



Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown

Parish Life Office:
Christian Initiation
925 S. Logan Boulevard
Hollidaysburg, PA 16648
(814) 317-2672; 814-693-9605
Facsimile: (814) 696-9516
jthompson@dioceseaj.org

MEMO

To: Pastors, Deacons, Parish Administrators, Chaplains, and Catholic Campus Ministry Directors and Coordinators of Christian Initiation

From: Jeanne Thompson, Coordinator of Christian Initiation of Adults

Re: Rite of Election of Catechumens, and the Call to Continuing Conversion of Candidates: Letter of Invitation, Name Forms; Articles; 2017 Liturgical Calendar; F.Y.I. Minor Rites Chart

Date: January 6, 2017

Christmas Season will be coming to a conclusion on the Feast of Baptism of the Lord, January 9, 2017. Praise God that we have a longer period of Ordinary Time this year before entering into Lent!

Ash Wednesday is on March 1, 2017. On the First Sunday of Lent, March 5, 2017, the combined Rite of Election and the Enrollment of Names of Catechumens, and the Call to Continuing Conversion of Candidates will be celebrated. (RCIA, #547-#560) In the Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown the celebration of the rituals are scheduled at the two Cathedrals. Bishop Mark L. Bartchak will preside at both. (RCIA, #121)

We began an alternating schedule of sites in 2013. Adjustments are made for groups depending on the proximity of the parish to the Cathedral. The schedule for this year is as follows:

2:00 PM at the Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament, Altoona, for parishes, campuses, and correctional institutions in Bedford, Blair, Centre, Clinton and Huntingdon County;

7:00 PM at Saint John Gualbert Cathedral, Johnstown for parishes, campuses, and correctional institutions in Cambria, Fulton, and Somerset County.

Preparation for this day hinges on proper information from each parish. The required lists of Catechumen and Candidate names are due in the Office of Christian Initiation no later than February 17, 2017. The necessary forms can be returned to the Parish Life Office via fax or email.

Liturgical Ministers are needed for both sites. Please contact me by February 10 if you would like to, or know someone, who would like to participate in the following capacities: Reader (2 are needed), Incense Bearer (2 are needed), Book of the Elect bearer (1 needed- a Neophyte or an Elect preferred), Altar Server (5 are needed- adult and/or youth).

Letters to the Bishop: It is the custom of the Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown that the Catechumens and Candidates write a letter introducing themselves to the bishop prior to the celebration of the Rite of Election. Please copy and give the page of invitation and instruction to each Catechumen and Candidate. All letters need to be postmarked by February 17, 2017 in order to receive a response from Bishop Mark before March 1.

Enclosures:

- Two excellent articles published through TeamRCIA on *Discernment* and *The Rite of Election*. Please read them first and share them with your RCIA teams and groups. You do have Permission to Copy.
- The Minor Rites Charts are for an easy reference for whom is to celebrate what and when. The reference numbers are the corresponding paragraph numbers in the *RCIA* text.

Please consider that the upcoming Easter Vigil may be too soon for some individuals or families to enter the Church. Sometimes spending more time in preparation is a blessing for the catechumens, candidates, their families, and the parish community too. They may want to consider the end of the Easter Season as a goal for the celebration of the initiation sacraments instead of the Easter Vigil.

The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults allows for the ongoing reception of the already catechized and baptized Candidates throughout the Church year. Parishes may even want to consider receiving the already baptized Candidates into the Full Communion of the Catholic Church at a Sunday Mass based on readiness throughout the liturgical seasons and not wait until Easter. These men and women are always invited to attend one of diocesan Palm Sunday Retreats and celebrate with the Neophytes on the last Saturday of April at the Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament, Altoona.

A few important notes:

- Chaplains and Sacramental Ministers for RCIA processes in the State Correctional Institutions are receiving an edited letter of invitation to give to their candidates.
- Men and women who are already practicing Catholics and only need to celebrate Confirmation to complete their initiation, should not intend to fully participate in the Rituals on March 5 as if they were the non-baptized, or previously baptized and non-catechized candidates. Their status should not be confused with those for whom the Rites are intended for. All are graciously welcomed to celebrate as part of the gathered community.
- For the already baptized, un-catechized Catholic candidates: The parish pastor, priest administrator or sacramental minister, who will be confirming these individuals must first be granted the Faculty to Confirm from Bishop Mark. These candidates do have the option to attend a Confirmation Mass in which Bishop Mark is presiding. The full schedule can be found on the diocesan website.
- Men and women who are waiting for canonical penalties to be satisfied, and are aware that they will not be able to celebrate the Sacraments of Initiation in the 2017 Easter Season, should not celebrate the Rite of Election and Enrollment of Names for Catechumens, or the Call to Continuing Conversion of Candidates, on March 5, 2017. However, it is the responsibility of the parish and sponsors that the Catechumens and Candidates continue to feel welcomed.

