

Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA)

The Easter Vigil and the Elect

“Of this night’s Vigil, which is the greatest and most noble of all solemnities, there is to be only one celebration in each Church.”¹ The focus of this night is fourfold:

1. The light of Christ which breaks into the darkness of sin and death.
2. The story of God’s intervention in the life of the people of Israel as presented in the Old Testament and the fulfillment of that covenant in Jesus Christ as presented in the Epistle and Gospel readings.
3. The blessing of the Holy Water and the Baptism and Confirmation of the new members of the Church.
4. Finally, the invitation to new members to participate in the Eucharist with the faithful.

Celebration of the Sacraments of Initiation

It is not surprising that it is on this night that we celebrate the Sacraments of Initiation. The Elect are fully initiated at the Easter Vigil through Baptism, Confirmation and reception of the Eucharist at the Easter Vigil.

They now enter into the Order of the Faithful. The Neophytes or (Greek for “new plants”) are cared for in a special way during the whole of the Easter season, until Pentecost. This period is called the Mystagogy. The continued growth of these Neophytes is so important that the Mystagogy may continue until the following Pentecost.

¹ Roman Missal p. 323.

THE EASTER VIGIL

The Vigil is divided into four parts:

1. The Blessing of the fire, the preparation of the Paschal candle, the procession of the candle and the Easter proclamation.
2. The liturgy of the Word, which consists of 9 readings, 7 from the Old Testament, an Epistle and the Gospel, tracing salvation history.
3. The blessing of the Holy Water and the celebration of the Baptism of new members.
4. The liturgy of the Eucharist and the invitation for the new members to join at the table of the Lord for the first time.

~ adapted from the
Roman Missal