

Young Apprentices

A RESOURCE FOR THE OCIA

PURIFICATION AND ENLIGHTENMENT

Fifth Sunday of Lent, Cycle A Readings Used

FIRST READING—EZEKIEL 37:12-14

The People of God living in exile are promised by the prophet that the Lord will bring them out of their “graves” (Ezekiel 37:12) and will reestablish 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 message, employing the image of the Spirit of God, who dwells within us and who provides life. Without this Spirit, we are mere flesh, lifeless bodies. Conversely, that which is mortal is brought to true life by the same Spirit who “raised Christ from the dead” (Romans 3:11).

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

When Lazarus emerges from the tomb, he is bound hand and foot in the linen burial cloths. His face is likewise covered. Jesus commands that he be untied, saying “let him go” (John 11:44). Freedom is a gift of our Redemption (see Galatians 5:1). 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.

Additional Background

Catechism of the Catholic Church: Key Images and Icons

The Tomb: 400, 1007

The Son of God: 422, 664, 668

The Stone: 408, 1696, 1707, 1874

The Resurrection and the Life: 1002

The Father: 2604

Dismissal Session

(Approximately 20 minutes)

Set the space with chairs in a circle. On a small table, place a purple cloth and a Bible.

Respond

This is the third Rite of Scrutiny. Provide an opportunity for the children to draw pictures or to journal on their experiences of the Liturgy of the Word and the Rite celebrated. After some time, invite anyone who wants to share what touched them during the Liturgy or what surprised them.

Enhance

1. Begin by reminding those present that they have now heard the stories of the Samaritan Woman, the man born blind, and Lazarus. Then invite each child to discuss with his or her sponsor
 - Which of these three stories is his or her favorite, and why
 - What each of these stories tells us about who Jesus is
 - What each of these stories tells us about God’s love for us
2. Invite all to share responses with the large group.

Pray

Say or sing together the Responsorial Psalm from today’s liturgy.

Extended Catechesis Session

(Approximately 45 to 60 minutes)

Supplies

In addition to the prayer table setup, you will need copies of the participant handout.

Sunday Word

Ezekiel 37:12-14

Psalm 130:1-2, 3-4, 5-6, 7-8

Romans 8:8-11

John 11:1-45

Welcome

Begin by welcoming everyone who is present, including parents, godparents, sponsors, and team members who are joining the group. Spend a few minutes gathering reflections and memories of the liturgy and the Rite of Scrutiny just celebrated.

Uncover

1. Proclaim from the Gospel John 11:20-45. Invite everyone to enter into the story.
2. Ask these or similar questions:
What surprised you in this Gospel?
What is your favorite part of this Gospel?
What does the short sentence, "Jesus wept," tell us about Jesus?
What do you think Jesus means when he says, "I am the resurrection and the life"?
3. Use the **Key Teachings** section of the participant handout and allow time for quiet reflection before inviting responses to the reflection questions.

Purify

1. Shift the focus to the later part of the Gospel, when Jesus calls forth Lazarus. Lazarus comes forth, bound hand and foot. Jesus commands those present to untie him and let him go free. Invite the children to discuss the following questions with their sponsors and parents:
How do you think Lazarus felt when he heard Jesus call him to come forth?
How do you hear Jesus call you to become the best person you can be?
Whom does Jesus call us to "untie and let them go free"?
2. Invite the whole group to name
 - The ways that sin binds us
 - The ways that grace frees us
3. Invite the children to some quiet time for prayer and reflection. Use the following questions to guide them, allowing quiet time between the reading of each:

Is there anything holding you bound right now? Is there anything you are sorry for? Are there any words you wish you had not said or things you wish you had not done? Tell God about these things.

Where do you need God's grace—his gift of forgiveness and mercy? Ask God for his grace today.

As the Easter Vigil draws ever closer, what else do you want to ask or say to Jesus? Take this time to talk to him in your heart.

Enlighten

1. Lead a brief discussion, highlighting the following points:
 - Christ is the resurrection and the life. He has freed us from every sin that holds us bound.
 - If we believe in Christ, we shall rise on the last day.
 - Baptism is our dying to the old self in order to rise anew in Christ.
 - Christ invites us into new life.
2. Explore the key images in the **To Help You Remember** section of the participant handout.

Live

1. Remind the children that the celebration of Baptism is two weeks away.
2. Encourage the children, their parents, and their sponsors or godparents to reflect on what they want to leave behind in the waters of Baptism so that they can rise to new life in Jesus.
3. Conclude by referring to the **Reflection** section of the participant handout.

Pray

Close by saying or singing together a portion of the Litany of the Saints.