DIOCESE OF ALTOONA-JOHNSTOWN
The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults
2017 LITURGICAL CELEBRATIONS



**RITE OF ELECTION OF CATECHUMENS AND THE CALL TO CONTINUING
CONVERSION OF CANDIDATES:**

First Sunday of Lent March 5, 2017

2:00 P M - **Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament, One Cathedral Square, Altoona**
(Bedford, Blair, Centre, Clinton and Huntingdon County parishes/campus ministry)

*Reception to follow in the Cathedral Hall

7:00 P M - **Saint John Gualbert Cathedral, 117 Clinton Street, Johnstown**
(Cambria, Fulton, and Somerset County parishes/campus ministry)

*Reception to follow at Saint John Gualbert Activity Center (corner of Railroad & Adams Sts.)

PASSION SUNDAY RETREATS: including gospel prayer, and Anointing of the Elect and Blessing of Candidates by Bishop Mark Bartchak.

Centre/Clinton Counties: **Saturday, April 8, 2017** 9:00 AM - 2:00 PM
Our Lady of Victory Church (Social Hall)
820 Westerly Parkway, State College
Anointing Service at 10:45 AM

Cambria/Somerset Counties: **Sunday, April 9, 2017** 1:00 PM - 5:30 PM
Begins: St. John Gualbert Cathedral, Johnstown (Clinton Street)
Anointing Service at 1:30 PM, **Continues at:** St. John Gualbert
Parish Activity Center (Corner of Railroad and Adams Street)

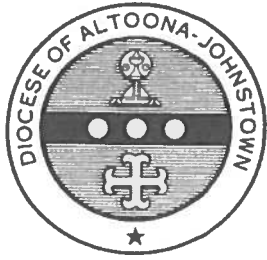
Blair/Bedford/Huntingdon/Fulton counties: **Sunday, April 9, 2017** 2:00 PM - 6:30 PM
St. Catherine of Siena Church
Old Route 22, Duncansville
Anointing Service at 4:45 PM

Those who cannot attend the retreat at the scheduled sites are always welcome to attend at another.

NEOPHYTE MASS OF THANKSGIVING: (based on Bishop Mark's calendar)

Main Celebrant: Most Reverend Mark L. Bartchak
Saturday, April 29, 2017 at 5:00 PM
Vigil Mass of the Fourth Sunday of Easter.
Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament
One Cathedral Square, Altoona

The Neophyte Mass is for all new members of the Church and their families along with their Sponsors and their families, and parish teams. **Dinner to follow in the Cathedral Hall for all who attend.*



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January 16, 2017

Dear Catechumens and Candidates,

The final period of formal preparation for Easter Sacraments this year begins on Ash Wednesday, March 1, 2017. On behalf of Bishop Mark L. Bartchak of the Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown, I extend this invitation for you to join him on the First Sunday of Lent, March 5, 2017, to celebrate the Rite of Election and Enrollment of Names of Catechumens (for those going to be baptized), and the Call to Continuing Conversion of Candidates (those already baptized). The rituals will be celebrated at 2:00 PM at the Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament, Altoona and 7:00 PM at Saint John Gualbert Cathedral, Johnstown.

These rituals of the Catholic Church are the public acceptance by a bishop on behalf of the universal Church, for the Catechumens to begin the immediate preparation stage for the celebration of Baptism, Confirmation, and the Holy Eucharist, and for the Candidates to continue their preparations for entrance in to full communion of the Church. Your sponsor will be with you to declare your intent.

I encourage all of you to ask your family members and those who have been supporting you in a special way to join the parish group in celebration on March 5. Their prayers will also sustain you during the coming weeks of Lent. Please let them know in advance that they are invited to a reception afterwards.

Bishop Mark 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 your decision to join the Catholic Church. Please share only what you are comfortable with. If you write about a previous marriage that ended in divorce, and were granted an annulment, please be sure to write about both.

Letters must be postmarked by February 17, 2017 in order for Bishop Mark to reply before the Rite of Election. Please write your return address, or use a printed return address label on the envelope.
Mail letters to: Bishop Mark L. Bartchak, 927 South Logan Blvd., Hollidaysburg, PA 16648.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Jeanne Thompson,
Coordinator of Christian Initiation

RITE OF ELECTION – March 5, 2017

Attending at the Cathedral in: Altoona or Johnstown (please circle)

The Catechumen(s) (those going to be baptized) from:

(Full name of Parish and Proper City or Town Name)

PASTOR/ADMINISTRATOR
(Complete name w/titles as desired for announcing) (please circle)

DIRECTOR/COORDINATOR
(please circle)

is/are: Please include pronunciation key.

_____ Godparent(s)/Sponsor(s): _____

_____ Godparent(s)/Sponsor(s): _____

_____ Godparent(s)/Sponsor(s): _____

_____ Godparent(s)/Sponsor(s): _____

_____ Godparent(s)/Sponsor(s): _____

_____ Godparent(s)/Sponsor(s): _____

_____ Godparent(s)/Sponsor(s): _____

PARISH BANNERS: The RCIA parish banners are in storage at each of the Cathedrals. The parish does not have to supply their own. If your parish has never participated in the Rite of Election, or has been newly named, please contact the Office of Christian Initiation ASAP.

BANNER CARRIER: Each parish must supply a banner carrier. They should not be a Candidate or Sponsor but can be a youth or an adult. Please check: _____ Yes, we do have a parish banner carrier.

