

The Rite of Election and Call to Continuing Conversion in the Parish

Lent 2021

Due to the ongoing COVID-19 Pandemic, Cardinal O'Malley has delegated to Pastors (and Administrators) the faculty to celebrate the Rite of Election in the parish this year. Though this rite is normally reserved to the Bishop (RCIA, 121), it may, in exceptional circumstances, be delegated for celebration in local parishes. In this document, the Office of Divine Worship aims to provide guidance to Pastors and Administrators who may never or have rarely celebrated this rite on the local level. Please note that the Rite of Election is NOT optional for Catechumens (the unbaptized). It is canonically required for admission to the Order of the Elect.

Ritual Specifics

- **Choice of Rite:** Both the Rite of Election and the Call to Continuing Conversion as well as the combined rite can be celebrated within Mass, or outside of the Mass. Due to the Church's desire that these rites be celebrated with the community of the Christian faithful (see RCIA, 121), it makes the most sense for parishes or collaboratives to use the rites as proposed within Mass. It is recommended to celebrate the rite within one of the currently scheduled Sunday (or Vigil) Masses.
 - **If you have CATECHUMENS ONLY...**(unbaptized persons)
 - Ritual reference for **Rite of Election or Enrollment of Names:** Use RCIA 129-137
 - **If you have CATECHUMENS and CANDIDATES**(baptized) **for Confirmation/Eucharist/Reception into Full Communion...**
 - Ritual reference for **Celebration of the Rite of Election of Catechumens and of the Call to Continuing Conversion of Candidates who are Preparing for Confirmation and/or Eucharist or Reception into the Full Communion of the Catholic Church:** Use RCIA 550-561
 - When using this combined rite within the parish community, "care must be taken to maintain the distinction between the catechumens and the baptized candidates." (RCIA, 549)
 - **If you have CANDIDATES ONLY...** (baptized persons)
 - Ritual reference for the **Rite of Calling the Candidates to Continuing Conversion:** Use RCIA 446-458
- **Ritual Book:** It is preferable, during the liturgy, to use the parish's hardbound RCIA ritual book to celebrate the rite
- **Liturgical Day:** The Rite of Election and/or Call to Continuing Conversion are celebrated on the First Sunday of Lent, this year, February 21, 2021 (or the Vigil Mass on Saturday, 2/20).
- **When during Mass is it celebrated?** Directly following the Homily and before the Preparation of the Gifts

- **What do we need to celebrate these rites?**

- RCIA Ritual Book
- A Book of the Elect
 - Note: Since 2020, the Archdiocese has asked parishes or collaboratives sending Catechumens to the Rite of Election to have their own copy of a Book of the Elect. The Archdiocese has Books of the Elect available for every parish at no cost. We distributed about 75 of them last year, but also know that not every parish has catechumens to send every year, and therefore some parishes may not have needed to request one in 2020. If you still need one, there are two options: 1) Email Tom Lyman at tlyman@rcab.org to request a Book of the Elect and we will mail it to you. Please make this request no later than Friday 2/12 in order for us to mail one, otherwise, we can arrange for you to pick one up in person at the Pastoral Center, 66 Brooks Dr., Braintree, MA 02184 when the building is open, Tuesday- Thursday, 10am-4pm. 2) Order your own Book of the Elect online or by phone from publishers such as LTP, Liturgical Press, or Catholic Book Publishing.
- Pens: enough for each catechumen to take his or her own and deposit in a “used pen” container
- Reserved seating: For each Catechumen and his/her sponsor, and for each Candidate and his/her sponsor. If family members can be safely seated close by, this of course can also be accommodated. Local leaders can decide upon the best system.
- Script for RCIA Director/Catechist/Deacon who will present Catechumens and Candidates to the Pastor: Provided in this document and can be edited according to need. Both the RCIA Director and the Pastor should have their own copy, and the music director should be included as well.
- List of names of all catechumens: Note any special pronunciations as needed. Remember, names of Candidates are not called at all, as they were already “elected” or chosen for membership in the Church at the time of their own Baptism.
- Worship Aid? Ordinarily, a worship aid of some sort would assist both Catechumens and Candidates and all the congregation to participate. This is a judgment call on the part of the local pastor in terms of advisability in the conditions of the ongoing pandemic. At minimum, a pared-down copy of the script with responses to be made would be helpful to those participating in the rite.

