



DISCUSSION GUIDE

part 6 of 7



The Celebration of the Sacraments of Initiation

Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist are rites of initiation into a lifetime of Christian discipleship. Celebrated together, they bring to our senses through sign and symbol the fundamental truths of our life in Christ: light of the world, living water, oil of salvation, and bread of life as we pray amid the saints of God past and present. From the moment of their baptism, the newly initiated are called “neophytes”—new plants. At the celebration of initiation, they join the faithful for the first time in exercising the dignity and duty of their baptismal priesthood by taking part in the Universal Prayer and in the celebration of the Eucharist. Reflection upon these rites leads us all more deeply into the mystery of Christ’s death and resurrection.



Continue this conversation at the
National Gathering on Christian Initiation™
August 1-3, 2023 • Chicago
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FOR YOUR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

GOD’S WORD MAKES THE VIGIL

Having been nourished by the word of God throughout their formation, the elect now come to the Easter Vigil. In this “mother of all Vigils,” “nine readings are provided ... seven from the Old Testament and two from the New ... all of which should be read whenever this can be done.” (Roman Missal, The Easter Vigil in the Holy Night, 20). Through the readings, the elect, together with the whole Church, meditate on “the wonders the Lord God has done for his people from the beginning,” (ibid., 2), and prepare to participate in the Lord’s saving work by reception of the paschal sacraments.

- How can we help the elect to enter into the Easter Vigil’s lengthy retelling of the wonders God has done for his people, and to understand that God is preparing to work a wonder in them through the sacraments of initiation?
- How can we prepare our lectors and liturgical musicians to celebrate the liturgy of the word well, with artistry and devotion?

THE DIGNITY OF THE BAPTISMAL PRIESTHOOD

What is the first liturgical action of the newly initiated? In the ancient world, the most sacred practices were kept secret from non-Christians, and even those undergoing instruction in the faith were dismissed after the readings, as they are today. At the celebration of initiation, the newly initiated join the faithful for the first time in exercising the dignity and duty of their baptismal priesthood. Their first liturgical action as Christians is to take part in the Universal Prayer, by which they pray for the church, the salvation of the world, all those in need, and the local community.

- Are you engaged by the Universal Prayer in your parish? Why or why not? What could make it more engaging?
- How do you feel when you hear yourself represented in the Universal Prayer? Does your parish pray for the inquirers, catechumens, elect, neophytes, and baptized candidates?

A SENSORY CELEBRATION OF THE EASTER VIGIL

At the beginning of their journey, the elect received the sign of the cross over their entire being (forehead, ears, eyes, lips, chest, shoulders, hands, and feet). Let us prepare the Easter Vigil liturgy so that it becomes a sensory experience for the entire community. Our hearts and minds are stirred by the power of the paschal mystery. We hear the Good News and respond in word and acclamation. Abundant use of the signs and symbols helps all see a deeper meaning that calls us to missionary discipleship capable of carrying others’ burdens. We journey to font and table, touching the water and with our hands creating a throne for Christ in the Eucharist.

- How can we prepare the Easter Vigil so that it becomes a sensory celebration for all in attendance?
- What can we do to help our baptized parishioners understand the signs and symbols, gestures and responses of the Easter Vigil?