

# Archbishop Lori's Homily - Rite of Election 2018

*Rite of Election 2018*

*Cathedral of Mary Our Queen*

*Baltimore, MD*

*Feb. 18, 2018*

Every day we make choices. We choose what to eat and what to wear. We try to choose what is best for our families and loved ones. Yes, making choices is a part of daily life.

The Rite of Election, however, is not just a gathering of people who have chosen a new religious denomination. Indeed, no one should choose a religion the way a consumer chooses a restaurant or a car... merely because we think it fits our style or merely because we find it inspiring and comforting.

No, you are here because you are convinced in your mind and heart that the Catholic Church offers the fullness of the Christian faith. You are here because you believe that in this community you can be deepened in God's love and be authentic followers of Christ. And so in freedom and joy, you stand before us today as those who have said 'yes' to the action of the Holy Spirit in your lives. Now, with your sponsors, you are asking to be chosen, to be 'elected' for Baptism and Reception into the Church at Easter. You certainly have my vote!

Now an intense time of preparation for the Easter Vigil lies before you, forty days of repentance and interior reflection we call Lent. In this time of intense preparation, the Church calls you in two ways: first is purification and second is enlightenment. A word about each.

In our response to the Scripture readings, we sang Psalm 51 - "A clean heart create for me, O God, and a steadfast spirit renew within me!" A clean heart; a heart free of sin; a heart that is sincere and steadfast in virtue; a heart that is open to God's love and opens itself to others in love. Think of what peace and joy we'd all feel if our

hearts were truly like that.

Yet, we know that attaining a pure heart takes more than our choosing it. We have to grapple with temptation; we have to grapple with sin. The reading from the Book of Genesis tells how the devil tempted Adam and Eve. He convinced them that they'd be happier if they would disobey God. Alas, they fell for the devil's lies; they became enamored by the glamor of evil, with tragic consequences for themselves and for the whole human family. As the result of the fall of our first parents, you and I still find sin attractive. It promises happiness but in fact brings unhappiness, even misery into our lives and into the lives of many other people. Even so, how often we're tempted to sin; how often we fall.

Jesus too was tempted by the devil; tempted to false dominion, power, and glory. The devil tried to convince Jesus to renounce his heavenly Father and to abandon his mission to save us from our sins. As one of us, in our humanity, Jesus fought off the devil's temptations and embraced his God-given mission to preach, to heal, to suffer, and to die for us! By rejecting the devil and his temptations, Jesus opened the way for you and me to overcome temptation and sin in our lives. In fact, that is what this season of repentance and purification really is all about. It's a time of interior reflection and prayer for God's grace to root out of hearts evil inclinations and to address patterns of sinful behavior. It's all about recognizing and overcoming in our lives whatever it is that impedes our freedom to embrace the Lord's love in purity of heart. And so we engage in prayer, fasting, and works of mercy. Where appropriate, we make use of the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Daily we pray to Lord, "Wash me from my guilt and of my sin cleanse me!" Daily we pray for that new heart and that new spirit for which we long.

For it is that new heart, that pure heart freed of every encumbrance of sin that is truly open to the vision of God's glory, for as Jesus himself teaches in the Sermon on the Mount, "Blessed are the pure of heart, for they shall see God". Friends, the light we seek is brighter than the sun! It's more glorious than the stars! The wisdom we seek is wiser than the sum of all human knowledge and wisdom. We are made for God and for his truth and for the glory of his self-giving love. So the light we seek

and long for is the glory of God shining on the face of Christ, the One who loves us more than we can imagine, the One who gave his life for us!

Thus, to become a Christian is not merely an ethical decision or a lofty idea; it's not only a matter of trying to live a better, more virtuous life. No, to be a Christian is to encounter Christ who gives our lives a new horizon of hope and a decisive direction. In this season of Lent, this time of enlightenment, we beseech the Holy Spirit to open the door of our hearts to Christ, who is God from God and light from light. We are asking for the light of his truth, for the joy of Gospel to flood our minds and hearts so that we may live as his disciples and take an active part in the community of disciples we call the Church. As the light and love of Jesus dawns upon you more and more completely, you will also find in yourselves a new openness to the Gospel and a new openness to all that the Church believes and teaches. You will come to see the Church's teaching not as a set of rules but rather as a path of discipleship, a path of wholeness, a path of joy.

So today all of us gathered in this Cathedral and throughout the Archdiocese offer you our warm and loving support. We give thanks that Spirit of God has touched your hearts. I warmly thank your sponsors even as I ask them to model what it means to follow Christ as members of the Church. I thank your catechists for guiding you and walking with you in this journey and for supporting you as you prepare for Baptism and Reception into the Church. I warmly thank all the parish communities throughout the Archdiocese of Baltimore for truly opening your hearts in welcome to our newest members!

Dear friends, so soon to be chosen, I assure you of my daily prayers. May you become loving members of God's Holy People! May you live in purity of heart, filled with the light and love Christ, and be active members of the Church, the Body of Christ, all the days of your life. God bless you and keep you always in his love!