

## Introductions to Rites

**Rite of Acceptance (Welcome):** This rite formally welcomes those who are informally exploring the Christian faith (seekers) into structured formation as disciples (the catechumenate). This rite of acceptance usually takes place in a chief Sunday service of the congregation immediately before the beginning of formal instruction and formation. Through the rite the congregation publicly calls and welcomes the seekers as catechumens. The new catechumens accept the assembly's call to follow the way of Christ, indicating their desire to enter this period of formation in faith. The assembly confesses its willingness and desire to enfold the person into their midst through prayer and witness in the Word. The Rite of Acceptance at Redeemer normally takes place on the First in Advent.

**Rite of Election (Enrollment):** This rite confirms the catechumens' preparation and readiness for journeying toward initiation into the life of the church, the Body of Christ, through the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper. This rite marks their liminal passage from catechumens to being the Elect, those chosen and selected by the Lord through the Church to become members of His family. They will now journey through the period of final enlightenment by the Word to the initiation rites, most often at the Easter Vigil. In this rite the catechumens express their desire to be baptized and to join in the fellowship of the Lord's Supper. They do so ritually by signing the Book of the Elect which contains the names of all of the saints who have journeyed into the assembly's life through the catechumenate. It is the book of all the baptized and confirmed in the congregation.

**Rite of Footwashing (on Maundy Thursday):** While the washing of feet can be done in a variety of ways, including the washing of the feet of the entire congregation, the participation of the elect in this rite is a central part of their reception of the Gospel as the sustenance and shape of their life as the catechumenate reaches its high point. Our Lord commanded his disciples to love one another by following his example of humble service. His washing of the disciples' feet served as a symbol of the promise of eternal life which he would share with them, and as an example of humility which he wanted them to imitate. The foot-washing is a demonstration of how, on Good Friday, Christ would humble himself by submitting to death, even death on a cross. It is an enactment of the life he even now lives for us and of the service he provides to us when he feeds us with His body and blood at his holy altar. The church washes the feet of the catechumens as a symbolic enactment of its commitment to Christ's mandate to love one another by serving one another in humility (John 13:13–15, 34–35). We are all called to remember Christ's example and live in humility and here the elect receive the gracious ministry of their Lord and willingly desire to follow his example.

**Easter Vigil:** The Easter Vigil is not only the culmination of Holy Week but the culmination of the journey of the catechumens/elect. The proclamation of the salvation narrative through the Old Testament brought to its fulfillment in the Messiah, the Lord Jesus, leads the community to the font where the Lord through His church baptizes new brothers and sisters, bringing them through death to new life by the water and the Word. They are sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit in baptism as symbolized by their anointing with chrism. From the font, the newly baptized and the entire assembly gather around the table of the Lord and receive together as one fellowship the body of life and the cup of salvation. The catechumens/elect/neophytes have made the journey to a new life that they now live forever.