



CATECHUMENATE GUIDE

A GUIDE FOR PREPARING FOR THE RITE OF ELECTION

REVISED FOR LENT 2024

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I. Introduction

This packet applies exclusively to catechumens, to those who have not yet received the Sacrament of Baptism and who, following the Period of Evangelization and Precatechumenate, have 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. National Statutes for the Catechumenate in the United States of America (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 (seven years of age), also called “catechetical age,” are considered, for the purposes of Christian initiation, to be adults [cf. canon 97 §2; 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 or Enrollment of Names

Please read through this packet carefully to find answers to questions you may have concerning the preparation of your catechumens for the Rite of Election or Enrollment of Names. If your question is not answered in this packet, please contact the Office for Divine Worship and the Catechumenate.

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. It 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 will celebrate only the Rite of Election this year at the following times on February 18th at 2:30 p.m. at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception.

3. The Rite of Election takes place within a Liturgy of the Word without 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 hymn through the end of the recessional hymn, 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 should be simply carried in a reverent manner** (not above the head); it should *not* be carried in the same manner as the *Book of the Gospels*.
7. In order to highlight the dignity of this important celebration in the lives of the Catechumens, those in attendance are kindly asked to dress in *at least* "business casual;" one's "Sunday best" is especially encouraged; upper arms, thighs, and mid-sections should be covered on all. Please be certain to share this request with your catechumens and others who will attend.

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 each catechumen responding to God's call?

A. *Discernment of Progress*

This discernment 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]. It is not the catechumen who determines if he or she is properly prepared and ready to receive the Sacraments of Initiation, but the Church.

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

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

If a catechumen has not come to the above, he or she should not take part in the Rite of Election.

B. Godparents

A new ministry comes into play at this discernment. The sponsors, temporary ministers assigned by the Church for the Period of the Catechumenate, “hand on” the catechumens to those who will exercise a permanent ministry. The godparent accompanies each catechumen at the Rite of Sending; at the Rite of Election; at the Scrutinies and other liturgical celebrations in Lent; at the reception of the Sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and the Eucharist; and throughout the period of mystagogy.

The godparent(s) is/are 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, namely:

1. be appointed by the candidate for baptism, or by the parents or whoever stands in their place, or failing these, by the parish priest or minister; to be appointed the person must be suitable for this role and have the intention of fulfilling it;
2. be not less than sixteen years of age ... or unless the parish priest or minister considers that there is a just reason for an exception to be made;
3. be a Catholic who has been confirmed and has received the blessed Eucharist, and who lives a life of faith which befits the role to be undertaken;
4. not labor under a canonical penalty, whether imposed or declared; and,
5. not be either the father or the mother of the person to be baptized.

It should be remembered that if two godparents are chosen, one must be male and the other must be female; it is *not* permissible to have two people of the same sex fulfill the roles of godparents (cf. canon 873). It should also be remembered that a baptized non-

Catholic “may be admitted only in company with a Catholic godparent, and then simply as a witness to the baptism,” and not as a godparent (canon 874 §2).

The sponsor who has journeyed with the catechumen during the period of the catechumenate may fittingly be chosen by the catechumen to assume this role of godparent. This 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 of Easter [cf. *RCIA*, no. 10].

Every catechumen 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.

IV. Rite of Sending

Since the Rite of Election belongs to the diocesan Church, it is normative that the diocesan Bishop presides at the Rite of Election.

A. *Parish Rite of Sending*

This rite concerns the sending of catechumens to the diocesan Bishop, who gathers with the faithful of the 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 the decisions made for the Sacraments of Initiation, and to assure the catechumens of the parish’s care and support.

B. *Which Rite Should Be Used?*

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

C. *When to Celebrate the Rite of Sending*

The *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* states that 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 either within a Celebration of the Word of God or within Mass.

