

Diocese of Covington
RCIA Policies and Guidelines Manual
Purification and Enlightenment

XI. Purification and Enlightenment

- A. After the rite of election, the elect now move into this period of more “intense spiritual preparation for the sacraments of initiation” (RCIA, no. 138) to be celebrated at the upcoming Easter Vigil. This time, usually coinciding with Lent, is focused more on “interior reflection than catechetical instruction, and is intended to purify the minds and hearts of the elect as they search their own consciences and do penance.” (RCIA, no. 139) The candidates, who have been called to continuous conversion, may join with the elect in this period as a way to enter into Lenten purification and prepare for coming into full communion with the Catholic Church. Through this period and especially in the celebration of certain rites, including the scrutinies and penitential rite, the presentations of the Creed and Lord’s Prayer, and the preparation rites on Holy Saturday, the elect are enlightened with a “deeper knowledge of Christ the Savior” (RCIA, no. 139) and a burning desire to commit their lives to Him. This period ends with the preparation rites on Holy Saturday.
- B. **Pastoral Aspect** – The main focus of this period rests on the elect and candidates deciding to leave behind their old way of living to embrace life in Christ within the Catholic Church. During this period, the elect and candidates may experience doubt and discouragement, requiring close support and care from the community.
1. The godparents and sponsors of the elect and candidates should be present at all the rites and sessions of this period to support them in their final preparation.
 2. The pastor, RCIA leader, godparents, and sponsors, along with the whole Catholic community should be attentive to the needs of the elect and candidates and be prepared to talk with them and spend time with them as needed.
 3. Opportunities for entering into the season of Lent with the whole community should be offered and encouraged. Some examples are:
 - a) Lenten fasting
 - b) Opportunities for almsgiving or other acts of charity or service (e.g., soup kitchens, outreach centers, inner city schools, etc.)
 - c) Prayer opportunities (e.g., Stations of the Cross, Lenten penance service)

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- C. Catechetical Aspect** – The focus of catechesis shifts in this period to one of spiritual preparation for the Sacraments of Initiation and reception into the Church. Themes of repentance and holiness encourage the elect to reflect on God’s love for us, his faithful care for us, and our need to turn to him. Catechesis in this period should deepen within the elect and candidates the resolve to “hold fast to Christ and to carry out their decision to love God above all.” (RCIA, no. 141)
1. Catechetical session themes in this period should include:
 - a) The mystery of sin and the power of darkness
 - b) Purification of heart and mind (conscience, self-denial and penance, conversion)
 - c) The healing effects of God’s mercy
 - d) Recognition of Christ’s presence in daily life
 - e) Obedience to God, being conformed to Christ’s suffering
 - f) Prayer
 2. Catechesis should focus on Christ the Savior and the events of the Paschal Mystery – Jesus’ Passion, Death, Resurrection, and Ascension. (RCIA, nos. 138, 139)
 3. Care should be taken to catechize the elect and candidates regarding the meaning of the various rites that will be celebrated during this period.
 - a) All RCIA participants should be instructed regarding the meaning of the scrutiny rites and why a separate penitential rite is celebrated for the baptized candidates. “Because the prayer of exorcism in the three Scrutinies. . . properly belongs to the elect and uses numerous images referring to their approaching baptism, those scrutinies of the elect and [the] penitential rite for those preparing for confirmation and eucharist have been kept separate and distinct.” (RCIA, no. 463)
 - b) The elect should be prepared in advance for the scrutinies. In these rites the Church prays that the elect will receive divine assistance that will inspire in them a desire for purification by allowing the light of the Holy Spirit to lead them to scrutinize themselves and come to repentance.

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- (1) Through the scrutiny rites, the elect should “progress in genuine self-knowledge through serious examination of their lives and true repentance.” (RCIA, no. 142) They should be aware that the scrutiny rites are an opportunity to “progress in their perception of sin and their desire for salvation.” (RCIA, no. 143)
- (2) The scrutinies are “reinforced by an exorcism” (RCIA, no. 141), by which the elect are “freed from the effects of sin and from the influence of the devil.” (RCIA, no. 144)

D. Liturgical Aspect – The rites belonging to this period include the penitential rite (for baptized candidates), the scrutiny rites, the presentation of the Lord’s Prayer, the presentation of the Creed, and the preparation rites on Holy Saturday.

