



April 7, 2026

Dear Pastors,

Happy Easter!

We have experienced a very momentous OCIA process this year in the Diocese of St. Augustine with a record number of catechumens and candidates presented to Bishop Pohlmeier at 4 celebrations of the Rite of Election. The Holy Spirit is certainly working within our parishes to call forth people to explore, discern, and eventually if appropriate join the Catholic Church. We filled our Cathedral Basilica at all four celebrations with a total number of 1263 people called forward to the Easter Sacraments. This is 310 more than last year and the largest ever number since the diocese started providing the Rite of Election in 1987. We look for similar growth in the years ahead.

With this growth comes an opportunity for us to be even better at our initiation process, particularly for the already baptized and in conjunction with the revised Order. While the Rite of Election does have an adaptation of the rite to include the already baptized in Appendix 1, most of the OCIA is focused on the unbaptized. The local Ordinary is obligated to examine and call to the Easter Sacraments those who are not baptized. This requirement does not exist for the baptized. The baptized can be brought into the Church throughout the year unless they have an impediment.

The revised National Statutes for the Christian Initiation of Adults, now Norms, are focused on the unbaptized. While some Norms are also normative for how we work with the baptized, these norms are directed to the main purpose of the OCIA which is to welcome the unbaptized.

Starting with the coming OCIA year, which begins during this Easter Season, the Rites of Election will be celebrated with only the catechumens. This means that we are forgoing the combined Rites of Appendix 1 and we are focusing on the Rites as they apply to the catechumens. This frees you, as pastor, to fully initiate the baptized throughout the year, when they are ready to be received, to avoid the “further burden being imposed” as described in OCIA #474. A study of the following sections of the OCIA will assist you in knowing how to proceed with your candidates:

OCIA # 400- 410 baptized uncatechized Catholics – delegation from Bishop Pohlmeier needed to confirm.

OCIA #473-486 baptized Christians from another faith tradition. No delegation needed as this is part of your pagella of faculties.

There needs to be a discussion and understanding of the best days to celebrate the entrance into full communion of these candidates, but that is beyond the scope of this letter.

Several of the rites that we have celebrated as combined through Appendix 1 will now be optional for the candidates. For example, They would not participate in a Rite of Sending. A celebration of the Rite of Election would not be appropriate at the parish.

The catechumens will now be the only people signing the Book of the Elect. While we have long had the candidates sign as well, this is no longer appropriate. The only people aptly called “the Elect” are the unbaptized. The baptized are already among the Elect.

As we move into this new opportunity to welcome even more people to the Eucharistic Table without additional burden, we will have several opportunities for additional training in expanding the formation of our catechumens and assessing more fully the needs of the baptized.

I will be hosting 2 Zoom sessions for OCIA Coordinators in the coming weeks. I would welcome your presence at either gathering as well. The OCIA Board and I will be offering in-person training in June.

May our good God bless you richly for all that you do to shepherd souls!

Erin

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“You have already been told what is right and what the Lord asks of you. Only this, to do what is right, to love loyalty, and to walk humbly with your God.” (Micah 6:8)