

Purification and Enlightenment Session

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



*Praise to you,
all-seeing Father,
for you give enlightenment
to those who seek you!*

*Praise to you,
all-saving Jesus Christ,
for you open
the eyes of the blind!*

*Praise to you,
ever-enkindling
Holy Spirit,
for you inspire
the hearts of believers!*

Sunday Word

1 Samuel 16:1b, 6-7, 10-13a

Psalm 23:1-6

Ephesians 5:8-14

John 9:1-41

Repent

Too often we judge others by their appearances. We see and understand only the surface. It takes time to get to know others, but we often do not give others the time they deserve. We make snap judgments and rapid appraisals that do not serve ourselves or others well. Sometimes our prejudices and narrow perspectives further cloud our ability to discern.

For Reflection . . .

Why do you think we are so quick to judge others?

What is the single biggest obstacle that prevents you from knowing others well?

Renew

God looks beyond the surface into the heart. God completely sees and knows who we are—foibles, gifts, and capabilities.

While we cannot know another as God does, we ask the Holy Spirit for help. We strive for wisdom, humility, and enlightenment to come to know others as clearly as possible. We implore God to give us a keen eye to light the shadows and dark places within so we might come closer to knowing the truth of ourselves and others.

The witness of Scripture is constant, reminding us that with God, our Shepherd, all things are possible. Even as we walk through the darkest valley, the goodness and kindness of God follows us. Even failures, upsets, and difficulties can be a disguised blessing and eventually bring good as we strive to learn what is pleasing to the Lord.

For Reflection . . .

To whom do you open up completely? Why?

How often is your conversation in prayer with God honest and lively? What would help it be this way more often?

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Church Teaching: Christ, the Light of the World

Along with “purification,” the Church identifies “enlightenment” as the goal of this period in the process of initiation. Christ is the light of humanity, a light to which we are drawn by faith. The Holy Spirit gathers all believers into the light of Christ, which shines out visibly from the Church.

A prominent theme in the Fourth Gospel is how God’s truth is fully manifested to the world in Christ. The author employs the image of light to convey the informative and liberating character of this truth. At the beginning of this Gospel account, Christ is described as “full of grace and truth” (John 1:14). Later in this Gospel, Jesus himself says that he is “the light of the world” and that whoever becomes his follower will not therefore walk in darkness but in the ways of authentic life (John 8:12).

There are many ways in which believers, with the help of the Church, come to enlightenment and the truth. For example, in both liturgical or communal and personal (private) prayer, we fix our gaze of faith firmly on Jesus, while at the same time, Jesus gazes back at us. Focusing on Christ, we engage in a type of self-renunciation in order to be purified. Purified, we surrender to his love and enlightenment. The inner person, the heart and soul, is filled, illuminated, and fired up by the Word so that we might “see” everything in his truth and his compassion.

Distinctiveness of Church Teaching

Saint Ambrose (340–397) says, “You, too, should come to Siloam, that is, to him who was sent by the Father. . . .” Let Christ wash you, and you will see. Come and be baptized, it is time; come quickly, and you too will be able to say, “I went and washed”; you will be able to say, “I was blind, and now I can see.”

Baptism remakes us as adopted children of the light who walk in God’s ways. We leave behind the old ways of darkness and sin. In Christ we are called to our best, most expansive, grace-filled selves.

Key Images and Symbols of the Season

SENT—The Anointed One, the Christ, to whom we are joined in Baptism.

WASHED—Healed, made clean and whole, in Baptism.

THE HEART—where God speaks to us most intimately.

BLINDNESS—the willful stubbornness that turns away from God.

SIGHT—the capability to recognize God’s calling.

Preparing for Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist

As you think about, pray over, and share what has happened in this Sunday’s Liturgy of the Word and Scrutiny celebration, what areas in your life need the healing rays of Christ’s light?

How do you, as a child of the light, reflect Christ’s compassion and love to others?

