

Dear Pastors, OCIA Coordinators, and OCIA Team Members:

We will celebrate the Rite of Election AND Call to Continuing Conversion this year.

Stressing the importance of gathering as a diocesan Church, and given the feedback that we've received, Bishop Walsh has asked that we celebrate the Combined Rites this year. That way, both Catechumens and Candidates can gather as part of our diocese.

Please recall that the Rite of Election is NOT optional for catechumens. In order to receive the Easter Sacraments, a catechumen must be elected by the Diocesan Bishop (or his delegate)—a sign of the catechumen's election by God (see OCIA #119, 121). While the Call to Continuing Conversion can be celebrated as a parish rite, Bishop Walsh would like to strongly encourage everyone eligible to attend the diocesan liturgy.

We will celebrate the rites twice on the First Sunday of Lent (2/22/25).

In order to address concerns regarding travel, the Combined Rites will be celebrated twice on the First Sunday of Lent.

Bishop Walsh will preside at the rites, celebrated within Mass, at the Cathedral in Davenport. The Mass there will begin at 2pm.

Father Jason Crossen, our Vicar General, has been delegated by Bishop Walsh to preside at the rites at St. Mary of the Visitation church in Ottumwa. The liturgy will also begin at 2pm, and will be bilingual (English and Spanish).

We will gather for more than the Rites.

The Elect (catechumens) will be dismissed before the Liturgy of the Eucharist in order to "break open the word" together as the rest of the assembly continues to lift them in prayer. In Ottumwa, English and Spanish groups will be available, depending on need. We will have a reception with light refreshments to follow.

FAQs:

1. How do we register?

The Parish Information Form is to be completed electronically, and can be accessed at:

<https://www.davenportdiocese.org/rite-of-election>.

We are asking both for the number of candidates and catechumens *enrolled* in your RCIA process as well as the number of individuals who will be *attending* the Rites. **Please submit the form by February 1** (earlier appreciated!).

Before completing the form, please make sure that all impediments to receiving the Easter Sacraments have been removed. If a catechumen is not free to celebrate the Sacraments, neither should they celebrate Election. Because we must in no way ever detract from the baptism that the *candidates* received in the past, it is crucial that you not include their names in the Book of the Elect; as the baptized, they have already been elected! Also, at the Rite, please do not read the names of individuals who are not present at the Rite; only those who are actually being called by the bishop (or his delegate) should be named. (If a person is not present at the Diocesan Rite, then the pastor should celebrate the appropriate Rite in the parish.)

2. When would the Rite of Sending be celebrated?

The Rite of Sending may be celebrated within or outside of Mass, and at any appropriate time. So, the parish could celebrate it at Mass on Saturday night or early Sunday morning (or even the previous Sunday), or could celebrate it in the context of a Liturgy of the Word when the catechumens gather during the week. While strongly recommended as one way to involve the whole parish in initiation, the rite itself is optional.

3. When would the Book of the Elect be signed by the Catechumens?

The Book would be signed as part of the Rite of Sending. The bishop (or his delegate) does not need to sign the book.

4. What will the Liturgy look like?

Mass will begin as usual. The Rite of Election is celebrated after the homily.

- **Presentation of the Catechumens (at the Cathedral)**
 - *There will be two lecterns prepared, one in the area in front of each side altar. They will be located at the head of the side aisles, at floor level (in order to avoid steps).*
 - *The parish representatives will line up in the area outside the side doors into the church itself – half on the east side and half on the west side.*
 - *The representative from each parish will go to one of the lecterns and reads the names of the catechumens. We will alternate from side to side.*
 - *As their name is read, the catechumens stand and remain standing. They do not come forward.*
 - *The representative then goes back to their place with their parish community.*
- **Presentation of the Catechumens (in Ottumwa)**
 - *As above, except there will only be one lectern.*
- **Affirmation by the Godparents & the Assembly**

The Deacon will ask the godparents to stand, and they will make their affirmation (in the worship aid). The community then does the same, and the godparents are seated.
- **Invitation and Enrollment of Names**

As the presider moves from the chair, the representatives move into the aisles and hold up their books. The deacon says: "These are the names of the catechumens of the Diocese of Davenport."
- **Act of Admission or Election**

After the presider declares the election of the catechumens, the assembly responds with "thanks be to God" and applause. The godparents are asked to share a sign of peace with their catechumen. They are then seated.

The Rite of Election is followed by the Calling of the Candidates to Continuing Conversion:

- **Presentation of the Candidates**
 - *When called forward, the catechists make their way to the lectern(s), as above.*
 - *The names of the candidates are read (please note: the Book of the Elect is NOT used)*
 - *As their names are called, the candidates stand.*
 - *The representative then goes back to their place with their parish community.*

- **Affirmation by the Sponsors and Assembly**

The Deacon will ask the sponsors to stand, and they will make their affirmation (in the worship aid). The community is then asked for their affirmation.

- **Recognition**

The presider recognizes the candidates and then addresses the sponsors. The sponsors are asked to share a sign of peace with their candidate.

- **Intercessions**

All stand. After the Intercessions, the Elect are dismissed to go to the parish hall for the “breaking open of the word” together. Newly-elected children may remain in the assembly or they may be accompanied by an adult to the session. In Ottumwa, the time for reflection will be offered in both English and Spanish. Mass then continues with the Creed.

5. What happens in case of bad weather, etc.?

Bad weather is certainly a risk in late winter in Iowa! If attendance at the diocesan rite is impossible, pastors have the faculty to celebrate the Rite in their own parish. If the Rites are to be celebrated in the parish, the orders of service are found in the OCIA ritual text, §§118-137 (Rite of Election), §§ 446-458 (Rite of Calling Candidates to Continuing Conversion), and §§ 547-561 (combined rite).

If you will not be able to attend the Rite of Election, please call me at 563-349-2577.

If the weather seems severe enough that the Rite might be cancelled, please check the following (you may want to check more than one source in case we are having technical issues):

- Check the Diocesan website home page – www.davenportdiocese.org
- Check the Diocesan Facebook page – www.facebook/diodav
- Check the Diocesan X (Twitter) feed - www.twitter.com/davenportdioc

In addition, I will try to e-mail the parishes once a decision to cancel has been made. Also, please feel free to call me before heading out if you want to double check.

Please do let me know if you have any other questions. Please visit our website for updates (<https://www.davenportdiocese.org/rite-of-election>). Thank you for your support in helping to make these celebrations a real high-point not just for our candidates and catechumens, but for our entire diocesan church.

Peace and all good,

Deacon Frank Agnoli, OFS, MD, DMin
Director of Liturgy