Please inform him/her that there will be a practice beforehand:

Report to: *the work sacristy aisle way at the Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament, Altoona, at 1:15PM
*St. Anne Chapel at St. John Gualbert Cathedral, Johnstown at 6:15 PM

Please return forms by Friday, February 17, 2017 to: **Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown
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Hollidaysburg, PA 16648**

RITE OF ELECTION – March 5, 2017

Attending at the Cathedral in: Altoona or Johnstown (please circle)

The Candidate(s) (the already baptized) from:

(Full name of Parish and Proper City or Town Name)

(Complete name w/titles as desired for announcing) **PASTOR/ADMINISTRATOR**
(please circle)

DIRECTOR/COORDINATOR
(please circle)

is/are: Please include pronunciation key.

Sponsor(s): _____

Sponsor(s): _____

Sponsor(s): _____

Sponsor(s): _____

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Christian Initiation of Adults

Discernment

TeamRCIA.com

“Receive the sign of the cross on your ears,
that you may hear the voice of the Lord.”
Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, 56

Listening to God’s Voice

Hearing and Responding

A big part of becoming and being Catholic is learning to hear God’s voice and responding. Our Scriptures tell us many stories of people hearing God and responding.

Abraham heard God’s voice from an angel, a “messenger” of God, asking him to sacrifice his only son, Isaac. Confused and probably afraid, Abraham responds by trusting God’s voice (Gn 22). Moses heard God’s voice coming from a surprising and unusual source—a burning bush. He responded to this unexpected encounter with the Divine by taking off his shoes and accepting God’s call to set his people free (Ex 3). The Samaritan woman at the well heard God’s voice in the midst of her everyday chores, in an ordinary conversation with a stranger. She responded to Jesus by becoming the first evangelist proclaiming the Good News to her village (Jn 4). And Mary heard God’s voice in an angel with unbelievable and perhaps terrifying news for one so young—she would bear God’s child. She responded in faith with amen, “let it be done” (Lk 1).

Perhaps Adam and Eve’s sin was not just disobeying God but not responding when he called, for when they heard his voice after eating the apple, they hid themselves (Gn 3).

We pray for these your servants who have opened their ears and hearts to your word. Grant that they may grasp your moment of grace (RCIA, 102).

Voices in My Head?

Unlike some of the Scripture stories, however, we will probably hear God’s voice in much more ordinary ways. Most of us will never have an angel appear to us with a divine message from God. Nor will many of us encounter a burning bush or other supernatural revelation of God. More than likely, we’ll hear God the way the woman at the well did—in a simple conversation with another person while doing the simple things we do everyday—or the way Mary did—in an unexpected turn of events.

As Catholics, we believe that God is constantly trying to reveal God’s self to each person, using the ordinary things we experience in our lives to be the “messengers” for God’s word. In our family, friends, and the familiar events of our life, through the stranger and the new experience, and most especially in the poor, the outcast, and those events that shake us to the core, God is trying to say, “Here I am. Listen.”

At critical moments in our lives, God’s voice may be very strong: at the birth of a new family member or at the death of a loved one; when we fall in love, or when we break up; when tragedy happens or when we are overwhelmed by goodness; when we are deciding on a career, a vocation, a life-long partner; when we are hurt, or when we cannot forgive; when we need to choose a new way of life.

When we hear God’s voice, we might feel unsettled or out of sorts. We might feel that we need to do *something*, to make a change or be more resolved. Discovering who God intends us to be (our truest self), what God is asking of us at this moment in our life, and making a decision to act is called discernment.

(continued on next page)

Words to know

assembly: the baptized and catechumens gathered together in prayer, especially for the sacraments

catechumen: Greek, meaning “one in whom word echoes”; one who celebrated the Rite of Acceptance

discernment: from Latin, *discernere*, meaning “to cut away;” a lifelong process for listening and responding to God and being the person God intends us to be

conversion: a lifelong process of seeing and choosing a new path in light of God’s call; an internal process revealed in external practice

dismissal: a sending; catechumens are sent after homily to reflect on God’s Word; the baptized are sent at Mass to “go, love and serve the Lord;” not meant to separate but to enable one’s mission

RCIA: stands for “Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults;” process for becoming Christian

sponsor: a person given as a gift from the Church to catechumens, to serve as their companions who help them discern God’s will for them, share their own faith and discernment, and support them with prayer, guidance, and presence at the rites

Do you remember a time when you heard God’s voice and knew it was God speaking? Where or who did it come from? What did you feel when you heard God’s message for you? How did you respond?

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🗨️ When was the last time something critical or significant happened in your life? What was God communicating to you at that moment?

Discerning God's Call

For Catholics, there are four honored places we listen for God's voice: in Scripture, in our Catholic tradition and teaching, in the Church community, and in our own conscience. Those who are preparing to become Catholics—the catechumens—participate in an on-going process of discernment throughout their preparation, learning to listen for God's voice in these four principle ways. They do this to continue growing in their new faith in Christ and to know when they are ready to take the next step toward initiation into the Church. We who are already baptized serve as models for the catechumens, teaching them by our example how to listen for God's voice each day, especially when we need to make an important decision.

