

# Christian Initiation News and Notes

January 2023

**It's that time of year already!**

**The Rite of Election and Enrollment of Names of Catechumens and Call to Continuing Conversion of Candidates** on the First Sunday of Lent, February 26, 2023 will be celebrated at **2:00 p.m.** in the Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament, Altoona and **7:00 p.m.** in Saint John Gualbert Cathedral, Johnstown

Bishop Mark L. Bartchak is the Main Celebrant. All priest and deacons are invited and encouraged to represent their faith communities and accompany the Catechumens and Candidates to the Rites in the Opening Procession.

After the community has expressed their approval based on the testimony of the Godparents and Sponsors, and the Catechumens have given their personal expression of their intention to enter fully into the life of the Church, the Catechumens will enroll their names in the "Book of Life." Bishop Mark in the name of the Church will admit the Catechumens as the Elect as they have been chosen by God. (RCIA, #125)

The already baptized Candidates will also be presented to Bishop Mark at this COMBINED Rite. The immediate preparation for the celebration of the Sacraments of Initiation then begins!

## **RITE OF ELECTION AND CALL TO CONTINUING CONVERSION NOTES**

The necessary forms for February 26 are in this mailing, and will also be on the diocesan website. If you are not the parish RCIA Director or Coordinator designated on the mailing label please notify the Christian Initiation Office ASAP and bring the mail to your parish office so it can be given to the appropriate person.

The lists of Catechumens/Candidates and names are due in the office of Christian Initiation by February 13, 2023. Please use the enclosed forms. If you would like them on a Word document please call or send an email and I will forward them to you. The lists may be returned via fax, scanned/email, or USPS mail.

**Letters to Bishop Mark.** Please make a copy of the Letter of Invitation addressed as Dear Catechumens and Candidates, and give it to them as soon as possible! Please talk about it with them, do not merely hand it out. This is the only way that before February 26 Bishop Mark can be introduced to the men, women, children and youth desiring the initiation sacraments. Their letters give him an appreciation for those who are asking to become full members of the Catholic Church. This is a big deal! **Letters should be postmarked before or by February 10.**

**Liturgical Ministries:** We will be having a full opening procession this year. Every parish/campus will need to supply a banner carrier. Liturgical ministers are needed at both Cathedrals. **Their names are needed by February 10:** 2 readers; 3-4 servers; 1 cross bearer; 2 incense bowl bearers; and lastly, 1 Neophyte or Catechumen to carry the Book of the Elect in the opening procession. Their Godparent/Sponsor can accompany them. Everyone will need to be onsite 45min -1 hour beforehand for practice and directions.

**Music Ministry:** The Directors of Music Ministry will be supplying the Cantor and Psalmist but members of all parish choirs are invited to join the Cathedral Festival Choir to sing.

## **PALM SUNDAY RETREATS: April 1, 2023 and April 2, 2023, Saturday and Sunday of Palm Sunday Weekend**

It is with full intention that the retreats will be held at all three locations this year; State College on Saturday, and Johnstown and Duncansville on Sunday. Holding the retreats at all 3 locations will depend on the numbers. The families of the sponsors/godparents and team members are always welcome to join us.

Catechized Candidates being received into full communion of the Catholic Church outside of the Easter Vigil as well as the already baptized Catholic adult Confirmation Candidates are very welcome and should be invited to attend also.

This year we will be praying *The Pilgrimage Way of the Cross*. Help is needed for the prayer Anointing Service as Readers and we will need many cross bearers of all ages. Everyone attending will be encouraged to participate in the prayer movement. A fuller description will be sent in an additional mailing. We always seek out Witness Speakers and are especially in need of them. Our Neophytes remember their experience and inspiring message for years. Please call or email me soon with names of a young adult or adult who you know has a faith story to share to the Elect and Candidates.

I have enclosed the forms for your information and to encourage attendance. Bishop Mark makes it a priority to spend this prayer time with the Elect and Candidates on this most important day to begin Holy Week. Please encourage full attendance.

