

Purification and Enlightenment Session

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

Catechist Preparation

FIRST READING—EZEKIEL 37:12-14

The people of God living in exile are promised that the Lord will bring them out of their “graves” (see Ezekiel 37:12), reestablishing them in the Promised Land.

This will be accomplished through the Spirit, similar to God’s original act of Creation, when the Spirit of the Lord breathed over the waters, turning chaos into ordered life (see Genesis 1:2) and when God blew into Adam the breath of life (see Genesis 2:7).

SECOND READING—ROMANS 8:8-11

This section of Romans further amplifies the Gospel, employing the image of the Spirit of God, who dwells within us and who provides life. Without this Spirit, we are mere flesh, a lifeless body. Conversely, that which is mortal is brought to true life by the same Spirit who “raised Christ from the dead” (Romans 8:11).

GOSPEL—JOHN 11:1-45 OR 11:3-7, 17, 20-27, 33B-45

When Lazarus emerges from the tomb, he is bound in the linen burial cloths. Jesus commands that he be untied, saying, “Unbind him, and let him go” (John 11:44). Jesus frees us from that which binds us up and holds us in the tombs of sin, despair, and death. We heed the voice of the Lord and we “come forth.” We let go of the evil that seeks to ensnare us, preventing us from living the authentic life of the Spirit.

Making Connections

Key Images and Symbols

The Grave (*Catechism of the Catholic Church* [CCC] 400, 1007)

The Son of God (CCC 422, 664, 668)

The Stone (CCC 408, 1696, 1707, 1874)

The Resurrection and the Life (CCC 1002)

The Father (CCC 2604)

Music Suggestions

“I Am the Bread of Life/Yo Soy el Pan de Vida,”
S.Toolan (GIA)

“On Eagles Wings,” M. Joncas (OCP)

“Live in Me,” E. Bolduc (WLP)

Dismissal Session

(Allow about 20 minutes)

Have the space set with chairs in a circle. On a small table, place a purple cloth and a Bible and, if possible, a framed copy of the Apostles’ Creed.

Respond

Provide some quiet time for the group to reflect on the Liturgy of the Word and the Third 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 God desires for each one of us. Allow this discussion to continue for a time without rushing.

Enhance

1. Encourage the participants to consider these questions:

You have journeyed with the Samaritan Woman, the man born blind, and now Lazarus, whom Jesus raised from the dead. In what way(s) have you experienced this as a journey to uncover the reality of sin in life?

In what way(s) have you experienced Lent as a journey to strengthen your desire to be embraced by Christ in the waters of Baptism and to receive him in the Eucharist?

In what way(s) has your experience helped you to know just how much Christ loves you and desires all people to know him and the Father?

2. We have heard Jesus proclaim, “I am the living water,” “I am the light of the world,” and “I am the resurrection and the life.” What do these “I am” statements proclaim about who Jesus is?

Pray

Recite, sing, or chant the Responsorial Psalm from today’s Liturgy (Psalm 130:1-8).

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Extended Catechesis Session

(Approximately 45 to 60 minutes)

Readings

Ezekiel 37:12-14

Psalms 130:1-8

Romans 8:8-11

John 11:1-45 or 11:3-7, 17, 20-27, 33b-45

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 reflections on the liturgy and Third Scrutiny.

Uncover

1. Proclaim the Gospel (John 11:20-45). Begin a conversation by asking these or similar questions:
What word or phrase stays with you from this Gospel?
When you hear the short sentence "Jesus wept," what is your response? What does it reveal about Jesus?
What is proclaimed about Martha's and Mary's faith and understanding about who Jesus is?
Jesus proclaims, "I am the resurrection and the life."
What do you understand from this proclamation?
2. Read or summarize **Repent** on the participant handout and allow time for reflection and discussion of the **For Reflection** questions.

Purify

1. Recall with the participants the focus in the later part of the Gospel when Jesus calls Lazarus forth. Lazarus emerges bound hand and foot. Jesus commands those present to untie Lazarus and let him go free. Ask the following questions:
In what ways are we called forth like Lazarus?
Are there any people we are called to untie and let go free?
2. Invite the participants to share their responses to the questions with one or two other people. Then encourage several volunteers to share their reflections with the large group.

3. Ask the group to reflect silently on the following:
 - Ways that sin binds you
 - Ways that grace frees you
 - What you ask of Jesus as the Easter Vigil and your initiation draw ever closer

Enlighten

1. Summarize or invite the participants to read the remaining sections of the participant handout and reflect on the questions. Then discuss the following points:
 - Christ is the resurrection and the life. He has conquered all sin and death for all time.
 - If we believe in Christ, we too shall rise on the last day.
 - Death is a threshold to eternal life.
 - Baptism is our dying to the old self in order to rise anew in Christ.
 - Christ invites us into new life. How will we respond?
2. Highlight the **Key Images and Symbols of the Season** section.

Live

1. The completion of the journey toward Baptism is two weeks away. Encourage the elect and their sponsors or godparents to reflect on what yet holds them bound from which they want to be freed.
2. Invite everyone to spend quiet time each day between now and the Easter Vigil considering what a great gift Jesus has given by calling them forth to Baptism or to the renewal of their baptismal promises. Ask them to consider what holds them back from living as true followers of Christ.
3. Invite the group to reflect on **Preparing for Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist**. If there is time, encourage volunteers to share their reflections.

Pray

Pray a portion of the Litany of the Saints, or use the prayer from the participant handout.