

# ***Coming Home: Period of Purification & Enlightenment, Sacraments of Initiation, and Period of Mystagogy - Preparing for the Life of Grace***

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## RCIA 139

**This is a period of more intense spiritual preparation, consisting more in interior reflection than in catechetical instruction, and is intended to purify the minds and hearts of the elect as they search their own consciences and do penance.**

**This period is intended as well to enlighten the minds and hearts of the elect with a deeper knowledge of Christ the Savior. The celebration of certain rites, particularly the scrutinies and the presentations, brings about this process of purification and enlightenment and extends it over the course of the entire Lenten season.**

# Period of Purification and Enlightenment

- ▶ **What spiritual preparation during this period means – with ideas for interior reflection and appropriate instruction.**
- ▶ **What is intended by giving the Elect – and the Candidates – a deeper knowledge of Christ the Savior?**
- ▶ **A look at the celebration of the Minor Rites during this period; the Scrutinies – for the Elect, the Penitential Rite and Celebration of Reconciliation – for Candidates, and the Presentations of the Creed and the Our Father – for the Elect, and in some instances, also for Candidates – we will see how this is discerned.**

# RCIA 120

**“Before the Rite of Election is celebrated, the catechumens [and candidates] are expected to have undergone a conversion in mind and in action and to have developed a sufficient acquaintance with Christian teaching as well as a spirit of faith and charity.**

**With deliberate will and an enlightened faith they must have the intention to receive the sacraments of the Church, a resolve they will express publicly in the actual celebration of the rite.”**



**So - Before the Rite of Election and Call to Continuing Conversion, participants should manifest:**

- ✓ **A Conversion in Mind and in Action**
- ✓ **A Sufficient Acquaintance with Christian Teaching**
- ✓ **A Sufficient Acquaintance with Faith and Charity**
- ✓ **An Intention and Desire to receive the Sacraments**

# Liturgical Aspect during Purification & Enlightenment

## ***For the Elect...***

- ▶ **The Scrutinies: (n.20, 141-146)**
- ▶ **1<sup>st</sup> Scrutiny - 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Lent (n.150-156)**
- ▶ **2<sup>nd</sup> Scrutiny - 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Lent (n.164-170)**
- ▶ **3<sup>rd</sup> Scrutiny - 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Lent (n.171-177)**
- ▶ **The Presentations: (n.21, 147-149)**
- ▶ **Presentation of the Creed – 3<sup>rd</sup> week of Lent (n.157-163)**
- ▶ **Presentation of the Lord's Prayer – 5<sup>th</sup> week of Lent (n.178-184)**

## ***For Candidates:***

- ▶ **The Penitential Rite: 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Lent (n.459-472)**
- ▶ **Presentations can also be done with some candidates as appropriate**
- ▶ **The Sacrament of Reconciliation is celebrated prior to the Easter Vigil (n. 482, Ap. II, N.27, 36)**

# Pastoral Aspect During Purification & Enlightenment

- ▶ The faithful are “to give good example to the elect and along with the elect to prepare themselves for the Easter solemnities.” (n.125)
- ▶ “After the election, the [clergy, sponsors, team, and parish] should surround the elect with prayer so that the entire Church will accompany and lead them to encounter Christ.” (n.121)
- ▶ “[The elect] are expected particularly to progress in genuine self-knowledge through serious examination of their lives and true repentance.” (n.142)

# Formational Aspect during Purification & Enlightenment

- ▶ **“This is a period... consisting more in interior reflection than in catechetical instruction... It is intended...to enlighten the minds and hearts of the elect with a deep knowledge of Christ the Savior.” (n.139)**
- ▶ **“Because they are asking for the three sacraments of initiation, the elect must have the intention of achieving an intimate knowledge of Christ and his Church.” (n.142)**
- ▶ **By means of the scrutinies, the elect “are instructed gradually about the mystery of sin...their spirit is filled with Christ the Redeemer... [and they] should progress in their perception of sin and their desire for salvation.” (n.143)**

**RCIA 138 “For both the elect and the local community, the Lenten season is a time for spiritual recollection in preparation for the celebration of the Paschal mystery.”**

**SO DURING THIS PERIOD, THE ELECT AND CANDIDATES SHOULD REFLECT ON:**

**✘ The Creed ✘ The Our Father ✘ The Liturgy of the Hours ✘ Devotional Prayer - especially to Our Lady and before the Blessed Sacrament**

**BASED ON THIS, SOME IDEAS FOR THIS PERIOD WOULD INCLUDE:**

**✚ Using a prayer book designed for the Lenten Season ✚ Praying the Stations of the Cross together**

**✚ Praying Evening or Night Prayer from the Liturgy of the Hours or praying *Lectio Divina* (Guided Scripture Meditation) ✚ Explaining the Lenten practices of Prayer, Fasting, and Almsgiving**