Scripture

The Scriptures reveal who God is and how God relates with his people. The Scriptures project God's voice most clearly when it is proclaimed in the assembly within the liturgy and connected to the real-life stories of that assembly in the homily. In the Gospel, especially, we believe that Christ is speaking directly to us, calling us again to listen and respond.

In a special way, the catechumens listen and respond to God in the Scriptures by "breaking open" the Word. They are dismissed from the Mass with a catechist to "feast" on the Scriptures and homily they just heard—to chew on them, in a sense—and to discover together what God is calling them to do at that moment in their faith journey.

Church Tradition and Teaching

You can't find answers in the Scriptures to every one of life's problems. But you can find Jesus' promise that the Holy Spirit will remain with us always, guiding us, instructing us in everything (Jn 14:26). That Spirit has led our Church through the ages, inspiring saints and holy women and men to hear and

respond to God's voice in their own time and situation. Church tradition is the collective wisdom and presence of that Spirit, showing us how our ancestors interpreted not only Scripture but also the signs of the times through which God was acting.

Church Community

The apostles didn't receive the Spirit as individuals but as a community. We believe that in the faithful, there is a "sense" of what God is calling us to be. When two or three are gathered, God is there. And so learning to hear God's voice is a group exercise. Together we listen for God with those we trust and who know us best—our companions, literally, those we share bread with. Our companions help us to hear and see the things we may be missing. They do this not just by what they say but also by how they live. Catechumens are given special companions called sponsors to help them discern God's voice throughout their journey to initiation.

🗨️ Who are your companions? Who is looking to you be their companion in faith? How can your own actions model for the catechumens a life of listening and responding to God?

Our Conscience

For those with faith, God's word is not far from them—"it is something very near to you, already in your mouths and in your hearts" (Dt 30:14). God's Spirit is in us, guiding our conscience into knowing the path God wants us to take. If after consulting all the other areas of discernment, we still feel uneasy, it may be because our conscience, God's Spirit in us, knows it is not satisfied. But if after true discernment, we feel at peace, even with a hard decision, we can trust that we have listened and responded well to God's voice.

Helped by the example and support of sponsors...and the entire Christian community, the catechumens learn to turn more readily to God (RCIA, 75).

A Process for Discernment

When faced with a difficult decision or turning-point in your life, or you just need to know better where God is leading you at this time, try this process.

Pray daily

Praying is less about saying things to God and more about being still to listen to God. Find a quiet place, and just be still and open to what God is trying to reveal to you. Making the sign of the cross, reading the Bible, or praying the Lord's Prayer may help you focus on being attentive to God.

Participate at Mass

Keep your eyes, ears, mouth, and hands open to encountering God when you participate at Sunday Mass. Read the Sunday readings before you come to Mass. Be present to those around you, especially the stranger. Bring your concerns to prayer in the community. Reflect with others after Mass.

Look to the saints and other holy people

Read about the saints and their writings. Read Scripture stories about our ancestors in faith. Pay attention to people in your church or in your life whom you admire because of their life of faith. Share your faith with them, and let them be your companion and sounding board.

Return to prayer

Be still again in prayer, and listen to the small voice within you. Imagine making your decision, and notice your feelings. Journal about them if it helps. Which decision gives you a sense of peace? Which choice feels right with who God intends you to be? When this peace comes, give thanks to God.

Christian Initiation of Adults

Rite of Election

TeamRCIA.com

“God is always faithful to those he calls.”
Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, 133

Chosen By God

Witnessing God at Work

Our country knows a lot about elections. Each year, we're bombarded with candidates telling us why they would be the best choice for our vote. There's a lot of self-promotion, but not a lot of testimony, at least not in the way the Church thinks of being elected.

In the Bible, we hear many stories of God choosing a person or even an entire people. The Israelites were God's "chosen people." David, the shepherd, was chosen by God to be king of God's people. The angel Gabriel brought Mary the news that she had found favor with God and had been chosen to be the mother of God's Son. And of course, Jesus is called the Messiah, the "chosen one" of God.

It is God who chooses. God takes the initiative and claims a person or a people as his own. Yet God's choice is always witnessed by another. God's choice is witnessed by the Church, God's own people. We know whom God has chosen because we can see God's influence clearly in that person's life. In that person, we see God at work.

Election begins with God and is witnessed by the Church. To be elected means to be chosen by God to be the way God wants to act in the world now. It is one way God continues to be present in our world, and it is how the Church continues to proclaim God's faithful presence to his people today.

When have you felt chosen? What were you chosen to do? Who testified on your behalf that you were the right choice? How did their testimony make you feel?

Chosen for Baptism

When an adult seeks to be baptized, the Church is always looking for signs in that person's life of God at work. Here are some signs we look for: Does the person listen to God's word and respond to it? Have they changed their way of life to match the way of life presented in the Gospel? Do they pray with the Church and do the things the Church does? Do they live a spirit of charity in their family and work life? Have they learned to sacrifice themselves for the good of others? When we see these signs in the person's life, we can affirm that God has chosen them to be baptized.

