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Elect enter final stages of journey to full communion

PUEBLO — Across the Diocese of Pueblo as Lent started many candidates and catechumens began the final stages of their journey toward baptism or entering into full communion with the Catholic Church at Easter.

Bishop Tafoya conducted the Rite of Election and Call to Continuing Conversion February 25 at the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart in Pueblo. The 2 p.m. ceremony was held for the Pueblo Deanery and a 4 p.m. service was celebrated for the Trinidad/Walsenburg Deanery to accommodate those who have been participating in the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults—the formation process by which a person becomes incorporated into the Church. Two other Rites of Election for candidates and catechumens were celebrated on March 4 for the Grand Junction Deanery at St. Mary in Montrose and for the Durango Deanery on March 4 at St. Columba in Durango.

During the liturgy those called came forward and were greeted by the bishop. The godparents, catechists and the assembly then testified that the catechumens were worthy to be initiated; the participants in turn reaffirmed their intention to be initiated.

"The step is called election," notes the RCIA handbook, "because the acceptance made by the Church is founded on the election by God, in whose name the Church acts."

The process is then repeated for in a Call to Continuing Conversion with the presentation and recognition of baptized candidates preparing for reception into



Several of the Elect pose with Bishop Tafoya after the ceremony which acknowledged their

readiness to receive the sacraments of initiation at the Easter Vigil. Right: Bishop Tafoya signs the Book of the Elect.

Photos by Steve Bigley, APS

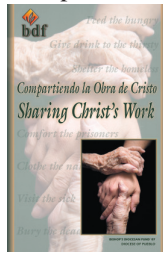


full communion of the Church. Many candidates were raised in a different faith. Some were baptized Catholic but never received first Communion as children or were not confirmed.

"The Rite of Election is that step by which the person enters more deeply, more seriously into their formation," said Bishop Tafoya. "They also enter into a stage of intensive purification."

DURANGO DEANERY RITE OF ELECTION CONTINUED ON 11. GRAND JUNCTION DEANERY RITE OF ELECTION CONT'D ON 13.

Sharing Christ's Work- Compartiendo la Obra de Cristo



for those ministering in our Diocese who follow the Franciscan spirituality, Lent is an opportunity for healing and conversion by using the power of God's love for us. It is a time for thinking about what's right with my life and what's wrong with it and a time for doing something to change what's wrong—in God's love and through God's love!

These two approaches to Lent are very different. The traditional approach is about giving up things we enjoy.

The Franciscan approach requires deeper self-reflection and, often, tougher solutions. The one "pays" for

past sins; the other focuses on loving God and each other more deeply.

But

Thus we can say an alternative vision of Lent is not centered on our sin, but rather on the grace of God. Lent then is a time to expand our hearts toward family, friends, neighbors, enemies, the poor, and the homeless, in our Diocese. It is a time to choose love and life!

The last several weeks you have heard your parish priests and leaders speak to you about the needs of the Diocese of Pueblo in our Annual BDF Diocesan Appeal. Learning how to love with the awesome love of Jesus and learning how to share that kind of loving is what those who are involved in the ministry for the Diocese are about.

Unfortunately, that ministry could not be totally realized without your support. We are grateful for the many who have already shown your support through your contributions and encourage the other members of our parish communities to choose to assist us that God's grace might be more evident in our Diocesan life.

Your support is an investment in the future and the ministry of Christ. Our mission continues to remind us that we work together as members of the Body of Christ to help our Diocesan community to grow in vitality.

Your Lenten gift, your pledge to the Diocese ensures that our mission

can truly grow. We have received, especially in this season of Lent, an indication of God's mercy. We need to parallel that with our own charity reflecting God's generosity in all aspects of our lives.

Our gratitude again for choosing to participate in this annual appeal across the 29 counties of Southern and Western Colorado.

Whatever approach of Lent you have chosen to bring to this holy season of Lent, it is our prayer that you become closer to God and feel as well the joy of Easter Sunday.

There are several options for your convenience to make your pledge and payments to Bishop's Diocesan Fund: Pledge envelopes should be available at your church; Pledges are taken on-line at the diocesan website www.bishopdiocesansfund.org; Automatic Withdraws from your checking or savings account on a monthly or quarterly schedule is also now available.

EASTER 2007

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ:

Greetings during this most Holy Week of the Christian year. I pray that your journey through Lent has been fruitful.

This week we celebrate the Easter Triduum, the three holy days commemorating the death and resurrection of Jesus. Each day is significant, but only as it relates to the others. We cannot separate the death of Jesus from His resurrection.

On Holy Thursday we commemorate the First Mass. The Gospel reading is from John. "So when he had washed their feet and put his garments back on and reclined at table again, he said to them, "Do you realize what I have done for you? You call me 'teacher' and 'master,' and rightly so, for indeed I am. If, therefore, the master and teacher have washed your feet, you ought to wash one another's feet. I have given you a model to follow, so that as I have done for you, you should also do." (John 13:12-15)

Christ gave us the Eucharist to nourish and strengthen us and fill us with His love, and in turn He expects us to love and serve one another.

Good Friday is a day of fast and abstinence. It is at this Liturgy that John tells us of Peter's betrayal.

At the Last Supper, when Jesus told His disciples that someone would betray Him, Peter swore that he would never do this, even if everyone else did. But by the time the rooster crowed, Peter had betrayed Jesus, not once, not twice, but three times.

Was it because of malice that Peter betrayed Jesus, or simply because of weakness? Peter loved Jesus and sincerely believed that he would keep his promise. We also love Jesus and, in the Sacrament of Penance, we confess our sins and promise not to sin again. But we are also weak and unable to keep our promises.

But the amazing part of this story is not that we are sinful, but that Jesus forgives us, just as He forgave Peter. God continues to love us and share His blessings with us. How wonderful is our God!

Holy Saturday is a day of anticipation, when we eagerly await the resurrection of Our Lord and Savior.

It is after dusk on Holy Saturday that we celebrate the Easter Vigil, the most important celebration of the entire liturgical year. Pope John Paul II wrote, "Catechumens and candidates are received into the Church at the Easter Vigil.

On this night, the liturgy speaks to us with all the abundance and wealth of the Word of God. This Vigil is not only the heart of the liturgical year, but is in some ways its womb: from it springs all of sacramental life. We could say that on this night, the table around which the Church gathers with her children, especially with those who are about to be baptized, has been lavishly prepared."

Not only catechumens and candidates "but all the baptized are called on this night, in faith, to experience profoundly what we have heard in the Letter to the Romans: "Do you know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by Baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life." (Rom 6: 3-4)

Luke's gospel relates how the women went to the tomb and when they arrived were told, "Why do you seek the living one among the dead? He is not here, but he has been raised." (Luke 24:5-6) Do we still seek Him in the tomb? Our Christian faith should not be based on suffering and death. We should be people alive with joy and hope, affirming and celebrating life. Let us proclaim with the psalmist, "This is the day the Lord has made, let us rejoice in it and be glad." (Psalm 118:24)

May the joy of this Easter season fill you with love for Him and for one another.

Alleluia!
Sincerely yours in Christ,

Arthur N. Tafoya
Bishop of Pueblo



The resurrection of Christ is depicted in a 14th-century painting of tempera on wood. The Easter season begins with the celebration of the Resurrection, which is April 8 this year in the Latin Church. CNS photo



Photo by Mike Photography