**✚ Doing Examinations of Conscience before Baptism or Reconciliation**

**✚ Explaining Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament and - if available - schedule periods of meditation time. If a priest or deacon can assist, have Benediction.**

**✚ Doing a Novena in preparation for the Easter Vigil ✚ Planning a Retreat time - especially consider Holy Saturday morning**

*“The elect are to be advised that on Holy Saturday they should refrain from their usual activities” ... and when it is possible, “bring the elect together for reflection and prayer...” RCIA 185*

## Some appropriate topics for weekly RCIA sessions during this period would include:

### *1. The Challenge of Sin*

- ✘ Sin and Repentance (RCIA 141, 143, 153)
- ✘ Forgiveness of Sin and Freedom (RCIA 144, 154, 469)

### *2. Prayer*

- ✘ Spiritual recollection and interior reflection (RCIA 138, 139)
- ✘ The help of the Holy Spirit (RCIA 153)

### *3. Conversion to Christ*

- ✘ Growth in virtue and holiness (RCIA 139, 469)
- ✘ Change and strengthening of heart (RCIA 153, 469)

### *4. The Mercy of Christ*

- ✘ Healing and Trust (RCIA 469, 470)
- ✘ Mercy in the Sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation (167, 299)

### *5. A Deeper Knowledge of Christ, the Savior*

- ✘ Christ's presence in daily life (RCIA 470)
- ✘ Conformity to Christ and his example (RCIA 131, 556)

### *6. Other topics such as Sacramentals, preparation and practice to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation (candidates - before Easter Vigil; elect - during the Easter Season), a "teaching Mass" etc. can be introduced during this period.*

# Scrutinies (catechumens) during Purification & Enlightenment

## Why have Scrutinies?

**The three Scrutinies ritually celebrate the central mystery of life, death and resurrection in the lives of the elect. It is the liturgical graces of the Paschal Mystery at work.**

**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. For the Scrutinies are celebrated in order to deliver the elect from the power of sin and Satan, to protect them against temptation, and to give them strength in Christ, who is the way, the truth, and they life. [RCIA 141)**

## Penitential Rite (candidates) during Purification & Enlightenment

**The Penitential Rite is celebrated for candidates on the Second Sunday of Lent or on a Lenten weekday. (RCIA 462). It is held within a celebration of the Word of God as a *kind* of scrutiny, similar to the scrutinies for catechumens. Along with the candidates, their sponsors and others present also participate in this Penitential Rite.**

**This Penitential Rite will also help to prepare the candidates to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation, which they are to receive before completing their Christian Initiation**

# Presentations of the Creed and Our Father (for the Elect and possibly some Candidates)

**These are the two Treasures of the Church: the Nicene or Apostles Creed, the summary of the Faith; and the prayer Jesus himself taught his apostles, These “ancient texts...have always been regarded as expressing the heart of the Church’s faith and prayer.” (RCIA 147)**

**The presentations are celebrated in the presence of a community of the faithful, preferably within a Mass. The Presentation of the Creed is celebrated during the third week of Lent.**

**The Presentation of the Lord’s Prayer is celebrated during the fifth week of Lent, although it may be included instead with the Preparation Rites on Holy Saturday (RCIA 149).**

# Presentations of the Creed and Our Father (for the Elect and possibly some Candidates)

- ▶ Those candidates who have had little to no Christian formation or experience of praying the Creed or the Lord's Prayer may be included in the celebrations of these Rites along with the elect (see NS 31).
- ▶ Nevertheless, *care must be taken that the candidates and the elect are clearly distinct from one another and that any wording appropriate for those who are preparing for Baptism is not used for those who are already baptized.*
- ▶ If, on the other hand, candidates have lived strong Christian lives, then including them might be seen as denigrating the life of faith they have already led. The *NATIONAL STATUTES FOR THE CATECHUMENATE* make it clear that these presentations would not be appropriate for these particular candidates (NS 31). Pastoral judgment is necessary to determine whether a particular candidate can appropriately participate in one or both of these Rites.

## Preparation Rites on Holy Saturday (RCIA 185 – 205)

When it is possible to bring the elect together on Holy Saturday for reflection and prayer, some or all of the following Rites may be celebrated as an immediate preparation for the Sacraments (RCIA 185).

