

# The Period of Purification and Enlightenment:

## The Rites of Handing On and of Immediate Preparation

Excitement mounts in the weeks before the initiation of adults. Yes, there is excitement during Lent. The bishop has renamed those formerly known as “catechumens” and numbered them among the “elect,” chosen for initiation into the new covenant with God. Parishes prepare spiritual enrichment and intense liturgies. All observe the disciplines of Lent, mindful of their sinfulness, yet confident of God’s mercy. All anticipate the glorious celebration of the paschal mystery during the sacred Triduum.

Punctuating this time is a series of rituals of which many Catholics are unaware because they are to take place apart from Sunday Mass. Yet in the quiet of Lent, when the prayerful practices of the faithful increase, those anticipating their initiation in the Church experience some of the primary symbols that bind together the Body of Christ.

The Federation of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions has asked me to present a webinar on this theme:

“The Period of Purification and Enlightenment of the elect normally coincides with Lent and begins with ‘Election.’ Both in the liturgy and liturgical catechesis, through remembrance of Baptism or preparation for it, and by penitence, Lent renews the community of the faithful together with the elect and disposes them to recall the Paschal Mystery...” (OCIA 138). “The time of purification and enlightenment is given to a more intense preparation of spirit and heart. This period is intended as well to enlighten the minds and hearts with a deeper knowledge of Christ the Savior” (OCIA 139).

The season is enriched by ancient rituals and related Scripture passages. This session will examine the rites of Handing On [Presentation] of the Creed and of the Lord’s Prayer which are traditionally celebrated during this period. Finally, we will study the rites of immediate preparation, celebrated on Holy Saturday.

This presentation opens with two preliminary topics: the purpose of these rites and the option of celebrating them outside of Lent. Then you will hear reflections on each of the rites in turn: The Handing On of the Creed, The Handing On of the Lord’s Prayer, and the Rites of Immediate Preparation.

I have prepared these remarks in the early days of the year 2023, when the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops is still anticipating the approval of its revised English and Spanish translations of the ritual book for the Christian Initiation of Adults. The work is under review at the Vatican’s Dicastery for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments. Consequently, when I quote from

the ritual book, I'll be using what the FDLIC anticipates will be the new translation, though some changes may still happen.

## Purpose

The ultimate purpose of all these rites is spiritual recollection. Lent has a twofold character: baptismal and penitential. According to the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy from the Second Vatican Council, the people are either recalling or preparing for baptism, and they are practicing penance to dispose themselves through prayer to celebrate the paschal mystery (109).

Consequently, the Christian Initiation of Adults provides a suite of liturgies for the community to recall the paschal mystery, “which the Sacraments of Initiation apply to individuals” (138). Even as we celebrate the death and resurrection of Christ, the sacraments apply these events to our elect. This webinar series has already treated the scrutinies, three major celebrations of purification. This presentation covers the remaining ceremonies for those who together are petitioning for life in Christ. As the ritual book states, “The spiritual and catechetical preparation of the elect, or the ‘co-petitioners,’ is completed by these rites and extends throughout the entire Time of Lent” (139).

Regarding the first two of these, their aim pertains to the name of this time, the period of purification and enlightenment. Both words are important. Ceremonies like the scrutinies purify what may keep the elect from committing to Christ and enlighten them with strengths for their faith. Of the next ceremonies, the ritual book says, “The ‘Rites of Handing On,’ by which the Church entrusts to the elect ancient texts of faith and prayer, that is, the Creed and the Lord’s Prayer, have the purpose of enlightening them” (147).

The unbaptized are the subject of these two ceremonies. However, in the case of Catholics baptized as infants who received no further catechesis for confirmation and holy communion, the Church also permits them to celebrate these two ceremonies “to signify God’s action in this task of preparation” with rites “that respond to the circumstance and spiritual benefit of these adults” (407). In the United States, this permission extends beyond uncatechized Catholics to those validly baptized in other Christian denominations who similarly received no further catechesis (400). However, it does not apply to baptized Catholics who have received communion but only lack confirmation. They belong in a separate confirmation preparation, not in this group of candidates.

