

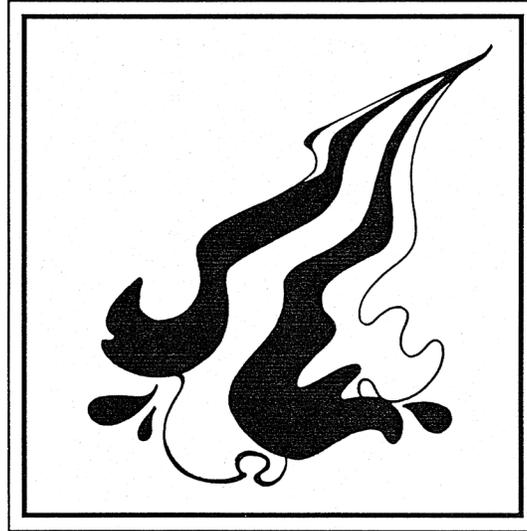


## Diocese of Springfield in Illinois

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Office for Divine Worship and the Catechumenate

# CATECHUMENS



## A GUIDE FOR PREPARING FOR THE RITE OF ELECTION AND CALL TO CONTINUING CONVERSION

REVISED FOR LENT 2020

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## I. Introduction

This packet applies exclusively to catechumens. A catechumen is a person who has not yet received the Sacrament of Baptism and who, following the Period of Evangelization and Precatechumenate, has been admitted into the Order of Catechumens through the parish celebration of Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens [cf. *RCIA*, nos. 41-74 and 260-276].

Catechumens participate in the lengthy period of the catechumenate which, for the dioceses of the United States, is normatively at least one year long [cf. NSCUSA, no. 6]. This period for formation, instruction, and probation ends with the Rite of Sending of the Catechumens for Election and the Rite of Election. Permission is needed from the diocesan Bishop for a period shorter than one year.

Unbaptized children who have reached the age of reason, also called “catechetical age,” are considered, for purposes of Christian initiation, to be adults [cf. canon 852:1; *RCIA*, nos. 252-259]. They, too, are called catechumens and, when deemed ready, receive the three Sacraments of Initiation in proper order at an Easter Vigil with the older catechumens. If they are deemed ready and are prepared to be initiated at Easter, these children should take part in the Rite of Sending and the Rite of Election.

After the Rite of Election, catechumens are also called “the Elect;” after the reception of the Sacraments of Initiation, they are called “neophytes.”

## II. The Rite of Election and of the Call to Continuing Conversion

Please read through this packet carefully to find answers to questions you may have concerning the preparation of your catechumens for the combined rite of the “Celebration of the Rite of Election of Catechumens and of the Call to Continuing Conversion of Candidates Who Are Preparing for Confirmation and Eucharist or Reception into the Full Communion of the Catholic Church.” If your question is not answered in this packet, please contact the Office for Divine Worship and the Catechumenate.

The long title of this rite clearly indicates the three distinct groups of those who are the focus of this liturgy:

- (1) all catechumens seeking the three Sacraments of Initiation;
- (2) baptized but uncatechized Catholics seeking both Confirmation and the Eucharist; and,
- (3) baptized Christians seeking reception into the full communion of the Catholic Church.

For brevity, the title is often shortened to the “Rite of Election and Call to Continuing Conversion.”

The following universal and particular norms apply, to which diocesan and parish ministers have the duty to attend:

1. The **Rite of Election** is *not* optional, but is a necessary and required step in the catechumen’s journey to the Easter Vigil, the celebration of the Sacraments of Initiation, and, afterwards, living the Christian life as a member of the faithful.
2. The Diocese of Springfield in Illinois continues the practice of celebrating the Rite of Election and Call to Continuing Conversion twice to accommodate the number of people

who come. Both celebrations take place in the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception on the weekend of the First Sunday of Lent:

- † **Saturday at 7:00 P.M.**, for all parishes and institutions within a 50-mile radius of the Cathedral, and others who choose to come.
- † **Sunday at 2:30 P.M.**, only for those parishes and institutions beyond the 50-mile radius.

A light reception follows both liturgies in the Cathedral atrium.

3. The Rite of Election and Call to Continuing Conversion takes place within a Liturgy of the Word outside Mass. Hence, there are no concelebrants.
4. There is no reserved seating in the Cathedral, except for those with particular needs who have previously contacted the Office for Divine Worship and the Catechumenate. Members of parish delegations are encouraged to sit together on a first come basis.
5. From the beginning of the entrance song through the end of the final song, please do not take still or moving pictures either from the pews or by moving about the church. This respects the nature of liturgical prayer and minimizes distractions during this act of worship.
6. **Bring the parish *Book of the Elect* with you.** The coordinator, pastor, or other minister will carry it forward when the catechumens are presented. **The *Book of the Elect* should not be held high; it simply should be carried in a reverent manner** (not above the head); it should *not* be carried in the same manner as the *Book of the Gospels*.

### III. Parish Preparation for the Rite

It cannot be assumed that every catechumen is ready for election and, consequently, the Easter celebration of the Sacraments. If election is fundamentally God's work through the Church, then steps must be taken to foster adequate listening to God. What does God have in store for each person? How is the catechumen responding to God's call?

