



# THE 2024 SPRING GUIDE *to the* RITE OF CHRISTIAN INITIATION



## *RITE of* **ACCEPTANCE**

—  
Before the  
beginning of Lent  
(Ash Wednesday  
February 14, 2024)

## *MASS of* **SENDING**

—  
Sunday morning,  
**February 18, 2024**

## *RITE of* **ELECTION**

—  
**Sunday, February 18**  
4:00PM  
St. Augustine  
Cathedral,  
Bridgeport, CT

## *The* **SCRUTINIES**

—  
The 3rd, 4th & 5th  
Sundays of Lent:  
**March 3, 2024**  
**March 10, 2024**  
**March 27, 2024**

## **SACRAMENTS** *of* **INITIATION**

—  
Easter Vigil  
Saturday  
**March 30, 2024**

*Pastors should notify the Institute for Catholic Formation with their intention to send candidates to the Rite of Election.*

## **RITE of ACCEPTANCE**

In this rite, those who have never been baptized state their intention to respond to God's call to follow the way of Christ. The Church, in turn, accepts them into the Order of Catechumens (a Greek word meaning 'hearers'). "From this time on, the Church embraces the catechumens as its own, with a mother's love and concern. Joined to the Church, the catechumens are now part of the household of Christ, since the Church nourishes them with the word of God and sustains them by means of liturgical celebrations" (RCIA, 47).

As this rite begins, those who wish to enter the order of catechumens are received at the doors of the Church. An ancient dialogue follows. The priest, representing the entire Church, asks, "What do you ask of God's Church?" They respond: "Faith." "What does faith offer you?" "Eternal life." At the heart of this rite is the signing of the senses of the catechumens with the cross. Their forehead, ears, eyes, lips, heart, shoulders, hands, and feet are all marked with the sign of the Cross.



## DISMISSALS

Each Sunday, the catechumens are dismissed following the homily Mass. With a leader, they go to spend time in meditation and prayer on the readings of the day. This immersion in the word of God is a primary part of their preparation and formation.

"My 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 at the Lord's table. Go now in the peace of Christ."

## RITE of ELECTION

After long months of formation and preparation, as the season of Lent begins, the catechumens gather with the Bishop, other catechumens, pastors, and RCIA teams of many other parishes. During this rite, the catechumens formally declare their wish to enter fully into the life of the Church through baptism, confirmation, and Eucharist, and write their names in the Book of the Elect.

On the basis of the testimony of sponsors and catechists, the Bishop, representing the entire Church, admits the catechumens to the Easter sacraments of initiation: "I now declare you to be members of the Elect, to be initiated into the sacred mysteries at the next Easter Vigil. Now it is your duty, as it is ours, to be faithful to God and to strive courageously to reach the fullness of truth that your election opens up before you.

## SCRUTINIES

Celebrated on the 3rd, 4th, and 5th Sundays of Lent, the Scrutinies are intended to deliver the Elect from the power of sin, to protect them against temptation, and to give them strength in Christ, who is the way, the truth, and the life. Through prayers and ritual action, the Elect acknowledge their faults.

From one of the Scrutiny prayers: "Father of mercies... look with love on these Elect and fulfill their hopes; they have already experienced temptation, and they acknowledge their faults. Lead them from darkness into your unfailing light, cleanse them from sin, let them know the joy of your peace, and guide them safely through life."

## The SACRAMENTS of INITIATION

At the Easter Vigil, the Elect receive the sacraments of initiation--baptism, confirmation, and Eucharist. By baptism, they are received into the royal priesthood of believers; by confirmation, they receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, and share in the outpouring of grace that came upon the apostles at Pentecost. They then receive the Eucharist, sharing for the first time in the body and blood of Christ, the heavenly food that strengthens us to carry out Christ's work in our own time and place. For our Elect, the sacraments of initiation are not the end, but the beginning of new lives of faith and service.

## What About Confirmation Only?

If someone comes forward who is a practicing Catholic, over 18, and only lacks Confirmation, what is a parish to do? For some, the answer is to include that person in the traditional RCIA meetings. But the Rite itself indicates that this is not where these candidates belong. A person in this position should actually receive formation separately, specific to the sacrament of Confirmation. If your parish is not in a position to offer such formation, please consider inviting these candidates to the HYBRID (online and in person) program for Adult Confirmation Session on MARCH 23, 2024 from 9-12 at The Catholic Center in Bridgeport. Registration and further information available at <https://formationreimagined.org/event/adult-confirmation-march-2024/>