

Preparing the Catechumens for the Rite of Election

Introduction

During the *Rite of Election*, the Catechumens gather at the cathedral to be elected by God and have their names enrolled before the presence of the bishop. During this rite, “*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 119].

As the *Rite of Election* belongs to the diocesan Church, it is normative that the bishop presides. Consequently, the *Rite of Election* cannot be celebrated in the parish unless an extraordinary reason calls for it, and delegation has been given by the bishop [RCIA 12, 34, 121].

In terms of formation, what makes a Catechumen ready for the *Rite of Election*? The first part of the rite looks back at the *Period of the Catechumenate*, during which the Catechumens are being formed in preparation for the rite. “*Before the Rite of Election is celebrated, the catechumens are expected to have undergone a conversion of mind and action and to have developed a sufficient acquaintance with Christian teaching as well as a spirit of faith and charity*” [RCIA 120]. Therefore, besides knowing Christian doctrine, they also have been imbued with faith that does justice, i.e., charity. More specifically, we find in the questions the bishop asks the godparents and assembly, the very catechesis needed during the period of the catechumenate:

1. Have they faithfully listened to God’s Word proclaimed by the Church?
2. Have they responded to the Word and begun to walk in God’s presence?
3. Have they shared the company of their Christian brothers and sisters and joined them in prayer?

All three questions are asking whether the Catechumens are ready for the Easter mysteries—which is the focus of the second part of the *Rite of Election*. In this second part, the rite looks ahead to the period of immediate preparation for the sacraments of initiation at Easter and sets out these prerequisites for the celebration [RCIA 119-120].

1. The Elect have undergone conversion in mind and action.
2. The Elect have an enlightened faith and intend to celebrate the Easter mysteries.

From the day of their election and admission, the Catechumens are called “the Elect.” They are also described as competent (co-petitioners), because they are joined together in asking for, and aspiring to, receive the three sacraments of Christ and the gift of the Holy Spirit. They are also called *illuminandi* (“*those who will be enlightened...*”) [RCIA 124].

Please note: We have provided an overview of the rite at the Cathedral so that you may practice with those who will participate. In this fashion, people will have a general idea of what they are to do and say during the actual liturgy.