

The Period of Purification and Enlightenment

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Session #8

Period of Purification and Enlightenment

- ▶ What spiritual preparation during this period means - with ideas for interior reflection and appropriate examples.
- ▶ 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*; as well as 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.
- ▶ A look at the Preparation Rites for Holy Saturday.

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:

- ❖ Praying the Stations of the Cross and other Lenten Devotions
- ❖ Praying Evening or Night Prayer from the Liturgy of the Hours
- ❖ Praying *Lectio Divina* - guided meditation on the Scriptures
- ❖ Explaining the Lenten practices of Prayer, Fasting, and Almsgiving
- ❖ Doing Examinations of Conscience before Baptism (elect) or Reconciliation (candidates)
- ❖ Explaining Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament and - if at all possible - 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

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

1. The Mystery of Sin

Sin and Repentance (RCIA 141, 143, 153)

Forgiveness & Freedom (RCIA 144, 154, 469)

2. Prayer

Spiritual recollection & interior reflection (RCIA 138, 139)

The help of the Holy Spirit (RCIA 153)

3. Conversion to Christ

Virtue & holiness (RCIA 139, 469)

Conversion of heart (RCIA 153, 469)

4. The Power of Mercy

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: 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.

“When it is possible, bring the elect [and candidates] together on Holy Saturday for reflection and prayer ... as an immediate preparation for the sacraments ...” RCIA 185

- ▶ Best done in a context of Morning Retreat or Morning 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 of the day, *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 simple “practice” for Easter Vigil could be included afterwards (or not) to help participants understand what to expect and help calm any nervousness about what will take place.

Possible Pastoral Issues in the Period of Purification and Enlightenment

Special Challenges that could arise for the Elect or Candidates could 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 during RCIA sessions for the benefit and spiritual strengthening of the elect and the candidates.

Discussion Questions:

- ▶ Why are the Scrutinies solely for the Elect?
- ▶ If we make sure to pray and add devotions, what's wrong with continuing regular catechetical sessions with our RCIA group during Lent? There's so much to know!
- ▶ Why could a member of the Elect in your RCIA process suddenly get a case of "cold feet" just before Holy Week? What could you do about it?