

THE RITE OF CHRISTIAN INITIATION - THE SCRUTINIES

Last Saturday at 5:15 mass, this Sunday at 10a.m. and next Sunday at 11:30 we celebrate what are known as the **Scrutinies** for our RCIA candidates who will be welcomed into the Church at this year's Easter Vigil. Our candidates for Full Communion this year are Andrew Courington, Ali Pederson and Ali's daughter Peyton who is a 6th grader at our school.

I've always found that word "scrutiny" to be an odd and troubling one, even though I know what's going on in this rite. But looking at some of the Webster definitions of "scrutinize" can help us to appreciate the deep meaning of that word in the context of this Catholic ritual. Among those definitions, we find *to look at critically or searchingly* and *to examine in order to determine the nature, condition or quality of a thing*. But in the Scrutinies associated with the RCIA, it's not really the Church, much less a priest doing the *scrutinizing*. Rather, it's the candidates themselves who are asked by the instructions and prayers of the rite to look deep into their own hearts and lives and evaluate their own readiness as they approach the end of their Lenten journey and their own celebration of the Easter Sacraments.

If you listen closely to those instructions, prayers and blessings, you will hear a great deal—probably a great deal too much—about sin and Satan. That emphasis probably reflects the ancient origins of these rites which seem to imply something close to an exorcism—though that's certainly not what's happening either! Rather, the candidates for the Easter Sacraments—and we who participate in these rites as well—are simply asked to honestly acknowledge the atmosphere of evil, sin and temptation that can surround us from day to day. By admitting that these realities exist, we're better able to confront them head-on and commit ourselves to living, as best we can, the life of holiness to which we're called as members of the Church.

So, as our candidates *scrutinize* themselves during these three weekends, it's good for us to join them in looking "searchingly" into our own hearts and lives as we consider just how well we're doing in living up to the promises of Baptism. When Ali, Peyton and Andrew have affirmed their new faith at the Easter Vigil, we too will renew the promises of our baptism when we (or more likely our parents and Godparents speaking for us) rejected Satan "and all his works and all his empty promises" and promised to serve God faithfully in the holy Catholic Church.

Fr. Bob