

Purification and Enlightenment Session

APPRENTICES IN FAITH: A Resource for the RCIA
Fourth Sunday of Lent • Year B • March 10, 2024

Catechist Preparation

FIRST READING—1 SAMUEL 16:1B, 6-7, 10-13A

God is portrayed as being in total control of the situation. He chooses the youngest, the least among Jesse's sons, as Heaven's anointed to replace Saul. God sees beneath outward appearances and judges the true worth of a person, unlike humans who frequently misjudge others because they rely on externals. God sees from the inside out.

SECOND READING—EPHESIANS 5:8-14

The very last part of the reading from Ephesians, which is a portion from an ancient baptismal hymn, applies the theme of enlightenment and waking from sleep to this initiation sacrament. Early Christians described Baptism as "enlightenment" or "illumination."

GOSPEL—JOHN 9:1-41 (OR 9:1, 6-9, 13-17, 34-38)

The man who has been cured gradually acknowledges the true identity of Jesus, the Light of the world, first calling Jesus "that man" (verse 11), then "prophet" (verse 17), and then "man from God" (verse 33). Finally, and climactically, the cured man calls Jesus "Lord" (verse 38) when he bows down to Jesus in worship. Thus the man grows in faith while the critics of Jesus grow further away from him in disbelief.

Making Connections

Key Images and Symbols

Sent (*Catechism of the Catholic Church* [CCC] 422, 1227)

Washed (CCC 1215, 1228)

The Heart (CCC 1777, 2711, 2715)

Blindness (CCC 398, 2088)

Sight (CCC 1216)

Music Suggestions

"Christ, Be Our Light" (B. Farrell/OCP)

"Shine on Us, Lord" (J. Mattingly/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 baptismal candle.

Respond

1. Provide some quiet time for the group to reflect on the Liturgy of the Word and the Second Scrutiny just celebrated.
2. After some quiet time, invite volunteers to share a word or a phrase that stuck with them or a feeling that arose within them during the Liturgy of the Word.
3. When everyone has had an opportunity to share their responses, ask participants to consider what their word, phrase, or feeling proclaims about God, Jesus, sin, grace, and what God desires for each one of them. Allow this discussion to continue for a time without rushing.

Enhance

1. Encourage each person to consider these questions:

In what way(s) did the liturgy affirm the reality of sin but show that God's love and grace is greater than sin?

In what way(s) are you the man born blind who proclaims, "I do believe, Lord"?

What is it you are saying that you believe?
2. After some quiet time, invite volunteers to share their responses to the questions.
3. Sing or play the hymn "Amazing Grace." Invite participants to discuss their understanding of what it means to say, "I once was blind but now I see."

Pray

Invite the participants to pray in the quiet of their hearts a word of thanks for the gift of seeing with "new eyes." Conclude by leading them in singing "Amazing Grace."

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Extended Catechesis Session

(Approximately 45 to 60 minutes)

Readings

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

Psalms 23:1-6

Ephesians 5:8-14

John 9:1-41 (or 9:1, 6-9, 13-17, 34-38)

Welcome

Begin by welcoming everyone who is present, including godparents, sponsors, team members, and spouses who are joining the group. Spend a few minutes to gather some reflections about the Liturgy of the Word and Second Scrutiny.

Uncover

1. Proclaim the Second Reading, Ephesians 5:8-14. Begin a conversation based on the reading by inviting responses to these or similar questions:

What do you understand to be fruitless works of darkness? Why is it important to bring them into the light?

What are some words to describe how “children of light” are to live?

2. Read or summarize Repent on the participant handout and allow time for quiet reflection and large-group discussion based on the For Reflection questions.

Purify

1. Share with the group some key phrases from the First Reading, 1 Samuel 16:1b, 6-7, 10-13a, such as:
 - Fill your horn with oil and be on your way to Jesse of Bethlehem.
 - I have chosen my king.
 - Do not judge from his appearance.
 - Not as man sees does God see.
 - The Lord looks into the heart.
 - From that day on the spirit of the Lord rushed upon David.
2. Invite participants to describe what they think it means that the spirit of the Lord rushed upon David.

3. Invite participants to reflect silently on the following questions:

How do you “see”? What matters most to you?

What would the Lord see if he looked into your heart?

What do you need to let go of in order to see as the Lord sees?

Enlighten

1. Summarize or invite the participants to read the remaining sections of the participant resource and reflect on the questions. Then discuss the following points:
 - Christ is the Light of the world.
 - Those who believe walk in the light.
 - God’s truth is fully manifested in Christ.
 - The man born blind comes to see (believe) that Jesus is the Son of God and he falls down to worship Jesus. The man sees both physically and spiritually; he walks as a child of the light.
 - Baptism makes us children of the light who walk in God’s ways
2. Highlight the Key Images and Symbols section.

Live

1. The end of the journey toward Baptism is imminent. As the journey continues, 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.
2. Encourage the participants to reflect on what empty promises of Satan they want to leave behind in the waters of Baptism.
3. Invite the group to reflect on Preparing for Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist. If there is time, encourage volunteers to share their reflections.

Pray

Conclude by inviting everyone to stand and pray aloud together the prayer on the participant handout.