

Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) – Celebration of the Scrutinies.

These very special rites are celebrated on the third, fourth and fifth Sundays of Lent, at liturgies where the Elect (non-baptised) are present. The Elect are those in our midst who are preparing for Baptism. Part of their journey to the font is that they have been received among us, the Rite of Acceptance, and they have been enrolled in the Book of the Elect in the Rite of Election which was celebrated with Archbishop Gregory on February 28th, 2010.

Even if these rites are not celebrated at the liturgy we attend, or not celebrated in our parish or congregation at all, it can be wonderful to reflect upon the journey these Elect are making during Lent, as an inspiration and source of renewal for us in our journey.

These are ancient rites and they may, at first, seem strange to us. But they are profoundly rooted in our human experience. We need to examine (scrutinize) how we are, the areas of our lives where we are tempted, or seriously sin - in what we do and what we fail to do. We really need healing and the strength that can come from the support of our sisters and brothers.

Invitation to Silent Prayer

One of the most powerful moments of the Scrutinies is how they begin. After the homily, the Elect are invited to come forward with their sponsors and to kneel down. Then, the whole assembly is invited to pray for them in silence. It is a very solemn moment. This community has cared for these elect for some months now on their journey. We have sent them to reflect more and more deeply on the Word of God, and expressed to them our longing for the day on which they would join us at the table of the Lord. Now we pray for them in this sacred silence, deeply asking God to protect them and heal them in the weeks ahead.

Intercessions for the Elect

We then pray out loud together for the Elect.

Prayer of Exorcism

Then, we pray that they might be freed from the power of the Evil One and protected on their journey.

The Laying On of Hands

In a silent ritual deliberately reminiscent of the rite used for ordination in the Sacrament of Holy Orders, the priest or deacon lays his hands for a brief moment on the head of each of the Elect. It is a solemn act of calling down the Spirit of Jesus to be with them and protect them.

Dismissal of the Elect

The Elect are then sent forth to reflect upon the Word and this powerful gesture of love on the part of this community, that cares for them so deeply, with the love of Christ.