- **Who serves in this rite?**

- Pastor (Administrator)
- Someone to present Catechumens and Candidates from the Ambo: This can be the RCIA Director or RCIA Catechist, a Faith Formation Leader, Parochial Vicar, or Deacon
- Music ministers

- **Which vestments are used?**

- Priest and Deacon vest in the usual Violet vestments for the First Sunday of Lent

- **Optional Rite of Sending Catechumens for Election by the Bishop:** This rite is OMITTED this year, since the Bishop has delegated the celebration to Pastors.

Pastoral Considerations

- **Entrance Procession:** During the ongoing pandemic, *only the presider* should process into the church. Catechumens and Candidates should already be seated in their assigned places. Be sure to have them arrive early to do so.
- **Prepare all liturgical ministers:**
 - **Lectors:** Make sure they have the right readings you have chosen, given the options RCIA gives
 - **Music ministers:** Make sure that any additional music is prepared in advance, remembering that sadly, singing by anyone other than the cantor/musician or celebrant is still on hold during the pandemic
 - **Ushers/Seating Volunteers:** Alert them to special seating areas reserved for Catechumens and Candidates and their sponsors. Consider in advance whether additional family members may be seated with them or not. Make sure that you have SEPARATE seating areas for Catechumens and Candidates so that the distinction between the two groups can be maintained.
 - **Godparents/Sponsors:** Please rehearse with them what their role will entail prior to the Mass.
 - **Congregation:** If you use a single-use worship aid, indicate congregational responses , if you wish to use them, such as “We are” found in RCIA 552 or RCIA 131
- **Method of Signing the Book of the Elect:**
 - Plan ahead what method you will use. Consider the placement of a table in the front of the church near the sanctuary where the Book of the Elect may be signed. Plan how to have one pen for single-use for each Catechumen, and a place to collect used pens. Have a volunteer with the Book of the Elect to assist in directing catechumens to sign it.
 - If a **multi-parish collaborative** having a single celebration of the Rite of Election, catechumens from one parish at a time should be called, and should sign their names under a heading listing “St. Mary’s Parish”, and then separately those from “St. Joseph’s Parish”. While the signatures in the Book of the Elect do not have a canonical value like the Baptismal Record, the rite envisions catechumens grouped by canonical parish. These separate lists may be in two columns on the same page for 2021, or on separate pages with the proper parish heading.
 - CANDIDATES for full reception DO NOT SIGN ANY BOOK! Neither are their names called at all.

- **Musical considerations:**
 - Music proper to the First Sunday of Lent is completely sufficient for a Mass including the Rite of Election and Call to Continuing Conversion.
 - Since congregants cannot join in song, it would not be appropriate to invite a sung response following the signing of the book by catechumens, as we normally would. Music ministers are at liberty to consider whether another method would serve this function with the cantor/4 permitted masked singers.
- **Can we have one celebration of the Rite of Election and Call to Continuing Conversion for catechumens and candidates from all the parishes of our Collaborative?** Yes.
- **In our multi-parish collaborative**, both of the Masses where we would normally think to include the Rite of Election are rather full under pandemic restrictions. **Can we have two or three separate celebrations of the Rite of Election to keep within attendance limits?** Yes, this may be the best solution for some communities.
- **Can we celebrate this rite at the Vigil Mass?** Yes
- **We only have Candidates and no Catechumens. Can we celebrate ONLY the Call to Continuing Conversion?** Yes, using RCIA 446-458.
- **Do we have to celebrate the Call to Continuing Conversion?** No, the Call to Continuing Conversion is always optional.

