

# Purification and Enlightenment Session

APPRENTICES IN FAITH: A Resource for the RCIA  
Preparation for the Third Rite of Scrutiny • Fifth Sunday of Lent, Year A

## Preparation

Prior to the celebration of the Rite of Scrutiny, it is important to provide a time for spiritual preparation for the elect and their godparents and/or sponsors and members of the RCIA team. Some parishes offer this preparation to the whole parish community as a Lenten activity. This outline is merely a suggestion for how to facilitate the preparation time.

## Setting

**Option 1:** Arrange chairs in a circle. Place a small table in the middle with a purple cloth, a Bible, a candle, a cross, and a symbol that the parish may be using for Lent such as a bowl of sand. If parishioners are present, arrange several small groups. **Option 2:** If this session is held in the church, use the environment that has been set for Lent.

## Gathering

1. Welcome everyone. If this is the first time that members of the parish are present, invite them to introduce themselves to the others in the group.
2. Ask a volunteer to light the candle, and invite everyone to a moment of silence. Then pray, using these or similar words: *In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, we gather to pray. (pause) Send the Holy Spirit to open our minds and hearts as gather to prepare for the Rite of Scrutiny. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.*
3. Briefly explain the Rite of Scrutiny and explain to the participants that this is the third and last scrutiny. The godparent and/or sponsors will rehearse for the ritual and guide the elect through it. The purpose of this gathering is to prepare spiritually for the Rite of Scrutiny.

## Option 1

1. Proclaim the First Reading for the third scrutiny (Ezekiel 37:12–14). After some time for silent reflection, ask the participants to share what they heard in the reading—a word, a phrase, a thought, or a feeling.
2. Briefly comment about the reading, using these or similar points:
  - The setting is the Babylonian exile. The Temple in Jerusalem has been captured and the Israelites have been taken into captivity.
  - The prophet calls the Israelites to have hope.
  - God will breathe life into the people.
3. Invite the group to think about today's world and consider what our world would look like if we had life in abundance. Encourage the participants to explore the reasons why life in abundance does not happen for all. After some time for sharing, gather the groups' reflections and record them on a large piece of paper or on a board.
4. Proclaim the reading again. Then ask the group to reflect on their own lives and what their lives would be like if they lived as the prophet described. After some time for sharing, gather their responses.
5. Invite the participants to spend time between now and the Rite of Scrutiny thinking about the invitation to life in abundance.
6. Close by singing "I Am the Bread of Life" or another appropriate hymn.

## Option 2

1. Proclaim the Gospel for the third scrutiny (John 11:1–45). After a pause for silent reflection, ask the participants to share what they heard in the Gospel—a word, a phrase, a thought, or a feeling.
2. Briefly comment about the reading, using these or similar points:
  - Jesus waited till the fourth day to come to Martha and Mary.

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- Jesus wept about the death of Lazarus.
  - Jesus summons Lazarus to come out of the grave.
  - Jesus commands those present to untie Lazarus—to free him.
3. Ask the group to discuss the following:
    - The many ways we hold people bound.
    - Jesus' statement that he is the resurrection and the life.
    - What steps need to be taken to free people from what binds them?
  4. After some time for discussion, give everyone a piece of paper. Invite them to write a word or a phrase that describes how they are bound and how they would like to be freed.
  5. Invite the participants to spend time between now and the Rite of Scrutiny thinking about what binds us and how we hold bind others. Collect the papers before everyone leaves.

6. Close by singing "I Am the Bread of Life" or another appropriate hymn.

## Option 3

1. Use either formula A or B for the intercessions for the elect found in the ritual text RCIA 174.
2. After the gathering prayer, lead a reflection using the intercessions by proclaiming one intercession at a time. Follow each intercession with a pause and some time for the participants to discuss what it means to them at this point of their faith journey.
3. Proclaim the Gospel for the third scrutiny (John 11:1–45). Invite the group to choose a word, a phrase, or a thought from the Gospel and to think about it each day until the Rite of Scrutiny.
4. Close by singing "I Am the Bread of Life" or another appropriate hymn.