This discernment, testimony, and election are formally ritualized in the Church's ancient Rite of Election. This rite is the turning point for those who are seeking to be baptized. It is when their months and years of preparation

take the final turn because the Church recognizes that God has chosen them to be baptized at the next Easter Vigil. This rite, which takes place at the beginning of Lent, propels them and the Church into the final preparations for the great Easter celebration. After they celebrate the Rite of Election, the catechumen's baptismal preparation is less like catechesis and more like a retreat. It's a bit like the time before a couple's wedding when their concern is less about getting to know their soon-to-be spouse and more about preparing themselves to make this lifelong commitment.

The Rite of Election has several important symbols and actions that help to communicate the importance of this moment in the life of the Church. Let's look at some of these symbols. If you get to participate in your diocese's Rite of Election, watch for them.

(continued on next page)

Words to know

Book of the Elect: a book that serves as both a record of those elected each year and a symbol of God's chosen people

catechumen: Greek, meaning "one in whom the word echoes"; one who celebrated the Rite of Acceptance

Elect: name given to catechumens chosen by God and affirmed by the Church as ready to celebrate baptism, confirmation, and Eucharist at the next Easter Vigil

election: the formal liturgical act of choosing those who have been called by God to celebrate the initiation sacraments; the election is proclaimed by the Bishop of a diocese

enrollment of names: another name for the Rite of Election; the formal liturgical act of gathering and recording the names of those ready to be initiated at the next Easter Vigil

godparent: a person chosen by a catechumen to be a lifelong companion and mentor in the Christian faith

Rite of Election: a liturgical rite that takes place at the beginning of Lent which formally names those who will be baptized at the next Easter Vigil

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Have you ever prepared for a significant moment in your life? What were the days and weeks beforehand like? How was that time different from your everyday life?

Testimony of the Church

Before the Rite of Election, a parish decides who among their catechumens have shown the signs of readiness for baptism. These catechumens are then asked to choose one or two godparents who will be their lifelong companions in the Christian faith. These godparents go to the Cathedral with their catechumens for the Rite of Election. There, the godparents testify and swear before the Bishop that they have seen God at work in the lives of their companions and therefore they are ready to be initiated into the Church. The Church assembly affirms the godparents' testimony, and the Bishop, on behalf of the Church, accepts the godparents' witness.

Enrolling One's Name

The Bishop then asks the catechumens if they are ready to accept God's election of them as verified by the Church. If they are, they are then to give the Church their names.

Your name is very important. God has called each person by name, and the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* says "the name is the icon of the person" (2158). Your name is sacred. When you give your name, you are giving your life. Those deemed ready to celebrate baptism are asked to give their life to God by giving their name to the Church for enrollment in the list of God's chosen ones. These names are inscribed into a book called the Book of the Elect. Sometimes, the godparents will also put their name in the Book of Elect next to their companion's name as a kind of "surety" or endorsement. These names and books are presented at the Rite of Election.

What does your name mean to you? Do you know how you got your name? Have you ever put your name on something important?

Act of Election

Having received the catechumens' names, the Bishop makes a powerful proclamation: "I now declare you to be members of the elect, to be initiated into the sacred mysteries at the next Easter Vigil." This Act of Election officially gives the catechumens a new name. From then until their baptism at Easter, they will be known as the Elect. They are the ones of whom we speak before Communion: "Happy are those who are called to his supper." The Elect are those called by God to be his own, to be washed in the waters of baptism, anointed by the Spirit in confirmation, and nourished by Christ in the Eucharist.

Handing Over to the Godparents

This is a very subtle but important part of the Rite. The Bishop asks the godparents to place their hands on the shoulders of their Elect. This gesture shows that the Elect are now in their care. The Bishop tells the godparents that they are to support them by their love and example, especially during these final days before Easter. As their first act of care for them, the Church prays for the Elect in intercessions and a final prayer.

Who are your godparents? How have they supported you in your faith? Are you a godparent for someone? How can you help the Elect strengthen their own faith?

All the baptized are God's chosen people. In each of our lives, Christ continues his mission of bringing peace and light into the world. We do this in very simple ways—by living as Christ in our families and in all our daily interactions. The Elect are chosen not simply for baptism but for mission, Christ's mission. The Elect are signs that God is still indeed with us, blessing our world and recreating it with his Spirit.

After the election, [the entire community] should surround the elect with prayer, so that the entire Church will accompany and lead them to encounter Christ. (RCIA 121).

Rite of Election or Enrollment of Names

Gathering Rites

Gathering song
Sign of the Cross and Greeting
Opening Prayer

Liturgy of the Word

(usually taken from the First Sunday of Lent)
First Reading
Psalm
Second Reading
Gospel Reading
Homily

Presentation of the Catechumens

Affirmation by the Godparents (testimony)
Affirmation by the Assembly (testimony)
Invitation and Enrollment of Names
Act of Admission or Election
Intercessions for the Elect
Prayer over the Elect
Dismissal of the Elect

Liturgy of the Eucharist (optional)



Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown

**Parish Life Office:
Christian Initiation**

925 S. Logan Boulevard
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Facsimile: (814) 696-9516
jthompson@dioceseaj.org

January 6, 2017

Dear State Correctional Institution Chaplains, RCIA Directors and Coordinators,

Since 2007, the names of the men in the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults processes in the State Correctional Institutions, who will be celebrating the sacraments of Initiation in the Catholic Church at Easter, have been announced at the Rite of Election and Enrollment of Names of Catechumens, and the Call to Continuing Conversion of Candidates.