The Rites of Immediate Preparation are set forth for the elect “on Holy Saturday to prepare themselves, by recollection and prayer, to receive the Sacraments” (185). There is no similar ceremony for baptized, uncatechized Catholics, nor for validly baptized candidates for reception into the full communion of the Catholic Church, confirmation and communion, even if these ceremonies take place at the Easter Vigil. All those candidates—Catholics and other Christians alike—are already baptized, so rites of immediate preparation for baptism would be incongruent.

Regarding unbaptized children of catechetical age, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops has not provided adaptations or amendments to

these three ceremonies. Nonetheless, the Rites of Handing On “may be added, adapted to the age of the children” (258). Many of the children among the elect would benefit from the celebration of these rites, and they may simply join the adults.

The ritual book says nothing about applying the Rites of Immediate Preparation to children, so three solutions present themselves: The children celebrate together with the adults; the children celebrate apart from the adults, with adaptations made at the parish; or the children do not celebrate these rites. In normal pastoral circumstances, children participate well in the Rites of Immediate Preparation for adults.

You can immediately see the spiritual purpose of these ceremonies. In the formation of catechumens, their catechesis should be complete before the Rite of Election, freeing them to observe Lent with the disposition proper to the elect. That is why the Rites of Handing On are to “take place after the Scrutinies... during the week” (21). However, the Church has a provision to celebrate the Rites of Handing On earlier, during the period of the catechumenate.

## Celebrating Early

The ritual book offers two reasons for celebrating the Rites of Handing On earlier than Lent. One is the lack of time during the final preparation of the elect (79, 104). The other reason is “for the benefit of the Period of the Catechumenate” (104). Among the Rites of Immediate Preparation, only the Ephphatha may be anticipated (79). The United States Conference of Bishops permits the early celebration of these three rites “in appropriate circumstances” (33 §6).

Regarding the first reason, the brief time, the Roman Missal’s Mass for the Rite of Election prefers that it take place on the First Sunday of Lent, but permits it apart from that time. The rubrics for adult initiation permit celebrating the Rite of Election the previous or following week, especially in mission stations (126). Still, it warns not to delay the Rite of Election too long. Rather, it “should be celebrated about six weeks before the Sacraments of Initiation, so that there is enough time for the Scrutinies and Rites of Handing On” (29).

You can imagine a situation where a bishop was prevented from celebrating the Rite of Election on the usual day due to difficulties of health, travel, or other ministerial commitments. If it was known in advance that the Rite of Election would be delayed, the two Rites of Handing On could be celebrated in parishes during the period of the catechumenate.

Or, you could imagine a catechumen unable to celebrate the Easter Vigil in your parish due to work, military service, illness, confinement, or other circumstances. In such cases the entire order of Christian Initiation may be celebrated outside the usual times that climax in Lent and Easter. Even then, the United States bishops plead for six weeks to separate the Rite of Election and the initiation rites, “to allow sufficient time for the Scrutinies and Rites of Handing On” (126).

In more extreme circumstances, the Simpler Order of Adult Initiation answers similar challenges (331ff). Its timeline deliberately abbreviates the normal gradual process of initiation. In such pressing needs, the Church allows a number of adaptations. One of these adds the Rites of Handing On to the word services, exorcisms and blessings in the period of the catechumenate (334 §1).

The second reason for delaying these two rites takes the benign view that they may enrich the period of the catechumenate, which may last quite a while. The introduction states, “If this is pastorally suitable, however, for enrichment of the liturgy of the Period of the Catechumenate, the Rites of Handing On can be transferred and celebrated during the catechumenate as a kind of ‘rite of passage’” (21).

The book develops this idea when it treats the period of the catechumenate as an advance through successive formational groups: “During these same years, as the catechumens progress from their first catechetical group to others, passages that occur can sometimes be marked by rites” (79). If you have different levels of formation in the catechumenate group, the Rites of Handing On could mark the transitions even before the Rite of Election. Nonetheless, “They should be celebrated when the catechumens seem to be mature; otherwise they should not take place” during this earlier period (104).