#### A. *Discernment of Progress*

This is done in an attitude of prayer. It is also a mutual process that involves the testimony of sponsors, godparents, and catechists, the wisdom of pastors and pastoral staff and parish catechumenate team members, as well as the reaffirmation of intention by the catechumens. It is a mutual listening to God who is the one who elects and calls [cf. *RCIA*, no. 119].

Before the Rite of Election is celebrated, the catechumens who will be a part of that rite are expected to have:

- a conversion in mind and in action;
- a sufficient acquaintance with Catholic teaching;
- a spirit of faith and charity; and,
- the intention to receive the sacraments of the Church [cf. *RCIA*, no. 120].

#### B. *Godparents*

A new ministry comes into play at this discernment. The sponsors, temporary ministers assigned by the Church, “hand on” the catechumens to those who will exercise a permanent ministry. The godparent accompanies each catechumen at the Rite of Sending, on the day of Election, at the celebrations in Lent, at the celebrations of Initiation, and throughout the period of mystagogy.

The godparent is chosen by the catechumen “on the basis of example, good qualities, and friendship, delegated by the local Christian community, and approved by the priest” [cf. *RCIA*, no. 11]. Each godparent must meet the qualifications outlined in canon 874 to carry out this office. The sponsor who has journeyed with the catechumen during the period of the catechumenate may be chosen by the catechumen to assume this role of godparent. That is to be encouraged. However, someone else can be chosen as godparent who then is present for all the rites and sessions of Lent and Easter [cf. *RCIA*, no. 10].

Everyone gets a sponsor for the period of the catechumenate, and each catechumen has the right to choose the person who will continue the journey through Lent, Easter, and beyond. Clearly, for the catechumen, that is the godparent [see section 2 above].

#### **IV. Parish Rite of Sending**

Since the Rite of Election and Call to Continuing Conversion belongs to the diocesan Church, it is normative that the diocesan Bishop presides.

##### *A. Parish Rite of Sending*

This rite concerns the sending of catechumens and candidates to the diocesan Bishop and the gathered diocesan Church. Catechumens are sent for Election. The Rite of Sending affords the parish the opportunity to hear the testimony, to express its approval, to rejoice at decisions made for the Sacraments of Initiation, and to assure the catechumens and candidates of the parish’s care and support.

##### *B. Which Rite Should Be Used?*

Having two rites from which to choose does not mean any one of them can be used interchangeably.

a) Sending of the Catechumens for Election [cf. *RCIA*, nos. 106-117] is used if there are *only* catechumens preparing for all three Sacraments of Initiation at this coming Easter Vigil. Only the unbaptized are properly called “catechumens.” Only their names are inscribed in the parish Book of the Elect.

b) Parish Celebration for Sending Catechumens for Election and Candidates for Recognition by the Bishop [cf. *RCIA*, nos. 530-546] is used when there are *both* catechumens *and* candidates who will be ready for sacraments this Easter Vigil.

##### *C. When to Celebrate the Rite of Sending*

The ritual text states the Rite of Sending is celebrated at a suitable time prior to the Rite of Election [cf. *RCIA*, nos. 108, 436, 533].

It may take place within a Celebration of the Word of God or within Mass.

The anticipated or morning Masses of the First Sunday of Lent make excellent sense since many of the faithful will be able to participate in the rite. However, the Sunday before Lent begins or a day in that week are alternatives, especially if travel time to the cathedral is a factor.

Ash Wednesday does not seem a suitable day since the receiving of ashes imprints a strong penitential character on the liturgy.

#### D. *The Book of the Elect*

Within the Diocese of Springfield in Illinois, the ritual *Book of the Elect* is a parish book and not a diocesan one. The signing or inscription of names takes place in the parish.

a) **Who signs this book?** *Only catechumens sign, or have their names inscribed in, the Book of the Elect because only they will be elected for Baptism. Godparents, as witnesses and guides, may also sign, but each parish establishes its own practice. Along with the date, space should remain for the Bishop to also sign the page within the Rite of Election. Candidates, because they are already baptized, do not sign this book nor have their names inscribed in it.*

b) **When does the signing take place?** The book is signed after the affirmation by the godparents and assembly [cf. *RCIA*, nos. 113 and 539] during the parish rite of sending.

Because the altar is set apart for the celebration of the Eucharist, the signing of the *Book of the Elect* should take place on a separate table where the assembly may witness each catechumen sign or have their name inscribed.

### V. **Special Concerns**

#### A. *Marriages*

We must be certain nothing stands in the way of initiation. If a declaration of nullity of Marriage is needed, it must be granted prior to the First Sunday of Lent in order to participate in the Rite of Sending and the Rite of Election and Call to Continuing Conversion and the other rites of Lent and Easter.

If a declaration of nullity has not yet been granted, *do not* include those names on Form A.

If the declaration of nullity of marriage is granted later in Lent, contact the Office for Divine Worship and the Catechumenate to request a dispensation from The Rite of Election.