1. The penitential rite “can serve to mark the Lenten purification of baptized but previously uncatechized adults who are preparing to receive the sacraments of confirmation and eucharist or to be received into the full communion of the Catholic Church.” (RCIA, no. 459)
 - a) **The penitential rite is celebrated *only for the baptized candidates*. It is not to be celebrated for those who are not yet one with the Church in Baptism.**
 - b) The penitential rite “may be celebrated on the Second Sunday of Lent or on a Lenten weekday”. (RCIA, no. 462) If the candidates are to be received into full communion and receive the sacraments of Confirmation and Eucharist at a time other than the Easter Vigil, then the rite may be celebrated “at the most suitable time.” (RCIA, no. 462)
 - c) The penitential rite “may also help to prepare the candidates to celebrate the sacrament of penance.” (RCIA, no. 461)
2. “The Scrutinies are meant to uncover then heal all that is weak, defective, or sinful in the hearts of the elect; to bring out, then strengthen all that is upright, strong, and good.” (RCIA, no. 141) Instructions regarding the celebration of the scrutinies can be found in the RCIA ritual numbers 141 – 146 (general), 150 – 156 (First Scrutiny), 164 – 170 (Second Scrutiny) and 171 – 177 (Third Scrutiny). A few important points follow:

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- a) The scrutinies are celebrated *only for the unbaptized elect*. They are not to be celebrated for those who are already one with the Church in Baptism.
- b) There are three scrutiny rites. All three should be celebrated for all of the elect. These are not optional rites and are proper to the period of purification and enlightenment.
- c) The scrutiny rites are “solemnly celebrated on Sundays” (RCIA, no. 141) and “should take place within the ritual Masses ‘Christian Initiation: The Scrutinies’, which are celebrated on the Third, Fourth, and Fifth Sundays of Lent” (RCIA, no. 146). The Ritual Mass for the Scrutinies can be found in the Roman Missal Ritual Mass #2 a, b, & c on page 1121. (RCIA, no. 146 for circumstances where the period of purification and enlightenment takes place outside of Lent.)
- d) At the Masses when the scrutiny rites are celebrated, “the readings with their chants are those given for these Sundays in the Lectionary for Mass, Year A.” (RCIA, no. 146). This means that regardless of the current lectionary cycle, the Year A readings are always used at the scrutiny Masses.
- e) Special “intercessions for the elect” (RCIA, no. 145) are prayed at the scrutiny Mass. Two options are given in the ritual (RCIA, no. 153). The ritual also allows for them to be “adapted to fit various circumstances” (RCIA, no. 153) which allows for intercessions which are adapted to the specific needs of the elect.

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3. In the presentations of the Creed and the Lord's Prayer the Church entrusts to the elect "the ancient texts that have always been regarded as expressing the heart of the Church's faith and prayer." (RCIA, no. 147)
 - a) Instructions regarding the presentation of the Creed can be found in the RCIA ritual book, nos. 157 – 163.
 - b) Instructions regarding the presentation of the Lord's Prayer can be found in the RCIA ritual book, nos. 178 – 184.
 - c) The presentations normally take place during this period of purification and enlightenment, but "for pastoral advantage and because the period of purification and enlightenment is rather short, the presentations may be held during the period of the catechumenate." (RCIA, no. 104) If this is the case, take care to substitute the word *catechumens* for *elect* in all formularies. (RCIA, nos. 104 & 105)
4. The preparation rites on Holy Saturday are intended as proximate preparation for the celebration of the Sacraments of Initiation. A suggested time for these rites would be the morning of Holy Saturday, which will set the tone for the day. There is some pastoral flexibility regarding which of these rites are celebrated based on the particular circumstances (RCIA, no. 186). Instructions regarding these rites can be found in the RCIA ritual book, nos. 185 – 205.
 - a) **The recitation of the Creed, *ephphatha* rite, and choosing of a baptismal name are all to be celebrated *only by the unbaptized elect.***
 - b) Baptized candidates may be present at the celebration of the preparation rites to pray with and for the elect.
 - c) At the conclusion of the preparation rites the entire group (elect, candidates, sponsors and godparents) may remain together as a group to prepare for the Easter Vigil. Some possible activities during this time may include:
 - (1) a brief catechesis on the Liturgy of Light and the Paschal candle;
 - (2) a reflection on Christ as the light of world (how spreading the light from the Paschal candle to the individual candles symbolizes spreading the light of Christ in the world);