- ▶ Presentation of the Lord's Prayer (if it has been deferred)
- ▶ Recitation of the Creed
- ▶ Ephphetha Rite
- ▶ Choosing of a Confirmation Name/Patron Saint
- ▶ Concluding Rites

**For all of Holy Saturday, the elect (and candidates) should refrain from their normal activities and, if possible, observe a fast (RCIA 185.1, NS15).**

- ▶ **Best done in a context of Morning or Early Afternoon of Recollection**
- ▶ **Preferable that Godparents, Sponsors, and all RCIA team participate**
- ▶ **Ideally celebrated in a church or chapel (unless preparations for Easter Vigil would be distracting)**
- ▶ **Both clergy (priest and/or deacon) and laity should have leading roles.**
- ▶ **Appropriate songs/hymns, readings, and a homily should be chosen according to the suggestions of the Rites**
- ▶ **Other elements to “round out” the event may be included such as Morning Prayer (Lauds) or the Office of Readings from the Liturgy of the Hours, *Lectio Divina* on a passage of Scripture to be used at the Easter Vigil. Time for guided prayer and recollection to help prepare for the Great Events of the Vigil is also good.**
- ▶ **A review or “practice” for Easter Vigil could be included afterwards to help participants understand what to expect and help calm any nervousness about what will take place.**

# Putting it all Together: *A Possible Schedule for the Period of Purification and Enlightenment*

- ▶ **Ash Wednesday** – Lent begins; all attend Mass/Service of Ashes  
(RCIA sessions take place Thursday evening; Dismissals take place after Liturgy of the Word at 10:00am Sunday Mass)
- ▶ **Thursday after Ash Wednesday** – Temptation and Grace; the Universal Call to Holiness – a meditation on the upcoming Gospel of Jesus in the Desert; Communion of Saints – choosing a patron saint for Confirmation and personal intercession
- ▶ **1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of Lent** – Parish Celebration of Sending Catechumens for Election and Candidates for Recognition by the Bishop; Rite of Election of Catechumens and Call to Continuing Conversion of Candidates; Dismissal to reflect on the Word of God after Homily
- ▶ **Thursday of 1<sup>st</sup> Week of Lent** – The Eucharist as Christ Revealed, Adoration and Devotion to the Sacred Heart; a meditation of the upcoming Gospel on the Transfiguration

## Putting it all Together: *A Possible Schedule for the Period of Purification and Enlightenment*

- ▶ **2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Lent** – Penitential Rite (candidates); may also be celebrated during upcoming weekday session if a priest or deacon is present; Dismissal to reflect on Word of God after Homily
- ▶ **Thursday of 2<sup>nd</sup> Week of Lent** – The Mercy of God, Personal Charity/Humility, and Mary as the Model: a meditation on the upcoming Gospel on the Samaritan Woman
- ▶ **3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Lent** – First Scrutiny (elect); Dismissal to reflect on Word of God after Homily
- ▶ **Thursday of 3<sup>rd</sup> Week of Lent** – Presentation of the Creed; may also be celebrated within a Mass after the Homily (RCIA 157); Sin, Pride and avoiding Spiritual Blindness; a meditation on the upcoming Gospel on the Man Born Blind
- ▶ **4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Lent** – Second Scrutiny (elect); Dismissal to reflect on the Word of God after Homily

## Putting it all together: *A Possible Schedule for the Period of Purification & Enlightenment*

- ▶ **Thursday of 4<sup>th</sup> Week of Lent** – Bodily Death, Judgement, and Eternal life; a mediation on the upcoming Gospel of the Raising of Lazarus; Forgiveness in Baptism and Reconciliation; a workshop and practice for the Sacrament of Reconciliation
- ▶ **5<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Lent** – Third Scrutiny (elect); Dismissal to reflect on the Word of God after Homily
- ▶ **Thursday of the 5<sup>th</sup> Week of Lent** – Presentation of the Lord's Prayer; may also be celebrated within a Mass after the Homily (RCIA 178); a meditation on The Paschal Mystery and the events of Holy Week; Christ's Suffering, Death, and Resurrection – the source of our Redemption and all graces.

# Putting it all together: A Possible Schedule for the Period of Purification & Enlightenment

- ▶ **Palm Sunday of the Passion of the Lord** – Dismissal to reflect on the Word of God after Homily; During Holy Week, all are to attend Tenebrae Service (Wednesday), Mass of the Lord's Supper (Thursday), and Service of the Passion (Friday)
- ▶ **Holy Saturday** – Morning of Recollection or Retreat; to include Morning Prayer (Lauds), Preparation Rites (Ephphetha Rite, Recitation of the Creed); revealing and discussion of Confirmation name/patron; Sacrament of Reconciliation (possibly) provided for Candidates while Elect have meditation on select Scripture passages on God's mercy and forgiveness. Sacramentals brought forth for blessing as part of Concluding Rites. Practice or Review for Easter Vigil and Dismissal.
- ▶ **Easter Vigil** – 8:00pm