When the Rites of Handing On are carried out during the period of the catechumenate, planners are to change references to the “elect” to “catechumens”. Furthermore, each of these two rites may conclude with the Ephphatha (105). No further reason is given. This is the only Rite of Immediate Preparation that may be anticipated before the day of baptism.

Throughout the history of the catechumenate, the Rites of Handing On and of Immediate Preparation were consistently celebrated between election and baptism. Permission to anticipate them, and the reasons given, were innovations to the post-Vatican II initiation rites for adults.

The ritual book refers to this permission numerous times (147, 148, 149, 157, 178, for example). But given the history of the catechumenate and the meaning of these ceremonies, their most expressive celebration would come during the period of purification and enlightenment. Although one may anticipate them, the best practice is to keep them during Lent.

The Ceremonial of Bishops drives home this point. It says that the bishop should preside at the Rites of Handing On because of their significance, but only if these ceremonies are not anticipated and take place after the Rite of Election (CB 421). Many people know that the bishop may “rightly reserve to himself” the Rite of Election, but many do not realize that he may also reserve the Handing On “of the Creed and of the Lord’s Prayer, as well as the actual celebration of the sacraments of initiation” (CB 407).

Incidentally, missing from the bishop’s list of Lent celebrations are the scrutinies with their exorcisms, over which a priest or deacon would normally preside. In a parallel situation when the bishop baptizes an infant, a priest is to be

present to say the prayer of exorcism and carry out the prebaptismal anointing (CB 439).

## Handing on the Creed

Throughout their formation, catechumens have learned about the faith, which has drawn them more deeply into commitment. The period of purification and enlightenment sets a spiritual environment, and its ceremonies accompany its goals.

The creed summarizes the faith. It enlightens those who study it and expresses the faith of those who believe it. To hand on the creed and the Lord's Prayer is to participate in a long ancestral line of believers whose faith demands to be shared. As the Ceremonial of Bishops says, in these ceremonies, "the Church lovingly entrusts to the elect the ancient texts that have always been regarded as expressing the heart of the Church's faith and prayer" (CB 420).

Members of your parish are expected to participate in both these rites. The faithful "should take care to be present at the Rites of the Scrutinies and of Handing On and give the catechumens the example of their own renewal in the spirit of penitence, faith and charity" (OCIA 9 §4).

The rite takes place during the week after the first scrutiny; that is, during the third week of Lent. "It is desirable that the Rite of Handing On of the Creed takes place in the presence of the community of the faithful after the Liturgy of the Word at a weekday Mass with the appropriate readings for these Rites" (157).

The scrutinies take place at Masses on the Third, Fourth and Fifth Sundays of Lent. To celebrate them with integrity, the Church moves the Rites of Handing On to weekdays.

The Church recommends that these rites take place during Mass. This gathers the faithful, whose presence is key to the celebration. The presidential prayers come from the current weekday in the missal, but the readings for the Rites of Handing On may replace those normally assigned to that day.

The first of these (Deut 6:1-7) is an early declaration of faith in God. It proclaims belief in one God and expects complete love of God. Furthermore, the words are to be made public and passed on from one generation to the next.

The responsorial draws verses from one of the psalms praising the law of the Lord (19:8, 9, 10, and 11). As a refrain, the people sing the words of Peter when he declared his faith in Jesus following the discourse on the Bread of Life. Jesus is the Lord who alone has the words of eternal life. The same responsorial occurs on the Third Sunday of Lent in Year B, when the first reading presents the Ten Commandments.

The lectionary gives a choice for the second reading. In Romans 10:8-13, Paul proclaims that those who confess with their mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in the resurrection will be saved. This passage, which also serves as the second reading on the First Sunday of Lent in Year C, shows the link between faith and salvation.

The other option comes from the First Letter to the Corinthians in a long and short form (15:1-8a or 1-4). Here, too, Paul promises that those who hold fast to the gospel will be saved. His key message is the resurrection of Jesus. The longer version, which mentions the appearance of the risen Jesus to James, is the first reading for the Feast of Saints Philip and James on May 3.

