



Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

As we accompany the Elect on their Lenten journey toward the Easter sacraments, the celebration of the Scrutinies is a privileged moment of grace. These rites, celebrated on the Third, Fourth, and Fifth Sundays of Lent, serve to strengthen the Elect in their conversion, purify their hearts, and prepare them for their full initiation into the Church at the Easter Vigil. Here are some pastoral considerations:

### **Understanding the Purpose**

The Scrutinies are not merely prayers of exorcism but profound encounters with Christ, who heals, strengthens, and calls the elect to deeper conversion. They reveal the presence of sin but also affirm God's power to bring freedom and new life. Rooted in the Gospel readings from Year A—Jesus as the Living Water, the Light of the World, and the Resurrection and the Life—these rites help the elect confront weakness and sin while trusting in God's mercy.

### **Celebrating with Pastoral Sensitivity**

- Use the prescribed liturgical texts: The Scrutinies for adults should not be rushed, changed, or abbreviated. The prayers and intercessions are powerful and should be proclaimed with reverence.
- Be present to the elect: Take time beforehand to explain the significance of each scrutiny, helping them understand that this is a moment of deep grace.
- The celebrant should receive and speak to the Elect with fraternal charity and joy.
- The community also plays a role by praying for the Elect: These rites are not private but involve the whole parish, who are called to support the elect with prayer and witness. The faithful should be encouraged to see their own need for ongoing conversion.

### **Proclaiming the Word of God with Conviction**

The Church prescribes the use of the Year A readings when the Scrutinies are celebrated. These powerful Gospel accounts—Jesus and the Samaritan Woman, the Man Born Blind, and the Raising of Lazarus—speak directly to the themes of purification and enlightenment. Preach in a way that connects these readings to the lives of the elect and the entire community.

### **Reciting the Prayer of Exorcism**

The prayer of exorcism in each scrutiny asks God to strengthen the elect against sin and evil. These prayers should be proclaimed with faith, confidence, and pastoral care, recognizing that all present are in need of God's healing and deliverance. Speak the words with a tone of fatherly love, emphasizing God's mercy and the power of Christ to bring freedom.

### **Fostering a Spirit of Prayerful Reflection**

The Scrutinies invite the elect and the entire community into deeper self-examination. Consider incorporating moments of silence before or after the prayers, allowing space for personal reflection. The elect should sense that they are being drawn closer to Christ, who alone satisfies the thirst of their hearts.



### **Encouraging the Elect to Continue in Prayer and Preparation**

Outside the liturgy, encourage the elect to pray with the Gospel readings, to reflect on their own spiritual journey, and to trust in God's work in their lives. Offer opportunities for spiritual conversation and support, ensuring they feel accompanied in their preparation for Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist.

### **Leading with Joy and Hope**

Above all, celebrate these rites with the confidence that God is powerfully at work. The Scrutinies are not about fear but about grace. They are moments of profound encounter with Christ, who calls the elect—and all of us—into deeper freedom and life. As we lead them through these sacred rites, may our ministry reflect the gentle yet firm love of Christ, who seeks out the lost and leads them to the waters of new birth.