The mission of the local Ordinary is to assure the inclusion of all the faithful as members of the Church. With prayerful reflection, careful investigation of Canon Law, and in conversation with the input of the men themselves, it was established that the names of the Catechumens and Candidates, and their sponsors, would be announced amidst the attending parishes, "After the Election, they should surround the elect with prayer, so that the entire Church will accompany them and lead them to encounter Christ." (RCIA #121)

On behalf of Bishop Mark, I am asking that you please help me to continue in this effort to "grow our Church." As members of the Body of Christ, all our potential Neophytes will be one in us through prayer as they prepare to enter into the Communion of Saints, "While the sacraments benefit us as individuals, they also bring life to the entire Church. As members of Christ's body, when we are strengthened as individuals, the family of God is strengthened as a whole. (CCC, #1134)

Please send the list of the Catechumens and Candidates and their sponsors from the S.C.I. by February 17, 2017. One of the Chaplains or representative for the R.C.I.A. process will need to be present on March 5th to announce the names. If no one is able to be at the designated Cathedral then I can perform that task for you.

I am aware that the procedure for the Rite of Election will be different for your circumstance. Please go to the registration table and check-in at least a half an hour before the Rite. You will receive a new copy of the list you sent and a program. There are no banners for the correctional institutions. Please check the order of procession inside the booklet as you will be coming in with the parishes, but not necessarily have to wait in the gathering areas. You can place yourself in the line-up before the Rite begins.

I will announce the Catechumens and after they are declared the Elect by the bishop the RCIA directors will announce the Candidates. The directors/coordinators get in the line to go the microphone according to the program list. In some years the Chaplains have announced the lists of names for one another. If you can please let me know ahead of time what your situation will be, I will be better able to prepare and organize the lists for the registration table.

I know that our diocese is blessed by your ministry at the correctional institutions and that the Body of Christ continues to grow by the conversion and faith of these men and women through the Catholic Church. I hope they know that they are an integral part of the Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown Diocese by your continued presence.

If anyone would want to volunteer to read a reading at either of the celebrations that would be great too. Please let me know soon if you are interested. The additional articles are for you to share with your team, RCIA groups and everyone you feel would benefit from the content.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Jeanne Thompson, Coordinator
Christian Initiation



Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown

Parish Life Office:
Christian Initiation
925 S. Logan Boulevard
Hollidaysburg, PA 16648
(814) 317-2672; 814-693-9605
Facsimile: (814) 696-9516
jthompson@dioceseaj.org

January 15, 2017

Dear Catechumens and Candidates,

You have indeed been blessed by God's grace during your journey to Baptism or Full Communion in the Catholic Church. The Season of Lent, beginning on Ash Wednesday, March 1, 2017, begins the next leg of the journey. The final period of preparation for the sacraments will be celebrated on the First Sunday of Lent, March 5, 2017, with celebrations of the Rites of Election and Enrollment of Names of Catechumens, and the Call to Continuing Conversion of Candidates.

These rituals of RCIA are the public acceptance of a bishop on behalf of the universal Church, for candidates who are preparing to celebrate the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and the Holy Eucharist. Bishop Mark is sensitive to the fact that although you will not be at one of Cathedrals, your names will be announced with those entering the Church through local parishes.

On behalf of Bishop Mark L. Bartchak, I extend this invitation to join him on March 5 in the bond of communal prayer in the Lord Jesus Christ. I encourage all of you as candidates for the sacraments to ask your godparents, sponsors, and those who have been supporting you during this time, to do the same. Our common prayer can be more "food for the journey" especially during the days of Lent leading to Easter when you will become a member of the Body of the Christ, the Church, and a missionary disciple of Jesus Christ in the Communion of Saints.

Bishop Mark is asking that you please introduce yourself to him in the form of a simple letter. This can give you the chance to reflect on your own faith journey. Tell him a little bit about yourself and why you decided to join the Catholic Church, sharing only those things you are comfortable with. The greeting can simply be "Dear Bishop Mark."