The verse before the gospel is John 3:16, much loved among Christians for its promise of salvation to those who believe. It comes from Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus, who himself is coming to faith.

The gospel also has two options. In the first (Matt 16:13-18) Peter confesses that Jesus is the Christ. In the second (John 12:44-50) Jesus declares that he came into the world as light so that believers may not dwell in darkness.

Any of these passages will provide a rich background for a meaningful homily on the nature of belief, its role in a person's life, and its demands for evangelization. The rubrics instruct the preacher to explain "the meaning and importance of the Creed in relation to the teaching that the elect have already received and to the Profession of Faith that they must make at their Baptism and uphold throughout their lives" (159).

For the ceremony, the deacon or some other minister invites the elect forward (160). In the absence of a deacon, the director of the parish catechumenate or a catechist would fittingly play this role.

The celebrant instructs the elect to listen to the creed, by which they will be justified. He says, "The words are few, but the mysteries they contain are great. Receive them with a sincere heart and treasure them" (160).

The celebrant then begins the creed alone. The community of the faithful—but not the elect—may join him in this recitation. Or he may recite the entire creed by himself. This is new to the revised translation in the United States, but it has always been an option in the typical edition in Latin. When the bishop presides for this ritual, the community joins him (CB 423).

The celebrant may use either the Apostles' Creed or the Nicene Creed. If the community is following the advice of the Roman Missal and reciting the Apostles' Creed on the Sundays of Lent and Easter because it is the baptismal creed, that may tip the choice in favor of this older, shorter symbol of the faith. For this reason the missal calls it the baptismal creed. It is also the creed we use to start the rosary.

The Nicene Creed is proclaimed more commonly in parish churches on Sundays, and for this reason it may be preferable. Either is acceptable.

The presider invites all to pray, observes silence with them, and then offers a prayer over the elect (OCIA 161). His invitation refers to the cleansing waters of rebirth, an allusion to the letter of Paul to Titus 3:5. He prays that God will bestow knowledge, firm hope and holy doctrine upon the elect.

The presider may dismiss the elect using one of two formulas, or he may allow them to stay for the remainder of the Eucharist, or he may dismiss the entire assembly if the Eucharist is not celebrated (162).

Normally, though, the Liturgy of the Eucharist follows (163). During the Eucharistic Prayer, the presider may mention the elect and their godparents. Special formulas for Prayers I, II and III are in the Roman Missal's Ritual Masses for Christian Initiation, the Rite of Election. These may be used at the scrutiny Masses, and, according to the Ceremonial of Bishops (424), they may also be used in the Rites of Handing On. The United States does not yet have translations of the second edition of the Ceremonial, but it specifies that the references appear not only in Eucharistic Prayer I, but also in Prayers II and III.

When this Rite of Handing On concludes, the elect have work to do. They are to memorize the words of the creed they heard. This continues an ancient custom originally based on the concern that the creed not fall into the hands of people who might twist the meaning of its words. Even the dismissal of catechumens answered a larger concern that no one experience the Liturgy of the Eucharist without proper formation, so the Creed and the Eucharist that followed were part of the *disciplina arcani* or "secret disciplines." The faithful handed on the creed not from pen to paper, but from mouth to ear.

After the elect receive it, they will be asked to repeat it to the community at the Rites of Immediate Preparation. The creed, the summary of their faith, will guide their spiritual formation throughout Lent until the day of their baptism.

## Handing on the Lord's Prayer

After the Creed, the second great treasure the elect receive is the Lord's Prayer. The most astonishing part of this prayer is its first two words. Jesus Christ is the Only Begotten Son of God, so he alone by right can call God his Father. But he taught his disciples that they too shared the same privilege. We are God's children by adoption, so we dare to call God our Father too.

In this ceremony, the elect "discover more deeply the new spirit of sons and daughters by which they call God their Father, especially in the midst of the Eucharistic Assembly" (OCIA 147). The rubric stresses the significance of this recitation of the Lord's Prayer: "When the neophytes take part in their first celebration of the Eucharist, they will say it together with the rest of the baptized" (149). The ritual highlights the offering of this prayer by the entire assembly gathered for the Eucharist. Once the elect receive it, they will recite it back on the day of their baptism as adopted sons and daughters of God, preparing to join their brothers and sisters at the eucharistic table.

