

Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults **The RCIA Process**

--by Vickie Shepherd

Rite Of Sending **The RCIA Process**

This rite and the Rite of Election go hand in hand within the process of the Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults. Unless you live in the Cathedral Parish or something similar within your diocese, where the Bishop will come and receive you in the Rite of Election; you will experience the Rite of Sending. These two rites are all about sending you for a reason, receiving you and returning you to the parish in anticipation of Easter Sacraments in a few short weeks. In many diocese the Rite of Sending may be celebrated on the same day or weekend as the Rite of Election. I believe the Rite of Sending is better celebrated the weekend before the catechumens and candidates actually go to the Rite of Election. It gives everyone involved time to reflect on what the rite is actually about. The fact that there is so much going on within both rites can become so overwhelming for the candidates, that they miss out on much of the symbolism we are using to assist in spiritual inspiration. These symbols should create in them the Spirit-driven need to seek and find the love and peace of Jesus in their lives. As you probably know by now, I am an advocate of symbolism. The heart of any rite is how the symbols are presented and received by you. What would be the use of doing something and not having a response or reaction that would move you to want to continue to seek the love of God?

Each rite you celebrate is a passing from one way of understanding the Christian life to another more discerning, zealous approach to the life in Christ you are seeking. I feel that each rite has its place in reminding you of the last rite you have passed from and builds to a new height and natural progression, of your conversion experience. Remember the Rite of Acceptance you celebrated a few months ago? This Rite of Sending echoes the steps of that experience while building up to a new more heightened experience. In the Rite of Acceptance, remember:

Standing at the church doors and knocking as
The doors were opened wide for you to enter?
You were accepted into the body of Christ,
Being introduced to the new community by
Your sponsor and becoming a part of this
Parish community, as you Embraced the
Word of our Lord, as well as accepting His
Cross. You then promised to walk in the
Light of Christ and inspiration of the Holy Spirit

Once again you find yourself standing before the parish community in which you have become a “vital part” of Christ’s body. Now is the time your sponsor/godparent and the parish community must give their testimony that you have experienced true conversion of faith and attest to your commitment to the Catholic community.

What does it mean, “to be sent”?

Each week during the Catechumenate period you have been dismissed from the general assembly to further reflect upon the word of God and the homily. You are disciples of Christ in a period of intense training. During this training you are *sent* to receive Christ through the word. He has left a message for us to use in our daily lives, and to share with others. When the others at Mass are dismissed to go out into the world to love and serve the Lord, you are also *sent* forth to do the same. This is a time you can put what you have learned into practice. The song that tells the world; “they will know we are Christians by our Love” is a great testament to your life in Christ.

At the Rite of Sending we are preparing to send you to meet with the Bishop who will receive you at the Rite of Election. The Rite of Election is a testimony of your faithfulness to this process in the past year or so. You will never be asked to stand alone. You will have your sponsor, team and community members who have been asked to accompany you on this part of your journey. So as you continue on this “road” we send our experienced disciples along with you, our “disciples in training”. It is their mission to let the Church know that you are ready to be in full communion with the Catholic Community. Another integral part of this ceremony is the signing of the book of the elect. As you sign this book you will seal your covenant with God. Just as you were signed with His cross in the last rite, you are now signing with Him in a promise to know, love and follow Him throughout your life. As the bishop signs this same book in the Rite of Election, he is receiving you into our family of Christ. You are now called the “elect” and have been elected to receive the sacraments of initiation at the Easter Vigil mass. Welcome to the family!

* I would like to let you know that these articles are my experience and personal feelings about the Rites you will be experiencing for yourself. It is based on the material I mentioned in each article and there are many books and articles written by experts in this field. I will research these and make a list for you. The webmaster has kindly put up sites that you may access from some of these experts, especially the North American Forum on the Catechumenate. I have been the co-ordinator of my parish RCIA process for 3 years now, and a team member for the past 15 years in my parish. I have seen many changes in the past and I am sure I will experience many in the future. This RCIA webpage is my experience as I reflect on the recent past. ~Vickie

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