Letters should be postmarked by February 17, 2017, to receive a personal reply before March 5, 2017. Please mail to: **Bishop Mark L. Bartchak, Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown, 927 South Logan Boulevard, Hollidaysburg, PA 16648**. Please include your return address.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Jeanne Thompson,
Coordinator of Christian Initiation

Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults: Minor Rites and Formation of Individuals & Groups
UNBAPTIZED inquirers: Catechumens

Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults	Number in 1988 edition	Occasion	Date
Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens	41-74	When candidates show the first signs of conversion, two or three times during the year (18) allowing a year for catechumenate (statutes 6)	Any date may be chosen; <u>it is most appropriate to celebrate this rite on a Sunday during Ordinary Time</u> ; the Sundays of Advent/Christmas/Lent are not normally appropriate.
Celebrations of the Word of God Suitable Catechesis	81-103 67 75.1 National Statute #6	Three possibilities: 1. Special celebrations 2. Sunday Liturgy of the Word at Dismissal 3. Scheduled by parish	Any dates between the parish celebration of Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens and The diocesan Rite of Election allowing one year for catechumenate catechesis/formation
Sending of the Catechumens for Election	106-117	A suitable time prior to the rite of election	Most parishes will choose the Sunday of Election. March 5, 2017
Election and Enrollment of Names	118-137	The First Sunday of Lent at the Cathedral	March 5, 2017 7 PM Saint John Gualbert Cathedral, Johnstown; 2 PM Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament, Altoona
Rites of Scrutiny	141-146 150-156 164-177	Solemn celebrations including minor exorcisms for intense spiritual preparation for the upcoming Easter Vigil	Sundays of Lent during Mass Third: March 19, 2017 Fourth: March 26, 2017 Fifth: April 2, 2017
Presentation of the Creed	147-149 157-163	During the week after the first scrutiny (157)	May also be anticipated (RCIA #104-105) March 19- March 25, 2017
Presentation of the Lord's Prayer	147-149 178-184	During the week after the third scrutiny (178)	May also be anticipated (RCIA # 104-105) April 2 – April 8, 2017
Preparation Rites for Baptism (if possible and with options)	185-205	Immediate preparation for celebration of Sacraments of Initiation of the Elect	During the day on Holy Saturday April 15, 2017
Celebration of the Sacraments of Initiation	206-243	After dark on Holy Saturday or before dawn on Easter Sunday	Easter Vigil April 15, 2017
Mystagogy (Gathering of Neophytes at parish)	244-251	Before or after Masses of Easter, once a month to Anniversary of Baptism, designated days or events; ongoing until natural death.	Formal: 2017 Sundays of Easter: April 16, 23, 30 May 7, 14, 21, 28 Pentecost Sunday: June 4
Mass of Thanksgiving for all Neophytes Diocesan Gathering	249-251	Eucharistic Celebration with Bishop as Presider (designated by Bishop)	Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament, Altoona (Vigil Mass of the Fourth Sunday of April) April 22, 2017

The un-catechized and previously BAPTIZED inquirers: Candidates

Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults	Number in 1988 edition	Occasion	Date
Rite of Welcoming the Candidates	411-433	Two or three times during the year when the candidates are ready (414, 18)	Any date may be chosen; <u>it is most appropriate to celebrate on a Sunday during Ordinary Time</u> ; the Sundays of Advent, Christmas, Lenten seasons normally not appropriate.
Celebrations of the Word of God (Parallel track with Catechumens) Suitable Catechesis	75.1	Three possibilities: 1. Special celebrations 2. Sunday Liturgy of the Word 3. Scheduled by parish	Any dates between the parish celebration of the Rite of Welcoming the Baptized and the diocesan celebration of The Call to Continuing Conversion of Candidates and reception to Full Communion
Rite of Sending the Candidates for Recognition by the Bishop to the Rite of Calling the Candidates to Continuing Conversion	434-458	A suitable time prior to the Rite of Calling	Most parishes will choose the Sunday of Recognition on the First Sunday of Lent March 5, 2017
Rite of Calling the Candidates to Continuing Conversion	446-458	First Sunday of Lent at the Cathedral March 5, 2017	March 5, 2017 7 PM Saint John Gualbert Cathedral, Johnstown; 2 PM Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament, Altoona
Scrutiny for the previously BAPTIZED: Penitential Rite	459-472	Preparation for Sacrament of Penance	Second Sunday of Lent March 12, 2017
Rites of Scrutiny: only for the Elect. Candidates are to participate as members of the assembly.	138-139	Solemn celebrations in period of intense spiritual preparation for the Easter Vigil	Third, Fourth, and Fifth Sundays of Lent
Reception of Baptized Christians into the full Communion of the Catholic Church	473-504	Celebration of Confirmation and Holy Eucharist	Easter Vigil April 15, 2017 Easter Sunday, any Sunday in Easter Season is ideal. April 16 – June 4, 2017
Mystagogy (Gathering of Neophytes at parish)	244-251	Before/after Masses in Easter, once a month to Anniversary of Baptism; designated days or parish liturgical events; ongoing until natural death.	Formal: 2017 Sundays of Easter: April 16, 23, 30 May 7, 14, 21, 28 Pentecost Sunday: June 4
Mass of Thanksgiving for all Neophytes Diocesan Gathering	249&251	Eucharistic Celebration with Bishop as Presider (designated by Bishop)	Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament, Altoona (Vigil Mass of the Fourth Sunday of April) April 22, 2017

Combined Group of the UNBAPTIZED and the Un-catechized, previously BAPTIZED
Catechumens and Candidates

Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults	Number in 1988 edition	Occasion	Date
Rite of Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens and the Rite of Welcoming the Baptized	505-529	When candidates show the first signs of conversion, two or three times during the year (18) as scheduled by parish	Any date may be chosen; <u>it is most appropriate to celebrate on a Sunday during Ordinary Time</u> ; the Sundays of Advent/Christmas/Lent are normally not appropriate
Celebrations of the Word of God Suitable Catechesis	81-103 67 75.1 National Statute #6	Three possibilities: 1. Special celebrations 2. Sunday Liturgy of the Word 3. Scheduled by parish allowing one year for catechumenate	Any dates between parish Acceptance & diocesan Rite of Election; parish celebration of Welcoming and diocesan Call to Continuing Conversion and/or reception of Full Communion
Rite of Sending the Catechumens for Election and Recognition of Candidates	530-546	A suitable time prior to the rite of election and calling (533)	Most parishes will choose the Sunday of Election, or anticipated Vigil Mass March 5, 2017
Rite of Election and Call to Continuing Conversion	547-561	The First Sunday of Lent at the Cathedral March 5, 2017	March 5, 2017 7 PM Saint John Gualbert Cathedral, Johnstown; 2 PM Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament, Altoona
Rites of Scrutiny (for the unbaptized only)	141-146 150-156 164-177	Solemn celebrations during intense period of spiritual preparation for the upcoming Easter Vigil	Sundays of Lent at Mass: Third, Fourth and Fifth March 19, 26 and April 2, 2017
Presentation of the Creed (unbaptized only)	147-149 157 104-105	During the week after the first scrutiny May also be anticipated	March 19- March 25, 2017
Presentation of the Lord's Prayer (unbaptized only)	147-149 178-184 104-105	During the week after the third scrutiny (178) May also be anticipated	April 2 – April 8, 2017
Preparation Rites on Holy Saturday (for unbaptized)	185-205	Holy Saturday with small group of family and parish community	During the day on Holy Saturday April 15, 2017
Celebration of Baptism of the Elect & Reception into Full Communion for the previously baptized	562-594	After dark on Holy Saturday or before dawn on Easter Sunday; or candidates on Easter Sunday or Easter Season Mass	Easter Vigil April 15, 2017
Mystagogy (Gathering of Neophytes at parish)	244-251	Ongoing from time of reception and completion of the initiation sacraments until natural death.	Formal: 2017 Sundays of Easter: April 16, 23, 30, May 7, 14, 21, 28 Pentecost Sunday: June 4
Mass of Thanksgiving for all Neophytes Diocesan Gathering	249 & 251	Eucharistic Celebration with Bishop as Presider (designated by Bishop)	Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament, Altoona (Vigil Mass of the Fourth Sunday of April) April 22, 2017

Persons who are previously BAPTIZED and CATECHIZED

Candidates for Full Communion into the Catholic Church and

Candidates, baptized Catholic who are seeking full initiation in the Catholic Church

Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults	Number in 1988 Study Edition	Occasion	Date
Celebrations of the Word of God	81-103 413	1. Sunday Liturgy of the Word 2. Weekday Mass 3. During Catechetical session	Anytime during Liturgical Year; Seasonal offerings by parish; schedule of sessions within Christian Initiation process
Rite of Welcoming the Candidates (optional)	411-433 478	Two or three times during the year or when the candidates are ready (414, 18)	Any date may be chosen; <u>it is most appropriate to celebrate on a Sunday in Ordinary Time.</u> The Sundays of Advent, Christmas, Lent normally not appropriate.
Suitable Catechesis	473,474,477, 478	Ongoing sessions with catechist and sponsor and/or inclusion with Christian Initiation group	Scheduled as discerned: Suggested minimum of three to six months (length of session time determined by pastor/team)
Penitential Rite (optional) (baptized non-catholic)	459-463	As scheduled within Sunday Mass with candidates, or penance service	Parish schedule; anytime during the year or Second Sunday of Lent March 12, 2017
Sacrament of Reconciliation ALL	482	Prior to profession of faith and Rite of Reception	During weeks of immediate preparation of sacraments; seasonal Penance Service
Rite of Reception into Full Communion (must include Confirmation for non-Catholics except for those of Eastern Rite)	473-504 *notably 483,485 #32 National Statutes	After appropriate Catechesis and discernment, during a parish Mass	Any Sunday may be chosen during the Church year aside from Lent, Holy Week and preferably not the Easter Vigil
Celebration of Confirmation only practicing Catholics Sacrament of Reconciliation recommended	485 Canon 883-885; 889	After appropriate Catechesis and discernment, is conferred by bishop, or with permission of	Sunday Mass of the Church year aside from Lent, Holy Week and preferably not the Easter Vigil. Pentecost Sunday encouraged June 4, 2017
Mystagogy (Formal option) Sundays of Easter, Pentecost Sunday April 16 - June 4, 2107	244-251	Sundays of Easter, all Sunday Masses and sacrament celebrations, rituals and events	Ongoing from time of reception into full communion/celebration of completion of the initiation sacraments until natural death.
OPTIONAL: Annual Diocesan Mass of Thanksgiving for all Neophytes (the newly baptized and received)	251	Eucharistic Celebration with Bishop as Presider (designated by Bishop)	Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament, Altoona (Vigil Mass of the Fourth Sunday of April) April 22, 2017