

## **Preparing for the Rite of Election**

On Saturday, February 25, 2012 the Amigo Hall and St George's Cathedral will be a hive of activity. On that day people who are journeying through the process of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) will gather for a unique liturgy; the Rite of Election.

Presided by Archbishop Peter Smith and assisted by the three Auxiliary Bishops: Bishop John Hine, Kent; Bishop Patrick Lynch, South East and Bishop Paul Hendricks, South West they will welcome and acknowledge those who attend, recognising the commitment and desire to be in full communion with the Catholic Church. The Centre for Catholic Formation (formerly the Christian Education Centre) coordinates this Diocesan event in conjunction with the Chancery, Cathedral staff, the Diocesan Music Committee, the Deaf Chaplaincy and many volunteers.

The Rite of Election is not a Mass. It is an opportunity for Archbishop Peter, on behalf of the whole church, to summon and therefore elect, those who are preparing for Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist, which they will receive at Easter. It is also a time when the Archbishop recognises the desire of those already baptised, to come into full communion within the Catholic Church.

Over the years we have seen the numbers at the Rite of Election fluctuate and grow. This indicates that more and more people are joining the Catholic Church, both those who have never been baptised (catechumens) and those who have been baptised (candidates) in another Christian tradition.

These catechumens and candidates come to the Rite of Election through the parish ministry of RCIA, often known as Journey of Faith. In different parishes within the Diocese people are welcomed to the RCIA where they will encounter communities of faith, acknowledge God's action in their lives, respond to the Gospel and its rich values and prepare themselves to come to the sacraments at Easter.

In 2011 we also welcomed six groups within the Ordinariate of Our Lady of Walsingham who were seeking to be received into the full communion of the Catholic Church at the Rite of Election.

We use the Combined Rite #547-561 with Election for Catechumens and the Call to Continuing Conversion of Candidates. A service booklet is prepared with the hymns, scripture references, prayers and responses. The Book of the Elect is symbolically located in the Baptistery and those preparing for baptism, the catechumens, are invited to sign it.

Several 'Preview Evenings' are held for RCIA co-ordinators, teams, catechumens and candidates in order to give them a sense of the liturgy and what to expect. We receive many positive comments about how helpful these evenings have been. Several parishes have now begun to use this Preview Evening as their weekly session.

If you have any questions about the Rite of Election or the RCIA please contact the Centre for Catholic Formation.

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