Together with the Handing On of the Creed, this rite may be anticipated before the Rite of Election. Unlike the Handing On of the Creed, this rite may be deferred until the day of baptism (149, 178). In that case, it becomes part of the Rites of Immediate Preparation. This is how Saint Augustine did it. He reserved Handing On the Lord's Prayer until the hours prior to the start of the Easter Vigil.

As with Handing On the Creed, the readings may be taken from the weekday or replaced with those that pertain to this celebration. The recommended readings meditate on the mystery of fatherhood (179).

In the first reading from Hosea, God speaks of Israel like his own child. He taught Ephraim how to walk and took his people into his arms, pressed them to his cheeks, and bent down to give them food. These tender images show God as a loving parent, one who knows how to be a good father.

Two choices for the responsorial follow. The first is the beloved Psalm 23, with its image of God as a shepherd who leads the singer to restful waters and revives the soul. He comforts and feeds his followers, providing shelter all the days of their lives.

Psalm 103 offers a similar image, especially in the refrain from verse 13: “As a father is kind to his children, so kind is the Lord to those who fear him.” Other verses call God compassionate and gracious, slow to anger and rich in mercy.

The alternatives for the second reading both turn to the places where Saint Paul reassures us that we are indeed adopted children of God, able to call him “Abba”. In Romans 8:14-17, 26-27, Paul says those led by the Spirit of God are children of God and joint heirs with Christ. In Galatians 4:4-7, Paul says that God sent the Spirit into the hearts of believers, calling out “Abba, Father.” The faithful are not slaves, but children, heirs of a divine inheritance. The gospel acclamation takes a verse from the first of these two options.

The highlight of this Liturgy of the Word is the proclamation of the gospel, which takes a form totally unique in Catholic worship. The General Instruction of the Roman Missal says, “When the Sacred Scriptures are read in the Church, God himself speaks to his people, and Christ, present in his word, proclaims the Gospel” (29). This is never more powerfully evident than in Handing On the Lord’s Prayer.

The deacon, instead of processing to the ambo, remains in place and invites the elect forward. The Ceremonial of Bishops specifies that when the bishop presides, they come forward to him while he is still seated in the cathedra. Once they are in place, he rises, invites them to listen, and proclaims Matthew’s account of Jesus teaching the Lord’s Prayer (CB 422). In a similar way, when a priest presides, the elect gather before the presider’s chair (180). The rubric is silent about the greeting. It remains unclear whether the one who reads the gospel greets the people as usual (“The Lord be with you”), or if the invitation to the elect to listen to the gospel replaces the greeting. The rubric is also silent about the option of incense. In favor of it, it would draw even more attention to the sacredness of this moment; on the other hand, this ceremony unfolds on a weekday in Lent, a day of little solemnity.

In the homily, the celebrant explains the meaning and importance of the Lord’s Prayer (OCIA 181). Then he invites the people to pray for the elect, using the same introduction from the parallel prayer in the Rite of Handing On the Creed. This prayer asks God to increase the faith and understanding of the elect, so that they may be numbered among his adopted children at their baptism (182).

Other matters pertaining to the Rite of Handing On the Creed also pertain to Handing On the Lord’s Prayer: The choice for words of dismissal depends on



whether the elect are going forth or staying behind, and whether the entire community is dismissed without the Liturgy of the Eucharist (183). If the Eucharist continues (184), the Eucharistic Prayer is expanded to mention the elect and their godparents, as would have been done in the scrutinies and in the Rite of Handing On of the Creed (CB 424).

## The Rites of Immediate Preparation

These rites form part of the vision for how the elect are to pass the entire day of their baptism. “The elect are to be reminded to keep themselves free on Holy Saturday as far as possible from their usual tasks, and to give time to prayer and recollection and to fast insofar as they are able” (OCIA 185 §1). These rites, then, are set forth to help their recollection and prayer. All or some of them may be used. Are they then optional? Probably. But are they expressive? Would they help drive home the significance of baptism? Would they aid in forming the commitment we expect the elect to make on the day of their baptism? Definitely.

