

Book of the Elect

RITE OF CHRISTIAN INITIATION OF ADULTS

The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) is the Church's ritual process that calls adults to a conversion of mind and heart, preparing them for a full, active life in the Church as disciples of Jesus. It is a long process, by which adults participate in liturgical rites that both mark the progress of their journey and form them more deeply by God's grace.

The RCIA is primarily intended for those who are unbaptized and preparing for the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist.

CATECHUMENS, THE ELECT, AND THE RITE OF ELECTION

The unbaptized are called catechumens. The RCIA period prior to the Easter Vigil, when the initiation sacraments are received, is called purification and enlightenment. During this period, the catechumens are deemed ready for Christian initiation and are formally called to the sacraments of initiation.

The Rite of Election (or enrollment of names), which marks the beginning of the period of purification and enlightenment, usually occurs on or near the First Sunday of Lent. Prior to this liturgy, the parish community sends the catechumens to the cathedral to be "elected" by the Bishop for the sacraments of initiation. The Rite of Election usually takes place in the cathedral, since the cathedral is the "mother church" of the diocese.

Those who participate in the Rite of Election are now called the *elect*. The Church recognizes them as "the elect of God"; those who have been chosen by God—or *elected*—for the sacraments of initiation.

The concept of election comes from the Exodus event. It was in that experience that the Lord chose Israel from among all the people of the earth. Even though all the earth belongs to the Lord, he consciously and deliberately chose Israel from among all his creation as his dearest possession (see Exodus 19:5). From that point on, they were to be known



as *the Lord's people*, his very own. They were his *elect*.

THE BOOK OF THE ELECT

At the heart of the Rite of Election is the enrollment of names, the signing of the *Book of the Elect*, a formal record of the names of those from the parish who have been elected for Baptism. Only the names of the catechumens are recorded in the *Book of the Elect*.

At this rite, the catechumens are called forward by name after the homily. The Bishop asks the godparents and the assembly if they find the catechumens to be ready for initiation. The catechumens then enroll their names by signing the *Book of the Elect*. After all the names have been enrolled, the Bishop elects the catechumens.

In some instances, the catechumens sign the *Book of the Elect* at their parish during the Rite of Sending of the Catechumens for Election. If the *Book of the Elect* has already been signed, it is simply presented to the Bishop during the Rite of Election.

THE BOOK OF THE ELECT AND YOUR PARISH

As the catechumens, now elect, continue their final journey towards the sacraments of initiation, they will need the prayers and support of your entire faith community. Your parish may display the *Book of the Elect* in a vestibule, gathering space, or other appropriate place in the church throughout the season of Lent. Pictures of the elect may also be placed around the book. This helps keep the elect ever on the minds of the assembly. We, as baptized Christians, should pray for the elect.

The elect are a reminder—a model for the baptized of true conversion and transformation in the Lord. They remind us that we, too, are God's chosen ones and that we have been claimed through Baptism. In turn, the baptized are models for the elect of the Christian life to which they aspire.