## Accompaniment in the Period of Purification & Enlightenment

### **THE FIVE FOUNDATIONS OF CHRISTIAN LIVING (RCIA 75.2)**

- 1. Turning more readily to God in Prayer**
- 2. Bearing witness to the Faith**
- 3. Keeping hope set on Christ in all things**
- 4. Following supernatural inspiration in word & action**
- 5. Practicing love of neighbor, even at personal cost**

# Accompaniment in the Period of Purification & Enlightenment

*Special Challenges that Could arise for the Elect or Candidates during this Period include:*

- ❖ **Doubt, Discouragement, “Cold Feet”**
- ❖ **Fear and Misgivings**
- ❖ **Criticism, disparagement, or disapproval from family, friends, or co-workers**
- ❖ **Unexpected obstacles (illness, personal crisis, etc.)**
- ❖ **Return of strong temptation to a sinful habit**
- ❖ **Becoming more sensitive, needy, and/or vulnerable**

*Responsibility of the RCIA Team, Godparents and Sponsors:*

- ❖ **Be aware and watchful for these possible temptations and challenges**
- ❖ **Encourage and reassure participants, helping them to persevere in their intention to become Catholics**
- ❖ **Prepare for intense prayer to help participants overcome any obstacles or temptation; spend more time with them.**
- ❖ **Remind participants of the graces and sustenance of the Liturgy and support of the Christian Community.**
- ❖ **Schedule additional blessings and anointings appropriate for this period during RCIA sessions for the benefit and spiritual strengthening of the elect and the candidates.**

# Mystagogy and the Neophyte Year

***“The period of mystagogy...is a time for deepening the Christian experience, for spiritual growth, and for entering more fully into the life and unity of the community. “ (n. 7.4)***

Mystagogy is the final period of the catechumenal process that takes place during the 50 days after Easter through Pentecost. It is the fresh spiritual reality for the newly baptized and initiated that is not only for this period, but through the neophyte year – which ends on Easter of the following year - and beyond.

The new Catholics are called Neophytes – and this period is about reflecting on their experience of Sacramental Initiation and their new life of grace. It is about how they will now live, pray, and worship throughout their lives with the continued support and assistance of the community that helped to bring them to the fullness of faith.

# Mystagogy and the Neophyte year

- Prepare neophytes to begin gathering again a week or so after initiation to share stories and pictures of their Easter Vigil celebration and to discuss the Scriptures for the Sundays of Easter in light of their sacramental experiences.
- Avoid the temptation to use the six weeks of Easter as a time for recruitment for parish service – information is fine – but no one should be pressured or feel obliged to join any ministry. Ministry flows from the experience of being a member of the parish and being called. Some neophytes ready to jump right in. For others, it takes time and reflection on what it means to be a “regular Catholic in the pews.”
  - Be sure to prepare those neophytes who received baptism at Easter for their First Reconciliation and make arrangements for them to receive it before Pentecost Too often this is forgotten.

“To close the period of postbaptismal catechesis, some sort of celebration should be held at the end of the Easter season near Pentecost Sunday.” (n.249)

# Mystagogy and the Neophyte Year

- ▶ **Consider having a weekly, bi-weekly neophyte bible study. There are many studies to choose from and many groups enjoy continuing to gather to learn and share their faith together.**
- ▶ **Offer a special invitation to neophytes to participate in various sacramental experiences throughout the year, and then to reflect on them together. Possibilities include first Communion, communal penance services, communal anointing of the sick, confirmation of the youth, and infant baptisms.**
- ▶ **Hold a special gathering each year for those having come into the Church from all previous years. Consider having the gathering during the Easter Season or at Pentecost time; perhaps with a speaker and a special meal.**

# Mystagogy and the Neophyte Year

**Some important Directives for the Neophyte Year indicated by the Rite include:**

- 1. Plan for monthly gatherings following the Pentecost celebration and look forward to experiencing with the neophytes their first year of full membership in the church. Plan with them from the beginning of Lent to celebrate the first anniversary of their initiation at the Pentecost that concludes their neophyte year. (n. 250)**
- 2. Ask neophytes to participate in the General Intercessions and Preparation of the Gifts. (Ap. II, N. 22)**
- 3. Use the Easter Season Cycle A readings at Masses where neophytes are present and preach the homily with them in mind. (n. 244)**
- 4. Invite the local bishop to visit with the neophytes during their first year as fully initiated Catholics. (n.251)**

**Mary, Star of the  
New Evangelization  
And our Mother, pray for  
us, servants of your Son  
and for all our Elect  
and Candidates!**

