



Welcoming New Catholics The RCIA: Holy Saturday Preparation Rites

An Overview

For all of the faithful Holy Saturday is a time of quiet prayer and reflection. For the candidates and elect, (that is the men, women and children preparing for entrance into the Church) Holy Saturday morning and afternoon is a time to continue their spiritual preparation for their initiation and welcome into full communion with the Catholic Church at the Easter Vigil that evening.

In the Archdiocese of Baltimore, the elect are gathered with their Vicar Bishop to reflect on God's Word and share stories of faith.

Two Preparation Rites are celebrated. The first: the **Ephphetha Rite** (or rite of opening the ears and mouth) impresses on the **elect** (only the unbaptized) their need of grace in order to hear the Word of God and profess it for their salvation. For this rite, the elect are called forward by the Bishop to receive a sign of the call to listen to God's Word and proclaim the gospel with their lives. The Bishop touches the right and left ear, and the closed lips of each person saying:

*"Ephphetha; that is be opened.
That you may profess the faith you hear,
To the praise and glory of God"* RCIA, 197.

The second Rite is the recitation of the Creed. A reading from St. Cyril of Jerusalem on the significance of the Creed is proclaimed. It is as follows:

Within these verses are contained all instruction in the faith.

*This is what I want you to retain word for word,
and which each of you must carefully recite,
without writing it on paper
but engraving it by memory I you heart.*

*Keep this faith
as the only provision you need for your journey
all the rest of you life,
and receive no other.*

*See now, my sisters and brothers,
and keep the traditions which you now receive
and the profession of faith through the recitation of the Creed.
and write them in bold letters within your heart.*

The **elect, together with the candidates for full communion**, profess their faith. The celebration is concluded with a special blessing of sending. The elect return to their parishes to celebrate the sacraments of initiation at the Easter Vigil.

For more information about the Preparation Rites of Holy Saturday please consult the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* paragraph numbers 185ff.