Editable Script for use in the rite

THE RITE OF ELECTION 2021

[Mass begins in the customary way]

[Pastors may address the congregation in these or similar words]

Brothers and sisters, today the Church begins her Lenten pilgrimage to the celebration of the Paschal Mystery of Easter. We are surrounded by Christians throughout the world who gather for the Rite of Election, and here in this Church of Boston we rejoice that so many have heard the call to follow Christ as his disciples in the Catholic Church.

In the coming weeks of Lent, you will celebrate the scrutinies, which are meant to uncover, then heal all that is weak, defective, or sinful in our hearts. From this healing, the Lord will bring out, then strengthen all that is upright, strong, and good in you. May these Lenten scrutinies deepen your resolve to hold fast to Christ and to carry out your decision to love God above all.

[Collect of the First Sunday of Lent is used]

[Liturgy of the Word takes place as usual through the end of the Homily]

CELEBRATION OF ELECTION

RCIA Director: Fr. N. _____, Easter is drawing near, and so these catechumens, whom I now present to you, are completing their period of preparation. They have found strength in God's grace and support in our community's prayers and example.

Now they ask that after the celebration of the scrutinies, they be allowed to participate in the sacraments of baptism, confirmation, and the eucharist.

Pastor: Those who are to be chosen in Christ, come forward, together with your godparents.

[RCIA Director calls the catechumens by name, one at a time.]

Pastor: God's holy Church wishes to know whether these catechumens are sufficiently prepared to be enrolled among the elect for the coming celebration of Easter. And so I speak, first of all, to you their godparents:

Have they faithfully listened to God's word proclaimed by the Church?

- **They have.**

Have they responded to that word and begun to walk in God's presence?

- **They have.**

Have they shared the company of their Christian brothers and sisters and joined with them in prayer?

- **They have.**

And now I speak to you, my brothers and sisters in this assembly: Are you ready to support the testimony expressed about these catechumens and include them in your prayer and affection as we move toward Easter?

- **We are.**

And now, my dear catechumens, I address you. Your own godparents and teachers, and this entire community have spoken in your favor. The Church in the name of Christ accepts their judgment and calls you to the Easter sacraments.

Since you have already heard the call of Christ, you must now express your response to that call clearly and in the presence of the whole Church.

Therefore, do you wish to enter fully into the life of the Church through the sacraments of baptism, confirmation, and the eucharist?

- **We do.**

Then offer your names for enrollment.

[RCIA Director calls out the name of each Catechumen, if from separate parishes, then calling out all Catechumens from one parish first, then the second (or third).]

[The catechumens sign the Book of the Elect]

Pastor: I now declare you to be members of the elect, to be initiated into the sacred mysteries at the next Easter Vigil.

The music ministers may sing one verse of a hymn recognizing this moment, such as Amazing Grace, or Praise the Lord for He is Glorious (Ode to Joy).

After the singing is completed, the Pastor continues:

Pastor: God is always faithful to those he calls: now it is your duty, as it is ours, both to be faithful to him in return and to strive courageously to reach the fullness of truth, which your election opens up before you.

Godparents, I now ask you to place your hand on the shoulder of the catechumen whom you are receiving into your care. Dear godparents, you have spoken in favor of these catechumens: accept them now as chosen in the Lord and continue to sustain them through your loving care and example, until they come to share in the sacraments of God's life.

RCIA Director: The elect are kindly invited to return to their seats, together with their godparents.

CELEBRATION OF THE CALL TO CONTINUING CONVERSION

RCIA Director: Fr. N. _____, I now present to you the candidates who seek to complete their Christian initiation and those who are preparing to be received into the full communion of the Catholic Church. They too have found strength in God's grace and support in our community's prayers and example.

Now they ask that after this Lenten season, they be admitted to confirmation and the eucharist.

Pastor: Those who desire to participate fully in the sacramental life of the Church, come forward, together with your sponsors.

[The candidates are called forward—but NOT by name. If they come from different parishes within a collaborative, they should be called in separate groups according to Parish, for example: "Candidates from St. Mary's Parish....Candidates from St. Joseph's Parish..."]