In the current translation of these rites, the American edition includes a suggested outline for the ceremonies that follow (187). These rites look different from other rites in the Catholic Church, and the option of using all or some of them makes their structure even more fluid. Although this model may be used, the typical edition in Latin did not include it and seems to have a different vision for how these ceremonies unfold. The American model shows a coherent Liturgy of the Word embracing song, greeting, reading of the Word, homily, the chosen rites, and then concluding rites of blessing and dismissal.

The typical edition presents this differently. Rather than one ceremony that flows from the chosen readings into the chosen rites, it presents a sequence of readings and rites. After one pairing of reading and rite, another such pairing follows. If the elect are spending part of the day together in prayer, such a structure could intersperse a retreat day, in which they meditate on the scripture and perform a relevant ritual action, pursue some other spiritual activities, and then return for the next of the rites with their scriptures and actions. The model proposed in the United States does not exclude the structure that the ritual book implies.

The first of the rites will probably be the Ephphatha. As with the previous translation, the new one bears the same inconvenience from the typical edition: The Ephphatha, which must precede the Recitation of the Creed, appears in the book *after* the Recitation of the Creed. The purpose of the Ephphatha is to “impresses on the elect the need of grace in order to be able to hear the word of God and profess it for their salvation” (197). It fittingly leads immediately to the recitation of the creed.

The ceremony begins with a song. The rubric offers no suggestions, not even verses from a psalm. However, any hymn about faith would be especially fitting. When the gospel account of the Ephphatha is proclaimed on the Twenty-Third Sunday in Ordinary Time of Year B, the lectionary suggests verses from Psalm 146, which praises God who opens the eyes of the blind and raises up

those who are bowed down. Those verses provide another idea for the opening song of this ceremony.

The only suggested reading is the aforesaid miracle from Mark 7:31-37. In the miracle, one of the few accounts where the gospels record a word in Aramaic, Jesus' own language, he opens the ears of a deaf man and removes the impediment from the man's speech. In doing so, Jesus touched the man's ears and tongue.

The celebrant explains the meaning of this gospel (198). Then the celebrant uses his thumb to touch the right and left ear, as well as the closed lips of each of the elect. He recites a formula each time: "Ephphatha, that is, be opened, that you may profess the faith you have heard, to the praise and glory of God." If the number of elect is large, the celebrant may abbreviate the formula after using it in full the first time, or he may involve other priests and deacons to assist (199).

That concludes the first of these rites, and it could end there. If the elect are making a retreat day, they could spend some time in private prayer, hear a spiritual reflection, or take a walk before returning for the next ceremony. Or it may follow immediately.

The next of the rites is the Recitation of the Creed. Its purpose is to prepare the elect for their baptismal profession of faith that evening and to instruct them in their duty to proclaim the message of the Gospel (193). The Ephphatha precedes this rite so that this becomes the first of its fruits.

Having memorized the words, the elect are expected to recite the creed "prior to professing their faith in accordance with that Creed on the day of their Baptism" (148). In Latin, the title of this ceremony, the Recitation, plays on the title for Handing On the Creed. The first is called the *traditio*; this one is called the *redditio*. What has been handed on is now being handed back. The elect show us by their memorization that the words have taken hold within them.

This ceremony is only conducted if the elect indeed celebrated the Handing On of the Creed (186 §1). That ceremony may have been omitted because of some unexplained "necessity". Whereas this again shows the optional nature of these rites, it also demonstrates their interdependence.

A song may begin this celebration (194). Again, no text is proposed, but something pertaining to faith or the power of Christ would make a good selection.

For the reading, one of three gospel passages may be proclaimed. In Matthew 16:13-17, Peter makes his confession of faith that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. In Mark 7:31-37, Jesus performs the miracle for the deaf man with the hearing impediment; this is chosen if the Ephphatha is performed within this same liturgy. The third option is another confession of Peter's faith, when he proclaims his allegiance to Jesus after the discourse on the bread of life (John 6:35, 63-71). The first and third of these options are closer in meaning than the middle one, but they are placed in the list—as frequently happens in the lectionary—in the order in which the readings appear in the bible.

