

Purification and Enlightenment Session

APPRENTICES IN FAITH: A Resource for the OCIA
Preparation for the First Scrutiny • Third Sunday of Lent • Year A Readings Used

Preparation

Prior to the celebration of the First Scrutiny, it is important to provide a time for spiritual preparation for the elect and their godparents or sponsors and members of the OCIA 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: *God of day and God of darkness, we give thanks for the many ways that you have blessed us.* (Pause.) *We give thanks for this season of Lent and for this opportunity to step back and consider our relationship with you, our relationship with others, and our relationship to all things.* (Pause.) *Send the Holy Spirit to open our minds and hearts as we gather to prepare for the First Scrutiny. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.*
3. Briefly explain that the Scrutinies are very simple. The godparents or sponsors will rehearse for the ritual and guide the elect through it. The purpose of this gathering is to prepare spiritually for the First Scrutiny.

Option 1

1. Proclaim the First Reading for the First Scrutiny (Exodus 17:3-7). 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 people grumble because they are thirsty.
 - They blame Moses for bringing them out into the desert.
 - Moses cries out to the Lord, and the Lord hears Moses.
 - Moses does as he is directed. The water flows out for all to drink.
 - The people question whether the Lord is in their midst or not.
3. Invite the group to think about today's world and consider who today might be considered an "outcast." Ask, "For what do they thirst?" After some time for sharing, gather the names and the thirsts and record them on a large piece of paper or on a board.
4. Proclaim the reading again. Then ask the participants to reflect on who or what keeps people from the water—from having their thirsts quenched by the water provided. After some time for sharing, gather and record their responses on a large piece of paper or on a board.
5. Explore with the participants the signs or activities that give hope to those who thirst. After some time for sharing, gather and record these signs or activities that give hope.
6. Proclaim the reading again. Encourage the participants to reflect on their own lives and name what it is that they thirst for and what keeps them away from the water that will quench their thirst. After some time for sharing, gather these responses. Invite the participants to take time between now and the First Scrutiny to think about their thirsts and what keeps them from the water that would quench their thirsts.

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7. Close by singing the Taizé chant “Jesus, Remember Me.”

Option 2

1. Proclaim the Gospel for the First Scrutiny (John 4:5-42 or 4:5-15, 19b-26, 39a, 40-42). After a pause for silent reflection, ask the participants to share their reflections on the Gospel—a word, a phrase, a thought, or a feeling.
2. Lead the participants in a guided mediation using these or similar words: *Close your eyes. . . . Take several deep breaths. . . . Picture the well where Jesus meets the woman. . . . Listen in on their conversation. . . . As you are listening, you realize it is not the Samaritan woman talking with Jesus but you. . . . Imagine your conversation with Jesus. . . . What would he ask you? . . . How would you respond?* (Long pause.) *The Samaritan woman, changed by her encounter with Jesus, went into the village and told everyone about her encounter. The villagers went to find him. Who would come to Jesus because of your testimony? . . . When you are ready, come back to this place and open your eyes.*
3. Ask the participants to share their response to the meditation. After some time, give everyone a piece of paper. Invite them to write a word or a phrase that describes the change they would like to pray for during the First Scrutiny.
4. Invite the participants to spend time between now and the First Scrutiny thinking about what they would like changed in their lives. Encourage them to bring this reflection to the Scrutiny. Collect the papers before everyone leaves.
5. Close by singing the Taizé chant “Jesus, Remember Me.”

Option 3

1. Use either formula A or B for the Intercessions for the Elect found in the ritual text (OCIA 153).
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 journeys.
3. Proclaim the Gospel for the First Scrutiny (John 4:5-42 or 4:5-15, 19b-26, 39a, 40-42). Invite the participants to choose a word, a phrase, or a thought from the Gospel and to think about it each day until the celebration of the First Scrutiny.
4. Close by singing the Taizé chant “Jesus, Remember Me.”