

# Purification and Enlightenment Session

APPRENTICES IN FAITH: A Resource for the RCIA  
First Sunday of Lent • Year B • February 18, 2024

O God,  
in Baptism  
you make us your  
adopted sons and daughters.  
Flood our hearts with  
new life in the Spirit.  
Amen.



## Sunday Word

Genesis 9:8-15  
Psalm 25:4-5, 6-7, 8-9  
1 Peter 3:18-22  
Mark 1:12-15

### Repent

Before he embarked upon his public ministry, Jesus spent forty days in the desert. He abandoned what comfort could be found among family and friends and embraced solitude in harsh desert conditions.

He stripped away everything that could possibly distract him from his impending mission. This retreat-like preparation bears fruit in Jesus' first preaching, which is simplicity itself: "The kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel."

### For Reflection . . .

*What superfluous aspects of life must you strip away this Lent?  
What sin holds sway in your life from which you must turn away?*

### Renew

In these forty days of Lent, the task at hand is both simple and profound. Those who are baptized seek to deepen the life of the Spirit that they received in Baptism. Those who are not baptized seek to prepare intensely for their upcoming Baptism and the life of the Spirit that they will receive in that sacrament.

Jesus Christ offers us a tremendous gift. We are recreated in him. Sin is vanquished. Our old selves are put to death. We rise with the Lord from the baptismal waters as the Church claims us for Christ and the Kingdom of God that he proclaimed.

### For Reflection . . .

*In your own words, how do you describe life in the Spirit?  
Complete this statement: The Church claims me for Christ because . . .*

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## Church Teaching: The Baptismal Covenant

A covenant relationship is not like a contractual one. In a contract, everything down to the last detail is strictly stipulated. A covenant relationship is less static and much more open-ended.

A covenant can be limitless, in that it is an ongoing relationship that develops over time. The baptismal Covenant that God establishes with us, his adopted children, is similar.

God takes the initiative. He establishes his Covenant in Christ. How we live up to this divine Covenant deepens with our own maturity in faith. God will not renege on his promise of Salvation to us, but we, in turn, must seek to put into practice the conditions upon which this Covenant is based, the twofold Commandment to love the Lord with our whole heart and soul and also our neighbor as ourselves.

The Good News is that we are given the grace of God again and again in order to live up to this twofold Commandment of love. Divine love makes our human love possible. Divine love undergirds and supports our living out the baptismal Covenant established by Christ.

### *Distinctiveness of Church Teaching*

Saint Augustine of Hippo said that “. . . the Son of God came to show humanity a pattern for living . . .” Most assuredly we are given grace upon grace from God in order to live up to our baptismal calling. But the very first and most fundamental gift to us is Christ himself and his living example of fidelity to the will of God.

We acknowledge and acclaim Christ as Lord and Master. He himself shows us the way to the Father in the Holy Spirit. He is our pattern of holiness and our very way of life.

### *Key Images and Symbols of the Season*

**FORTY DAYS**—Lenten “spring” by which we are renewed (see *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 540, 1095, 1348)

**LIFE IN THE SPIRIT**—a pure, undeserved gift (see CCC 686, 706, 729, 736, 1023, 1225)

**BAPTISMAL COVENANT**—by which we are made the adopted sons and daughters of God (see CCC 977, 1219, 1223, 1254, 1267)

**THE INITIATIVE OF GOD**—divine love takes action to save us (see CCC 169, 604, 620)

**FIDELITY OF CHRIST**—model, pattern, and example for us to follow (see CCC 609, 614, 623)

### *Preparing for Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist*

*Take time to read through the Second Reading from Mass today. What one word or phrase stays with you, and why?*

*If you were to write a letter to Jesus expressing your gratitude for the journey of faith thus far, what would you say?*

