

Rites of the Catechumens and Candidates

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The time is quickly coming where parishes will celebrate rites for the process of Initiation (RCIA). Even for the most experienced team, it is good to take some time to review the different rites, to help us prepare for them well and help our catechumens and candidates prepare as well.

Rite of Sending: On February 19th or February 25th, parishes will be celebrating the Rite of Sending. This Rite is where the community sends with love all the catechumens and candidates that are prepared to be initiated at the Easter Vigil this year (an explanation of readiness is found in no. 120-121 of the Rite). It shows the importance of the support of the community, as the teachers of the faith, to those to be received. In the Rite book, no. 112, the presider is to state to the community, “It is the responsibility of this community to inquire about their readiness before they are presented to the bishop...” and then later, “this community gladly recommends you...”

Don't forget to share this with your community! Instead of them thinking, “Oh, no, there is another of those rites and mass is going to be longer than usual!”, they should be thinking, “Wonderful! Today we get to pray for our candidates and catechumens!” But they won't think this until they understand what the rite means and why it is taking place.

The week before the Rite of Sending, write a bulletin article, film a video, post on social media, and/or announce at all Masses that this Rite will take place and what it means! Share pictures of the catechumens and candidates with a short biography so they can meet them! Invite them to donuts and coffee after Mass to interact together!

Rite of Election: There are five celebrations of the Rite of Election where Bishop Brennan greets the catechumens and proclaims them to be Elect of God. This is an important (and mandatory) rite for all the unbaptized, as it leads them to their final preparation for the sacraments. The Bishop asks first if their godparents and the assembly find them ready, then ask the catechumens themselves if they are ready to enter fully into the life of the Church. Once they offer their names through the Book of the Elect, they are declared members of the elect.

Call to Continuing Conversion: After this moment in the celebration, the candidates (those baptized in another Christian faith) are called forward in a similar way. Their sponsors and the assembly verify their readiness, and then the candidates are asked if they are ready. Since they are already baptized, they continue to be called candidates, but now are in their final phase of preparation.

Preparing for these Rites: The best way to prepare for these rites with the catechumens and candidates is to spend time with them before, explaining what these promises mean. Sometimes we think this means there needs to be a rehearsal or a walk through of the rites themselves, but more meaningful is to read to them the questions that will be asked and the prayers to be prayed, so they can truly understand what is happening. Spend a session in reflection, following the elements of readiness listed in the Rite book. Read nos. 118-125 carefully and become very familiar with it, to better prepare everyone!

For more information, read the Parish Resource Packet, available on our website, or call me at our office with any questions.