

Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults
The RCIA Process

--by Vickie Shepherd

Purification and Enlightenment
The RCIA Process

The period of Purification and Enlightenment usually starts the first Sunday of lent and ends with Easter Vigil. Lent is a time to prepare ourselves spiritually through repentance to celebrate the paschal mystery. We spend Lent “thirsting” for the waters of Baptism, whether you are anticipating baptism or have already been baptized.

During Lent you will be more spiritually centered, preparing to share in the Eucharistic banquet on Easter Vigil night.

Purification, enlightenment, sin, and grace; we don't have to look far into our conscience to know that we are sinners. Our souls long to have the darkness of sin expelled. That is where God's saving grace comes in, enlightenment of the soul. The light illuminates the darkness. This will be a time for you to discuss the sacrament of reconciliation in more detail with your group. Our God is a forgiving Father. He has experienced being human through His son Jesus. He has sacrificed His only son for the forgiveness of our sins. In the sacrament of reconciliation we are given a chance to seek forgiveness, renew our broken relationship with God and to repent or change what was sinful and walk in the footsteps of Jesus. The rites you will experience during this period of the RCIA are the penitential rite, which is for the candidates, the anointing of the catechumens, the scrutinies, the rite of exorcism, and the presentations.

The anointing of the catechumens can take place at any time during the catechumenate period including the period of purification and enlightenment. It may also be celebrated several times if needed or preferred. In our parish we have this ritual before the first scrutiny. This anointing will help strengthen the catechumen with Gods grace during this intense period of examination. The scrutinies (the penitential rite is done the second Sunday of lent) are done on the third, fourth, and fifth Sunday of lent. The readings for these scrutinies are from the cycle year A. The Samaritan woman is read on the third Sunday, the man born blind is read on the fourth Sunday, and the story of Lazarus is read on the fifth Sunday.

The priest or deacon usually celebrates the Rite of exorcism (minor). They have learned from the church as their mother, the mystery of deliverance from sin by Christ. The presentations of the

creed and the Lords prayer usually take place after the scrutinies. They can also be done during the catechumenate period for pastoral reasons. These ancient texts express the beliefs we hold true as catholic Christians. We are handing on our tradition to those who are going to be “reborn” through the water and the spirit. You will join us for the first time in reciting these prayers at the Easter Vigil mass. This period ends on Holy Saturday night as you are initiated fully into the Catholic Church and into the Body of Christ!

The Challenge

To renounce Satan is not to reject a mythological being in whose existence one does not even believe. It is to reject an entire worldview made-up of pride and self-affirmation, of that pride which has truly taken human life from God and made it into darkness, death and hell. And one can be sure that Satan will not forget this renunciation, this rejection, this challenge. A war is declared! A fight begins whose real issue is either eternal life or eternal damnation. For this is what Christianity is about! This is what our choice ultimately means!

--Alexander Schmemmann

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