Either the anticipated Mass or one of the morning Masses of the First Sunday of Lent makes 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 to celebrate the Rite of Sending since the receiving of ashes imprints a strong penitential character on the liturgy.

i) *The Book of the Elect*

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

(1) **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 the Book of the Elect as witness to their catechumen's name, 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 for full communion, because they are already baptized, do not sign this book, nor do they have their names inscribed in it.*

(2) **When does the signing take place?** *The Book of the Elect 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 in it.

V. Special Concerns

A. Marriages

We must be certain nothing stands in the way of Christian 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 the other rites of Lent and Easter.

If a declaration of nullity has not yet been granted, *do not* include those names on NAMES FOR THE RITE OF ELECTION 2024 included with this guide.

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 the convalidation of a 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 (*i.e.*, Holy Thursday, Good Friday, and Holy Saturday). Contact the Office for Tribunal Services about these and other marriage concerns.

B. Confirmation

Bishop Paprocki will no longer grant the faculty to confirm baptized but uncatechized Catholics at the Easter Vigil or within the Easter Season to priests. Such candidates for the Sacrament of Confirmation are to receive it from the Bishop either at the Pentecost Celebration of the Confirmation of Adults or when their parish *confirmandi* receive the Sacrament.

C. Children of Catechetical Age

Children of catechetical age (*i.e.*, those minors aged seven years and older) belong at the Rite of Sending and at the Rite of Election.

These children are to receive the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and the Eucharist at the Easter Vigil, in the proper order, and during the same liturgy (not at separate times) [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, contact the Office for Divine Worship and the Catechumenate to receive guidance and to request a dispensation from participating in the Rite of Election.

E. The Chrism Mass

Please contact the Office for Divine Worship and the Catechumenate if a catechumen or member of the Elect intends to come to the Chrism Mass so a Rite of Dismissal and Dismissal Prayer following the blessing of the oils and the consecration of the chrism may be prepared. Catechumens and the Elect will return to the assembly at the end of Communion and 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**, March 26, 2024, 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. They are e-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>.

NAMES FOR THE RITE OF ELECTION 2024

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 or are under the care of the same pastor.
- 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.
- Your form should arrive at the Office for Divine Worship and the Catechumenate *not later than February 8, 2023*. Forms may be scanned and sent via e-mail to cbranyan@dio.org or to dzehlne@dio.org. If submitting your form via the United States Postal Service, please bear in mind that it frequently takes two weeks for mail to arrive at the Catholic Pastoral Center.
- 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.
- List the names in alphabetical order by last name. To ensure legibility, please print or affix a label. If more space is needed for additional names, please submit them on a separate page and add them to Names for the Rite of Election 2023.
- Check the appropriate age group box.
- Give the name and mailing address of each catechumen.
- List any special needs a catechumen may have, such as accessibility, sign language, etc.

NAMES OF THOSE RECEIVED BETWEEN EASTER 2023 AND LENT 2024

This form is for listing the names, addresses, and dates of catechumens who celebrated the Sacraments of Initiation apart from the Easter Vigil in the past year.

- Follow the directions on that form.

LETTER OF TESTIMONY FORM 2024

This form is a convenient way for the godparent of each catechumen to put in writing his or her 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 RCIA team, the pastor or parochial administrator, or the sponsor during the catechumenate period.

Please make copies of this form as needed and give it to the godparents, sponsors, and others involved in the formation of the catechumen. 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 **not later than February 8, 2024**. The Office for Divine Worship and the Catechumenate will forward the testimonials on to the Bishop. These forms may be scanned and sent via e-mail to cbranyan@dio.org or dzehnl@dio.org. If submitted these forms via the United States Postal Service, please keep in mind it frequently takes two weeks for items to arrive at the Catholic Pastoral Center.

VII. Preliminary Affirmation and Testimony for Election

At the Rite of Election, the Bishop asks the following questions, which may help you 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:

Has this catechumen...

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

VIII. Other Concerns

If, after having read the above information, you have a question that has not been addressed or for which you like additional clarification, please do not hesitate to contact the Office for Divine Worship and the Catechumenate by calling (217) 698-8500 ext. 109 or e-mail Father Daren Zehnle at dzehnle@dio.org.