Pastor: The Christian life and the demands that flow from the sacraments cannot be taken lightly. Therefore, before granting these candidates their request to share fully in the Church's sacraments, it is important that the Church hear the testimony of their sponsors about their readiness.

Have they faithfully listened to the apostles' instruction proclaimed by the Church?

- **They have.**

Have they come to a deeper appreciation of their baptism, in which they were joined to Christ and his church?

- **They have.**

Have they reflected sufficiently on the tradition of the Church, which is their heritage, and joined their brothers and sisters in prayer?

- **They have.**

Have they advanced in a life of love and of service to others?

- **They have.**

And now I speak to you, my brothers and sisters in this assemble: Are you ready to support the testimony expressed about these candidates and include them in your prayer and affection as we move toward Easter?

- **We are.**

Dear Candidates, the Church recognizes your desire to be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit and to have a place at Christ's Eucharistic table. Join with us this Lent in a spirit of repentance. Hear the Lord's call to conversion and be faithful to your baptismal covenant.

[Music ministers may make a sung response, such as one verse of an appropriate hymn.]

Pastor continues: Sponsors, I now ask you to place your hand on the shoulder of the candidate whom you are receiving into your care. Sponsors, continue to support these candidates with your guidance and concern. May they see in you a love for the Church and a sincere desire for doing good. Lead them this Lent to the joys of the Easter mysteries.

RCIA Director: Candidates are kindly invited to return to their seats, together with their sponsors.

[An instrumental interlude may accompany the candidates returning to their seats.]

INTERCESSIONS FOR THE ELECT [AND/OR THE CANDIDATES]

Pastor: My brothers and sisters, in beginning this period of Lent, we look forward to celebrating at Easter the life-giving mysteries of our Lord's suffering, death, and resurrection. These elect [and candidates] [or "These candidates..."], whom we bring with us to the Easter sacraments, will look to us for an example of Christian renewal. Let us pray to the Lord for them and for ourselves, that we may be renewed by one another's efforts and together come to share the joys of Easter.

[These are found at RCIA 134, or RCIA 558 for the combined rite, or RCIA 455 for the Call to Continuing Conversion alone. In choosing intercession, parishes have the flexibility to add some of their own usual prayers of the faithful to these offered in the RCIA ritual book.]

*After the intercessions, with HANDS OUTSTRETCHED,
Pastor continues:*

Lord God,
you created the human race
and are the author of its renewal.
Bless all your adopted children
and add these chosen ones
to the harvest of your new covenant.
As true children of the promise,
may they rejoice in eternal life,
won, not by the power of nature,
but through the mystery of your grace.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.
AMEN.

Dismissal of the Elect

[There are three options: A & B are used if you normally dismiss the Elect prior to the Liturgy of the Eucharist; C is used if the Elect stay for the Liturgy of the Eucharist]

A. The celebrant dismisses the elect in these or similar words.

My dear children, you have set out with us on the road that leads to the glory of Easter. Christ will be your way, your truth, and your life. Until we meet again for the scrutinies, walk always in his peace.

The elect: Amen.

B. *As an optional formulary for dismissing the elect, the celebrant may use these or similar words.*

My dear friends, this community now sends you forth to reflect more deeply upon the word of God which you have shared with us today. Be assured of our loving support and prayers for you. We look forward to the day when you will share fully in the Lord's Table.

C. *If for serious reasons the elect cannot leave (see RCIA 75.3) and must remain with the rest of the liturgical assembly, they, along with the candidates, are to be instructed that though they are present at the Eucharist, they cannot take part in it as the Catholic faithful do. They may be reminded of this by the celebrant in these or similar words.*

Although you cannot yet participate fully in the Lord's eucharist, stay with us as a sign of our hope that all God's children will eat and drink with the Lord and work with his Spirit to re-create the face of the earth.

[Separate, standard Prayers of the Faithful as well as the Creed may be omitted for pastoral reasons]

[Liturgy of the Eucharist begins]