

Purification and Enlightenment Session

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

Catechist Preparation

FIRST READING—EXODUS 17:3-7

The ancient Israelites murmur against God, complaining that he has led them out of their “comfortable” slavery in Egypt only to die of thirst in the desert. God responds to the people’s complaint, instructing Moses to strike the rock and telling him that water would flow from it. What slakes the thirst and fills with faith is the Law and Tradition, which will guide the people through this world and the desert into the Promised Land.

SECOND READING—ROMANS 5:1-2, 5-8

This section of Paul’s letter focuses on God’s love, which has been poured into our hearts through the action of the Holy Spirit and given as a gift even while we were sinners. The reference to “poured out into our hearts” (Romans 5:5) can be interpreted as a baptismal reference.

GOSPEL—JOHN 4:5-42 OR 4:5-15, 19B-26, 39A, 40-42

The dialogue between Jesus and the woman is characteristic of John’s Gospel, where images such as light, bread, or birth are used by Jesus to communicate a higher or spiritual truth. In this passage, the image is of water. Jesus offers “living water.” The woman does not understand at first and asks for it so she will not grow thirsty again. The water that Jesus gives is not that which is contained within a well but vital, living water, the fountain welling up from within a person to provide authentic life in the Spirit.

Making Connections

Key Images and Symbols

The Desert (*Catechism of the Catholic Church* [CCC] 2119)
The Rock (CCC 424, 1972)
The Laying on of Hands (CCC 699, 1150)
The Well (CCC 2560)
The Harvest (CCC 425, 2527)

Music Suggestions

“Sweet Refreshment,” B. Moore (GIA)
“Come to the Water,” J. Foley, SJ (OCP)
“Waters of Life,” L. Kutscher (WLP)

Dismissal Session

(Allow about 20 minutes)

Have the space set with chairs in a circle. On a small table, place a purple cloth, a Bible, and a bowl of water.

Respond

Provide some quiet time for the group to reflect on the Liturgy of the Word and the First Scrutiny just celebrated. Then invite volunteers to share a word, a phrase, or a feeling that spoke to them in the Liturgy of the Word. When everyone has had an opportunity to share their responses, ask the participants to consider what their word, phrase, or feeling proclaims about who God is or what he desires for each one of us. Allow this discussion to continue for a time without rushing.

Enhance

1. Ask the following questions:

What did the Liturgy of the Word proclaim about the reality of grace?

What did the Liturgy of the Word proclaim about the reality of sin?

What did it proclaim about forgiveness?

What did it proclaim about Jesus?

What response does the Liturgy of the Word call forth from us?

2. After some quiet time, initiate a conversation based on the participants’ experience of the liturgy.

Pray

Play a recording of one of the music suggestions or another appropriate hymn for the closing prayer. Provide hymnals or words to the song, and invite the participants to sing along.

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Extended Catechesis Session

(Approximately 45 to 60 minutes)

Readings

Exodus 17:3-7

Psalms 95:1-2, 6-9

Romans 5:1-2, 5-8

John 4:5-42 or 4:5-15, 19b-26, 39a, 40-42

Welcome

Begin by welcoming everyone who is present, including godparents, sponsors, team members, and spouses who are joining the group. Spend a few minutes gathering responses to the Liturgy of the Word and the First Scrutiny.

Uncover

1. Proclaim the First Reading (Exodus 17:3-7). Begin a discussion based on the reading by asking these or similar questions:

For what were the Israelites thirsting?

What people in our world are also thirsting, and for what are they thirsting?

When Moses struck the rock, the water flowed out for all to drink. What keeps people away from the water that belongs to all?

2. Read or summarize **Repent** on the participant handout and allow time for reflection and discussion of the **For Reflection** questions.

Purify

1. Lead the participants in a guided reflection, using these or similar words:

Picture yourself at the well of Samaria. It is noon and it is hot. You have come to draw water for your home. . . . Jesus approaches you and asks you for a drink. How do you respond? . . . He asked the Samaritan woman to go and get her husband. What question does he pose to you? . . . Perhaps he asks, "What keeps you from the well of living water?" . . . In the quiet of your heart, talk with Jesus about your thirsts and what keeps you from drinking the living water that he offers to you and to all peoples.

2. After some time for quiet reflection, invite the participants to share a sentence or two that summarizes their experiences of the guided reflection.

Enlighten

1. Summarize the remaining sections of the participant handout and reflect on the questions. Then discuss the following points:
 - Jesus offers the woman living water. At first she does not understand the meaning of what he is offering.
 - Our faith is based on our encounter with Christ, who leads us to God.
 - This faith is based in a personal relationship that is nurtured by an entire community—the Church—and it is sustained through the life-giving waters of Word and sacrament.
2. Highlight the **Key Images and Symbols of the Season** section.

Live

1. Beginning with this First Scrutiny and the proclamation that Jesus is the living water, the whole Church prepares to renew their baptismal promises to reject Satan and all his empty works and to profess once again their faith in God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Encourage the participants to reflect on what empty promises of Satan they want to leave behind in the waters of Baptism.
2. Invite the group to reflect on **Preparing for Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist**. If there is time, encourage volunteers to share their reflections.

Pray

Pray or sing the Responsorial Psalm from today's Liturgy (Psalm 95:1-2, 6-9).