## **NEOPHYTE MASS: Saturday, April 22, 2023, 5:00pm Mass at the Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament**

Bishop Mark has made it his special prayer intention to celebrate full Eucharistic sharing with the Neophytes and all those who have entered into Full Communion and completed their initiation as adults in the Catholic Church. The Neophyte Mass is an important element of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults Period of Mystagogy (Post-baptismal Catechesis). Please read *RCIA*, #251.

One reader and 3 altar servers are needed to assist the Cathedral Parish Liturgical Ministers. I will need that information by April 12. A full meal is offered after Mass in the Cathedral Hall for everyone attending.

## **PARISH DIRECTOR/COORDINATORS**

In-person and Zoom Meetings are being scheduled to be held on February 1st and 2<sup>nd</sup> and February 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> for a conversation of the upcoming Season of Lent and more notes on the \*text revisions of the *Christian Initiation Rite of Adults*. The schedule will be sent **via email** next week. If I do not have an accurate email address for you please contact me ASAP.

**\*Order of Christian Initiation of Adults:** we are still waiting for the new USA, English and Spanish text approved by the USCCB in 2019. THE CURRENT RITUAL TEXT IS TO BE USED until we have the new. I have copies in my office for clergy and directors who need them. Please call.

## **DIRECTOR UPDATE FORM:**

I still have not received many of the parish forms as of this date. Please complete and return the form if the Christian Initiation Director/Coordinator has changed in the last 12 months. It is the primary means I have to gather the proper information for mailings and other communications. Please call if you need another form or send an email with the current information. The form is also on the diocesan website. *Thank You!*

## PASTOR INVESTIGATION FORM:

Forms should have been submitted for every catechumen and candidate especially those attending the Rite of Election and Call to Continuing Conversion in 2023. **Please do so as soon as you can.**

I am working on a new form for the Children of Catechetical age and Youth but you may not have it for February. For now, please list the information on a separate sheet with full information of their parent/guardian, date of birth, sacraments and the dates they have already received them, and sponsor/godparent names. Please attach this to their parent(s) forms if they are also in the RCIA process and entering the Church.

## TESTIMONY FOR BAPTISM DETERMINATION FORM

The Testimony for Baptism Determination form is for individuals who have knowledge of their baptism but have no physical evidence of it, i.e. a valid signed and sealed certificate from the parish at the time of the baptism; or a current official certificate acquired from the parish of their baptism.

The form is to be completed by the candidate, their witness, **and** the pastor or administrator. It is to be imprinted with the parish seal and mailed to the Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown in care of the Chancellor, Mrs. Teresa M. Stayer at 2710 W. Chestnut Avenue, Altoona, PA 16601-1720. The form will be approved, sealed and then returned to the parish to be kept as the Baptismal Record. If you need paper copies please email the request and I will send them to your office.

## VALID AND IN-VALID BAPTISM LISTS

Printed copies can be obtained by contacting the Office of Christian Initiation if you do not already have one.

**ALL Forms and the Baptism lists are on the diocesan website.** <https://www.dioceseaj.org/rcia>

**YOUTH PROTECTION:** All paid staff members and volunteers in parishes need to be in compliance with the Diocesan and State requirements. Please call Mrs. Michele Luciano at 814-695-5579, Ext. 2614 to verify your status. **You can access all information and forms on the website: [www.dioceseaj.org](http://www.dioceseaj.org)** Youth Protection.



### DIOCESE OF ALTOONA-JOHNSTOWN

*Mary, Mother of the Church Pastoral Center*

Parish Life Office: Christian Initiation

2713 West Chestnut Avenue

Altoona, PA 16601-1720

**Coordinator:** [Jeanne Thompson](mailto:Jeanne.Thompson@dioceseaj.org); 814-317-2672; [jthompson@dioceseaj.org](mailto:jthompson@dioceseaj.org) Fax: 814-949-8234.

**Website:** [www.dioceseaj.org](http://www.dioceseaj.org), Ministries, Christian Initiation. The office can now accept scanned email attachments.