## **CELEBRATION OF THE SCRUTINIES**

1. The Presentations cannot be combined with the Scrutinies: adding the “Handing On of the Creed” or the “Handing On of the Lord’s Prayer” into or after the scrutiny rites detracts from the centrality of the exorcism and makes the liturgy seem cluttered.
2. At the masses where the Scrutinies take place, the presidential prayers are from “For the Celebration of the Scrutinies” in the *Roman Missal* (see Ritual Masses, no. 2).
3. The Scrutinies are celebrated on the Third, Fourth and Fifth Sundays of Lent. Only the bishop can dispense the requirement for celebrating all three Scrutinies for adults. “The Bishop can, for his own diocese dispense from one Scrutiny in view of serious impediments or even, in exceptional circumstances, from two” (*Order of Christian Initiation of Adults*, 34.3). If one of your Elect has to be absent from the scrutiny on Sunday, you can celebrate it with him/her later in the week — either at a weekday Mass or an evening Liturgy of the Word. If the latter, a deacon may preside.
4. While children Elect are required to celebrate at least one Scrutiny; the OCIA offers the option of celebrating the Scrutinies along with the adults OR an adaptation of the adult rite (see OCIA, 291-294). Most parishes find that including the children in the Scrutinies with the adults is a powerful spiritual moment for both the child catechumens and their families.
5. Scrutinies are celebrated for the Elect only (those that are NOT BAPTIZED). Candidates (those BAPTIZED) would be invited to participate in the Penitential Rite (OCIA, 461) and the sacrament of Reconciliation at the appropriate time.
6. The Scrutinies take place after the homily (OCIA, 166).
7. The Elect and their godparents come forward and stand before the celebrant, where they are visible to the congregation and near the presiding priest.
8. The presiding priest invites the congregation to pray for the Elect in silence, while the Elect bow their heads or kneel and their godparents place their right hand on the Elect’s shoulder.
9. The Intercessions for the Elect are prayed (OCIA, 153). The Elect and their godparents remain in the same body posture as indicated above no. 7. The whole congregation stands to offer up the petitions. The usual intentions for the Church and the whole world should be added if the Elect are to be dismissed after the Intercessions and the Universal Prayer (Prayer of the Faithful) is omitted during Mass.
10. After the Intercessions the celebrant says one of the prayers of Exorcism over the Elect (OCIA, 154). The celebrant may lay hands in silence on each of the Elect. Afterwards the priest continues with the prayer.



11. Dismissal of the Elect – The Elect are normally dismissed from the Mass before the Liturgy of the Eucharist. The priest may use option A or B. If the Elect are to stay, Option C is used. If the Eucharist is not celebrated, then option D is used (Like during the week within the Liturgy of the Word by a priest or deacon).
12. During the dismissal, a song or suitable chant may be sung following the prayer to Christ may help the assembly to affirm the ritual action.
  - a. Psalms 6, 26 (25), 32 (31), 38 (37), 40 (39), 51 (50), 116:1-9 (114), 130 (129), 139 (138), or 142 (141).
  - b. Some suggested hymns: “Christ in Me, Arise” (Thompson, OCP), “A Blessing” (Wheeler, ILP), “Open My Eyes”/ “Abre mis ojos” (Manibusan, OCP), “Caminaré” (Espinosa, OCP).
13. After the dismissal and the conclusion of the hymn, if it was sung, the Creed is said or may be omitted.
14. The Universal Prayer (Prayer of the Faithful) begins immediately unless it was combined with the Intercessions for the Elect; but for pastoral reasons, the Universal Prayer may also be omitted.
15. The Offertory begins and Mass continues in the usual way.

### The Lectionary Text for the celebration of the Scrutinies – Year A

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| <b>1st Scrutiny</b><br><b>3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Lent</b> | Exodus 17:3 – 7<br>Israel grumbling in the desert; God gives water to drink. | Psalm 95  | Romans 5: 1 – 2, 5 – 8 The love of God has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit. | John 4: 5 – 42 The Samaritan woman at Jacob’s well.   |
| <b>2nd Scrutiny</b><br><b>4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Lent</b> | 1 Samuel 16: 1, 6 – 7, 10 – 13 David is chosen and anointed.                 | Psalm 23  | Ephesians 5: 8 – 14 Live as children of the light.  | John 9: 1 – 41 The man who had been blind from birth  |
| <b>3rd Scrutiny</b><br><b>5<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Lent</b> | Ezekiel 37: 12 – 14 I will put my spirit in you that you may live.           | Psalm 130 | Romans 8: 8 – 11 If the Spirit of Christ is in you, you will have life.                         | John 11: 1 – 45 The raising of Lazarus from the dead. |