A brief homily applies the significance of the reading. If the Ephphatha Rite is included in this ceremony, it is done after the homily (199).

The celebrant offers a prayer over the elect who are about to recite the creed. He asks that they profess it, hold onto it in faith, and accomplish it by their works (195).

The elect recite the creed from memory (196). They recite either the Apostles' or the Nicene Creed, depending on which one they received in the Rite of Handing On. St. Augustine required his elect to do the same. Imagine if you could not read, that you had no written version of the creed even if you could read, that you were required to recite the creed correctly in public before you could be baptized, that among those listening to you was your bishop, and that your bishop was St. Augustine. Then you get some idea of the intimidation that served one's preparation for initiation into the paschal mystery.

The recitation brings this ceremony to a close. However, it may also end with the blessing and dismissal added to the edition in the United States (204-205).

Another Rite of Immediate Preparation is called Choosing a Christian Name (200). The revised translation makes it clearer here that this option needs to be permitted by the diocesan bishop. It would be fitting if any of the elect have been carrying a name incompatible with Christian beliefs. In some cases, a new name may have been given at the Rite of Entrance into the Catechumenate, so that the person could continue their complete formation under a name in keeping with Christianity.

The ceremony begins with an appropriate song. No text is suggested, but a hymn in keeping with Christian belief, virtues, the covenant, or God's call by name may be appropriate.

Several scripture passages are suggested (201). In Genesis 17:1-7, God establishes a covenant with Abram and gives him the name Abraham. In Isaiah 62:1-5 God assigns a new name to his chosen people. In Revelation 3:11-13 the voice of Christ announces that upon the victor over temptations he will write the name of his God, the name of the city, and his own name. In Matthew 16:13-18, Jesus gives Simon the name Peter. In John 1:40-42 he assigns Simon the name Cephas, meaning the head. The celebrant explains the selected reading.

For the rite, the celebrant imposes a new name upon the elect (202). Their new name becomes their baptismal name, their Christian name. The rubric indicates that the elect have chosen this name beforehand, and now they receive it formally.

Another option presents itself. If the elect already have a Christian name, and if the number of the elect is not too numerous, the Christian meaning of the name received at birth from their parents may be explained to them.

That concludes the ceremony. However, in the United States a blessing and dismissal may be added (204-205).

**Or, in keeping with another option, these ceremonies may conclude with yet another rite, Handing On the Lord's Prayer. In that event, depending on the length of the ceremonies you wish, a song introduces the readings, including the proclamation of the all-important gospel from Matthew, a homily, a prayer over the elect, and a dismissal as provided in that rite. That would provide a harmonious conclusion to the entire suite of Rites of Immediate Preparation. It would continue a custom that St. Augustine favored, and put the handing on of the Lord's Prayer on the same day, indeed within a few hours of the recitation of the Lord's Prayer with the entire gathering of the faithful during the Liturgy of the Eucharist at the Easter Vigil.**

**The Concluding Rites that appear in the ritual book are unique to the edition in the United States. The suggested prayer (204) is taken from the collection of blessings of catechumens, found earlier in the book at 97B, where the celebrant may lay hands on the catechumens. Here, he extends his hands over all the elect.**

**The dismissal formula (205), also unique to the United States, is based on another one unique to the United States, found in the rite of sending to the rite of election (116). The first awaits the return of the elect for the scrutinies, and this awaits their return to celebrate the paschal mystery in their rites of initiation.**

**As "the time of purification and enlightenment is given to a more intense preparation of spirit and heart" (139), so the Church offers the elect a series of extra ceremonies to invite a deeper reflection on the initiation rites to come. Excitement mounts. Those who prepare the elect attending to the details of these rites, giving their time for a proper celebration, will help them approach their new life in Christ with purified heart and enlightened spirit. All this blossoms in the important ceremonies that the rubrics so meaningfully call the Rites of Handing On and of Immediate Preparation.**