If a convalidation of Marriage is required, it is best to celebrate it as soon as permitted by law, even before Lent and Easter. It *cannot* be celebrated during the Paschal Triduum. Contact the Office for Tribunal Services about these and other marriage concerns.

#### B. *Confirmation*

The same priest who baptizes one who is over the age of 7 *must* also administer the Sacrament of Confirmation within the same sacramental celebration [cf. canon 883]. Priests *cannot* withhold Confirmation, nor can they separate Confirmation from Baptism or reception. No “pastoral” reason permits an exception to this universal norm and no dispensation is possible.

### *C. Children of Catechetical Age*

Children of catechetical age (*i.e.*, those aged 6-7 and older) belong at the Rite of Sending and the Rite of Election and Call to Continuing Conversion.

These children are to receive the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist at the Easter Vigil, in the proper order, and during the same liturgy [cf. canon 852.1; National Statutes on the Catechumenate, nos. 18-19].

### *D. Those Who Cannot Participate in the Rite of Election*

When catechumens are legitimately prevented from taking part in the Rite of Election and Call to Continuing Conversion, contact the Office for Divine Worship and the Catechumenate to receive guidance and to request a dispensation.

### *E. The Chrism Mass*

For the Elect and other catechumens who come with the parish delegation to the **Chrism Mass**, there is a Rite of Dismissal and Dismissal Prayer following the blessing of the oils and the consecration of the chrism. They will return to the assembly at the end of Communion in time for the distribution of the sacred oils. A light reception follows. The Chrism Mass will be celebrated at 6:30 p.m. on **Tuesday of Holy Week**, April 7, 2020, in the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception.

## VI. Filling Out the Forms

The following forms help parishes and institutions prepare for the Rite of Election and Call to Continuing Conversion. They are mailed with this preparation material to the RCIA coordinators prior to the beginning of Lent. For additional convenience, they are also available from the web site of the Office for Divine Worship and the Catechumenate at <http://www.dio.org/worship/election-and-call.html>.

### FORM A – Names and Information [ ivory ]

#### Page 1 – Parish or Institution Information

- Fill out a separate form *for each parish*, even if two or more parishes join together for common catechumenal training and formation.
- Correct any errors on the label; fill in the information if no label is attached.
- Fill in the information for the RCIA coordinator.
- Check “NO” or “YES” regarding participation in the rites of Lent and Easter.
- If “NO,” stop here and go to **Form C** and complete it. Mail these two forms to the Office for Divine Worship and the Catechumenate *not later than February 26, 2020*.
- If “YES,” indicate whether the parish is coming to the Saturday or Sunday rite.
- If for any reason the RCIA coordinator will *not* be taking part in the Rite of Election and Call to Continuing Conversion, please list the name, address, and phone number of the delegate or temporary person in charge that day.

#### Page 2 – Catechumen Information

- This page only is for the *unbaptized* at or over the age of reason.
- Provide the names in alphabetical order by last name. Please print, type, or affix a label.
- Check the appropriate age group box.
- Give the name and mailing address.
- List any special needs a catechumen may have: accessibility, sign language, etc.

## **FORM C – Names of New Catholics...Outside the Usual Times [ green ]**

This form is for listing the names, addresses, and dates of catechumens *and* candidates who celebrated the Sacraments of Initiation or reception into the full communion of the Catholic Church apart from the Easter Vigil in the past year.

- Follow the directions on that form.

## **FORM D – Letter of Testimony to Bishop Paprocki [ white ]**

This form is a convenient way for the godparent for each catechumen to put in writing their discernment of the catechumen's progress toward a deepening encounter with Christ Jesus. Additional letters of testimony may also be completed by members of the team, the pastor or parish life coordinator, the sponsor during the catechumenate period, friends, etc.

Please make copies of this form as needed and give it to the godparents, sponsors, and others. This brief letter should have the same type of testimony that occurs in the parish discernment process and at the Rite of Sending. The form itself provides some guidance and reminders as to the shape this testimony should take. It should include:

- 1) evidence of how God has been active in the life of the catechumen;
- 2) how it seems clear that God has chosen him/her; and,
- 3) how his/her involvement in the training and formation in the Christian life and the desire to become Roman Catholic is a manifestation of God's choice and grace.

Have the completed forms returned to the parish RCIA coordinator for review. Make copies for the parish files and to aid in the giving of testimony during the parish Rite of Sending.

The parish RCIA coordinator then mails the letters of testimony to the Office for Divine Worship and the Catechumenate, either along with the other forms or under separate cover. The Office for Divine Worship and the Catechumenate will forward the testimonials on to the Bishop.

## VII. Preliminary Worksheet on Affirmation and Testimony for Election and Call

At the Rite of Election and Call to Continuing Conversion, the Bishop asks the following questions. Use this worksheet to help think about and clarify the testimony you will give at both the Rite of Sending and Rite of Election and the letter you will prepare for Bishop Paprocki.

### Catechumens for Election

#### How has this catechumen...

1. ...faithfully listened to God's word proclaimed by the Church?
2. ...taken his/her preparation and formation seriously?
3. ...responded to God's word and begun to walk in God's presence?
4. ...shared the company of his/her Christian sisters and brothers and joined with them in prayer?