

The Rite of Election

To help teams understand the Rite of Election so that they can prepare catechumens for the Rite.

*Seeking the
Living God*

Links to other sessions in this series:

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Catechumenate

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- Reception of the Baptised



A series of resources for RCIA teams prepared by the RCIA Network of England and Wales © 2010 RCIA Network.

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Listen to Scripture

When the days drew near for Jesus to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem. And he sent messengers ahead of him. On their way they entered a village of the Samaritans to make ready for him; but they did not receive him, because his face was set towards Jerusalem. When his disciples James and John saw it, they said, 'Lord, do you want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?' But he turned and rebuked them. Then they went on to another village.

As they were going along the road, someone said to him, 'I will follow you wherever you go.' And Jesus said to him, 'Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.' To another he said, 'Follow me.' But he said, 'Lord, first let me go and bury my father.' But Jesus said to him, 'Let the dead bury their own dead; but as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God.' Another said, 'I will follow you, Lord; but let me first say farewell to those at my home.' Jesus said to him, 'No one who puts a hand to the plough and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God.'

Luke 9:51-62

Read & Reflect

RITE OF CHRISTIAN INITIATION OF ADULTS

At this second step (the Rite of Election), 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 its '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.

RCIA 106

Affirmation by Godparents

Celebrant: God's holy Church wishes to know whether these candidates are sufficiently prepared to be enrolled among the elect for the coming celebration of Easter. And so I speak first of all to you their godparents.

Have they faithfully listened to God's word proclaimed by the Church?

Have they responded to that word and begun to walk in God's presence?

Have they shared the company of their Christian brothers and sisters and joined with them in prayer?

Act of Admission or Election

Celebrant N. and N., I now declare you to be members of the elect, to be initiated into the sacred mysteries at the next Easter Vigil.

Candidates Thanks be to God.

Celebrant God is always faithful to those he calls: now it is your duty, as it is ours, both to be faithful to him in return and strive courageously to reach the fulness of truth, which your election opens up before you.

RCIA 118b, 120

Act

- Visit the local Cathedral and ask to see the Book of the Elect – or find out where it is?
- What are key things that catechumens need to know to participate fully and enjoyably in celebration
- What fears/concerns might you need to address?
- What formation/preparation/support is there for godparents/sponsors? — invite to team session?
- How will you reflect on the Rite in the following weeks with the elect
- How will the parish community know that the Rite of Election is taking place; how might they be involved through an invitation to pray for catechumens

Prayer

Father of love and power,
it is your will to establish everything in Christ
and to draw us into his all-embracing love.
Guide the elect of your Church:
strengthen them on their vocation,
build them into the kingdom of your Son,
and seal them with the Spirit of your promise.

We ask this through Christ our Lord.
Amen

RCIA 122B

Further Reading & Resources

- *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*
reprinted Burns & Oates, 2006
- *On the Rite of Election* (Forum Essays)
by Rita Ferrone
Liturgy Training Publications, 1994

Notes & Ideas

- Communicate with parish, invite their prayers,
- The US edition of the Rite includes a Rite of Sending that some parishes find useful.
- This edition also offers the ‘combined Rite’ for the Rite of Election and the Call to continuing conversion.
- Where those who are baptised are to be received into Full Communion at the Easter Vigil, they are invited to join with the rest of the baptised in marking Lent by reflecting on their baptism and preparing to celebrate Easter well.
- See if Diocesan coordinators offer support/introductory evening/preparation pack
- Make sure sponsors can attend in good time – the Rite is always weekend of 1st Sunday of Lent

The Rite of Election

PRIOR READING

If you have time before the session take time to read the following extracts from Church documents as an introduction to the Session. There is space to make you own notes in the right hand column.

The second step in Christian initiation is the liturgical rite call both election and the enrolment of names, which closes the period of the catechumenate proper, that is, the lengthy period of formation of the catechumen's minds and hearts. The celebration of the rite of election, which usually coincides with the opening of Lent, also marks the beginning of the period of final, more intense preparation for the sacraments of initiation, during which the elect will be encouraged to follow Christ with greater generosity.

At this second step, 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 its '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.

This step is called election because the acceptance made by the Church is founded on the election by God, in whose name the Church acts. The step is also called the enrolment of names because as a pledge of fidelity the candidates inscribe their names in the book that lists those who have been chosen for initiation.

Before the rite of election is celebrated, the catechumens are expected to have undergone a conversion in mind and in action and to have developed a sufficient acquaintance with Christian teaching as well as a spirit of faith and charity. With deliberate will and an enlightened faith they must have the intention to receive the sacraments of the Church, a resolve they will express publicly in the actual celebration of the rite. ^[23]

The election, marked with a rite of such solemnity, is the focal point of the Church's concern for the catechumens. Admission to election therefore belongs to the bishop, and the presiding celebrant for the rite of election is the bishop himself or a priest or a deacon who acts as the bishop's delegate (see no. 12).

Before the rite of election the bishop, priests, deacons, catechists, godparents, and the entire community, in accord with their respective responsibilities and in their own way, should, after considering the matter carefully, arrive at a judgment about the catechumens' state of formation and progress. After the election, they should surround the elect with prayer, so that the entire Church will accompany and lead them to encounter Christ. RCIA 105-8



An adult catechumenate divided into several stages is to be restored, the introduction of which will depend on the judgement of the local Ordinary. In this way, it should prove possible to sanctify the time of the catechumenate, which is meant to be given over to the fitting instruction of the catechumen, with a succession of sacred rites to be performed each in its right time.

Sacrosanctum Concilium 64



The discernment for election and recognition is not discernment for canonization and final perfection. Nor is this the 'final exam', the test of religious knowledge. Rather, our posture needs to be of welcome, of waiting, of listening to the catechumen's willingness to embrace fully, with all his or her limits and gifts, the way of life of the gospel within the Catholic communion. We are inviting the catechumen to recognize God's stirrings and the response of faith. For some people, the time is not right. There is more growth, more challenge, more of a response needed before they can make the commitment to the sacraments. One needs honesty and courage to make any decision at this point. There is not right decision, just good decisions. The catechumen, sponsor, team and pastoral staff will be compassionate toward God's promptings.

Morris: The RCIA: Transforming the Church



Those called to be catechumens are embraced as family as soon as the Holy Spirit stirs up in them the desire and will for full participation in the life of the church. Those called to be Christian in other church and with whom the pope is not yet fully united are nonetheless linked to the Church in many ways. United to Roman Catholics by Scripture, prayer, charity and even sacraments, together we hope and work towards full unity.

Huebsch: Constitution on the Church (Lumen Gentium) in Plain English 14/15



Liturgical services are not private activities but celebrations of the church, the 'sacrament of unity', that is, a holy people gathered together and drawn up in order under the bishops. That is why the liturgical services belong to the whole body of the Church, why they manifest it and affect it, and why they also affect its individual members, but in different ways varying with the diversification of their orders, tasks and effective participation.

Sacrosanctum Concilium 26