

More Than 800 Prepare Throughout the Archdiocese of Enter the Catholic Church at Special Masses Sunday

The Archdiocese of Baltimore will welcome a total of 825 catechumens and candidates expected to enter the Catholic Church this Easter at a Rite of Election on Sunday, February 13 at 3 p.m. at:

Cathedral of Mary Our Queen, Baltimore
Shrine of the Basilica of Elizabeth Seton, Emmitsburg
St. John Neumann, Annapolis

Cardinal William H. Keeler, Archbishop of Baltimore, will welcome 172 catechumens (those seeking Baptism), and 326 candidates (those already baptized Christian) at the Cathedral, while Bishop W. Francis Malooly will welcome 60 catechumens and 83 candidates at the Shrine of the Basilica of Elizabeth Ann Seton in Emmitsburg, and Bishop Mitchell T. Rozanski will welcome 52 catechumens and 132 candidates at St. John Neumann in Annapolis.

For the catechumens, the Rite of Election closes the lengthy period of formation of the catechumen's minds and hearts. It marks the beginning of the period of final, more intense preparation for the sacraments of initiation. At this time, on the basis of the testimony of godparents and catechists and of the catechumens' reaffirmation of their intention, the Church judges their state of readiness and decides on their advancement toward the sacraments of initiation. Thus the Church makes its "election", that is, the choice and admission of those catechumens who are ready to receive the sacraments of initiation.

The days of Lent are the final period of purification and enlightenment leading up to the celebration of initiation at the Easter Vigil. During the Easter Vigil Liturgy on Holy Saturday, the catechumen will receive the sacraments of Baptism,

Confirmation and Eucharist.

For candidates for reception into the full communion of the Catholic Church and for candidates preparing for Confirmation and Eucharist, it is the Rite of the Call to Continuing Conversion. They, too, are affirmed by their sponsors and recognized by the Church.

In 2004, there were a total of 764 catechumens and candidates welcomed into the Church.