



Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown

Office of Christian Initiation
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January 18, 2023

Dear Catechumens and Candidates,

Ash Wednesday, February 22, 2023, will begin the final phase of your formal preparation to celebrate the sacraments of initiation in the Catholic Church at the Easter Vigil and during the Easter Season. On the First Sunday of Lent, February 26, 2023, Bishop Mark L. Bartchak will be the main celebrant at one of the most important Rites of Christian Initiation before you celebrate the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and Holy Eucharist. Your parish team will review this ritual celebration at an RCIA session before the 26th.

On behalf of Bishop Mark, I extend this invitation for you to join him, along with your Godparents and Sponsors, to celebrate the Rite of Election and Enrollment of Names of Catechumens (for those of you to be baptized), and the Call to Continuing Conversion of Candidates (for those of you already baptized). The rituals will be celebrated at 2:00 PM at the Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament, Altoona, and at 7:00 PM at Saint John Gualbert Cathedral, Johnstown. You only to have to be at one of them. Your family is encouraged to also be with you along with members of the RCIA Team and parish members. Bishop Mark will give you an opportunity for photo's after. Everyone is invited to a reception after the celebration.

Bishop Mark cannot meet you personally before February 26, but he would like you to please introduce yourself to him in the form of a simple letter. Please include your full name and the name of the parish of the RCIA process you are participating in. The greeting can simply be "Dear Bishop Mark." Please include a little bit about yourself and a brief reflection of your faith journey and decision to join the Catholic Church. Please share with him only what you are comfortable with. If you have been granted an annulment, please be sure to include that too.

Letters must be postmarked by February 10, 2023 and have your return address, on the envelope so you can receive a letter in response from Bishop Mark before the Rite of Election.

**Please address letters to: Bishop Mark L. Bartchak,
2713 W. Chestnut Avenue,
Altoona, PA 16601**

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Jeanne Thompson,
Coordinator of Christian Initiation