

RCIA SCRUTINES- Preparation for Adults

Why are the RCIA Scrutinies Celebrated?

- The Scrutinies are celebrated for the Elect (unbaptized) on the 3RD, 4TH, and 5TH Sundays of Lent.
- These Rites are celebrated to help deliver the Elect from the power of sin and Satan, to protect them against temptation, and to give them strength in Christ, who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life (RCIA 141).
- The Scrutinies uncover what is weak and sinful and strengthen what is good and upright in the elect. Through them, “the Elect are instructed gradually about the mystery of sin, from which the whole world and every person longs to be delivered...” (RCIA 143).
- The things that keep the elect from saying “yes!” are the things that must be scrutinized and exorcized, for in a few short weeks, they must respond “yes, I believe” as they stand at the edge of death at the font.
- The readings are always taken from Lectionary Year A readings each year.

Year A Gospel Readings:

- The Gospel story of the Samaritan woman at the well for the 1st Scrutiny (John 4:5-42)
- The Gospel story of the healing of the man born blind for the 2nd Scrutiny (John 9:1-41)
- The Gospel story of the raising of Lazarus for the 3rd Scrutiny (John 11:1-45)
- Just as the Scrutinies themselves are meant to be a series of rites spanning over an extended period of time, so too are these three Gospel readings meant to be “digested” little by little with time in between each set of readings. This is because the readings in their assigned sequence reflect the very purpose of the Scrutiny Rites.

How might the Scrutinies of the RCIA process help the parish as a whole?

The celebrations of the Scrutinies also remind the whole parish community of the need to reflect on their own sins and the need for God’s help. The universal Church hears the stories of the Samaritan woman, the man born blind, and the raising of Lazarus. These readings were chosen to be the driving force of prayerful introspection, surrender, and conversion. They offer powerful images of surrender, sin, conversion, faith, and healing. In our faith journey with those seeking Baptism, we must stir our souls, as if they were dying campfires, to expose any parts of ourselves that have not been purified by the burning love of the Holy Spirit. We are challenged with the Samaritan woman at the well when we thirst for the Lord, who knows what we need and provides it; we beg, with the man born blind, to see Jesus, who is the light and gives us sight; and finally we lie with Lazarus within the tomb of oblivion and death, built with the stones of our own sins, until Jesus reaches out his hand and pulls us from the pit. Take this gift of the Church and use this group of readings as Lenten reflections. The Scripture readings for each Scrutiny are listed below. Read them slowly, asking the Lord to give you the grace to hear what is being said to you. Share these readings with your family.

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INSTRUCTIONS FOR PREPARING FOR THE SCRUTINIES BY THE ELECT AND ALL IN RCIA

Elect and all of those in the RCIA: please take time to read and reflect on each Gospel reading for the 3 Scrutinies:

Scrutiny 1 (John 4:5-42)

In the story of the woman at the well, the Samaritan woman hears Jesus then goes and tells the villagers what she has heard, causing them to seek him out for themselves. The reading ends with the villagers saying to the woman, “We no longer believe because of your word; for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is truly the savior of the world” (John 4:42). **Was this not the starting point of every Elect and all of us? We heard a word, a word that we discovered over time to be Christ. Upon discovering who was speaking to us, we no longer believed because of hearsay, obligation, or pressure, but because we heard Christ’s voice for ourselves.**

Action for Elect and All in RCIA: *(Please read the Gospel above/meditate/journal answers to questions)*

Looking back on your spiritual journey, think of one of the times that you realized that Christ was speaking to you. What was he saying to you or asking you? How did you respond?

Scrutiny 2 (John 9:1-41)

In the story of the man born blind, the man healed of his blindness gradually grows to see as Christ sees. He regains his sight right at the start of the story. But only because of the interrogation he receives from his neighbors and the Pharisees and his struggle to respond to them faithfully, does he little by little begin to see the identity of who it was who healed him. By the end of the story, the one who healed him was no longer to him just “the man called Jesus” (John 9:11) or simply “a prophet” (John 9:17) or “from God” (John 9:33). He was “Lord” (John 9:38) in whom he believed. For the Elect and others in the RCIA, this progression may be familiar. **At the start of your catechumenate, RCIA participants’ eyes are signed “that [they] may see the glory of God” (Rite of Acceptance, RCIA 56). Through the catechesis you received over the months and your experience with the community of believers you grow in understanding of what you see—who the man Jesus was, the prophetic words he spoke, his unique relationship with the Father, and finally his true identity as Lord. He came to touch you personally.**

Action for Elect and All in RCIA: *(Please read the Gospel above/meditate/journal answers to questions below)*

Describe one of the things that happened in or outside of class or one of the interactions you had with a believer over the period of the catechumenate that touched you and truly helped to open your eyes see “the glory of God “ – to see who the man Jesus really is. What was your reaction at that time?

Scrutiny 3 (John 11:1-45)

In the story of the raising of Lazarus, we come to the final days before the Elect must stand before the font and profess their faith. In this reading, the miracle happens at the end of the story, but faith is already expressed long before the miracle takes place. Martha makes her profession of faith in Jesus the Messiah even as her brother is lying dead in the tomb. She needed no words and no miraculous deeds to believe in him; she only needed to believe. Period.

In this final story, we see what those who have been entrusted to continue Jesus' work have hopefully been doing in order to prepare the Elect to make their profession of faith. They have been preparing them, like Jesus prepared Martha and Mary, to understand the paschal mystery they would witness in the resurrection—that out of death comes new life in Christ. Only after Lazarus is revived and Jesus is raised from the dead will Martha truly understand the words of faith she professed. It is her belief in and love for Jesus that allow her to be ready for whatever he will do despite her human logic that death is death, for “Martha believes not in *what* she understands but in the one who has the words of eternal life” (Sandra Schneiders, *Written That You May Believe*, Crossroad Publishing Company, p. 158).

Action for Elect and All in RCIA: *(Please read the Gospel above/meditate/journal answers to questions below)*

In a short paragraph, write your understanding of the Paschal Mystery. How does your faith play a role in believing in the Paschal Mystery? What has the Paschal Mystery come to mean for you personally?