the full communion of the Catholic Church, the RCIA provides a number of rites to assist them. "This is a period of more intense spiritual preparation, consisting more in interior reflection than in catechetical instruction, and is intended to purify the minds and hearts of the elect as they search their own consciences and do penance. This period is intended as well to enlighten the minds and hearts of the elect with a deeper knowledge of Christ the Savior. The celebration of certain rites, particularly the scrutinies and the presentations, brings about this process of purification and enlightenment and extends it over the course of the entire Lenten season" (RCIA, n.139).

1st Sunday of Lent: Rite of Sending the Catechumens for Election, nos. 106-117, and/or Candidates for Recognition by the Bishop, nos. 530-546

- It is within the parish community that the preliminary judgment is made concerning the catechumen's state of formation and progress. This rite offers that local community the opportunity to express its approval of the catechumens and to send them forth to the celebration of election assured of the parish's care and support.

1st Sunday of Lent: Rite of Election or Enrollment of Names, nos. 118-137, and/or Call to Continuing Conversion of Candidates Who Are Preparing for Confirmation and/or Eucharist or Reception into the Full Communion of the Catholic Church, nos. 547-561

- On the basis of the testimony of godparents and catechists and of the catechumens' reaffirmation of their intention, the Church judges their state of readiness and decides on their advancement toward the sacraments of initiation. Thus the Church makes it "election," that is, the choice and admission of those catechumens who have the dispositions that make them fit to take part, at the next major celebration, in the sacraments of initiation.

3rd Sunday of Lent: First Scrutiny, nos. 141-146, 150-156

- The scrutinies, which are solemnly celebrated on Sundays and are reinforced by an exorcism, are rites for self-searching and repentance and have above all a spiritual purpose. The scrutinies are meant to uncover, then heal all that is weak, defective, or sinful in the hearts of the elect; to bring out, then strengthen all that is upright, strong, and good. For the scrutinies are celebrated in order to deliver the elect from the power of sin and Satan, to protect them against temptation, and to give them strength in Christ, who is the way, the truth, and the life. These rites, therefore, should complete the conversion of the elect and deepen their resolve to hold fast to Christ and to carry out their decision to love God above all.

3rd Week of Lent: Presentation of the Creed, nos. 147-149, 157-163

- The presentations take place after the celebration of the scrutinies. Thus, with the catechumenal formation of the elect completed, the Church lovingly entrusts to them the Creed and the Lord's Prayer, the ancient texts that have always been regarded as expressing the heart of the Church's faith and prayer. These texts are presented in order to enlighten the elect. The Creed, as it recalls the wonderful deeds of God for the salvation of the human race, suffuses the vision of the elect with the sure light of faith.

4th Sunday of Lent: Second Scrutiny, nos. 141-146, 164-170

5th Sunday of Lent: Third Scrutiny nos. 141-146, 171-177

5th Week of Lent: Presentation of the Lord's Prayer, nos. 147-149, 178-184

- The Lord's Prayer fills the elect with a deeper realization of the new spirit of adoption by which they will call God their Father, especially in the midst of the eucharistic assembly. From antiquity the Lord's Prayer has been the prayer proper to those who in baptism have received the spirit of adoption. When the elect have been baptized and take part in their first celebration of the eucharist, they will join the rest of the faithful in saying the Lord's Prayer.

Holy Saturday: Preparation Rites, nos. 185-192

Recitation of the Creed, nos. 193-196

- The rite of recitation of the Creed prepares the elect for the profession of faith they will make immediately before they are baptized; the rite also instructs them in their duty to proclaim the message of the Gospel.

Ephphetha Rite, nos. 197-199

- By the power of its symbolism the ephphetha rite, or rite of opening the ears and mouth, impresses on the elect their need of grace in order that they may hear the word of God and profess it for their salvation.

Choosing a Baptismal Name, nos. 200-202

- The elect may choose a new name, which is either a traditional Christian name or a name of regional usage that is not incompatible with Christian beliefs. Where it seems better suited to the circumstances and the elect are not too numerous, the naming may consist simply in an explanation of the given name of each of the elect.

Concluding Rites, nos. 203-205