

Purification and Enlightenment Session

APPRENTICES IN FAITH: A Resource for the RCIA
Third Sunday of Lent • Year A

*God, our loving Father,
in your Son, Jesus,
we draw water
from the life-giving springs
of Salvation,
which well up
from within us by faith.
May we seek out and find
what Christ alone
can give.*



Sunday Word

Exodus 17:3 –7
Psalm 95:1–2, 6–7, 8–9
Romans 5:1–2, 5–8
John 4:5–42 or 4:5–15, 19b–26, 39a, 40–42

Repent

We are fashioned as incomplete creatures. We need food to fuel our bodies. We need shelter to keep us safe from harsh weather and the dangers of this world. We need companionship to soften the isolation that gnaws at us.

God has created us this way so that we might turn to him, and to one another, as faithful children of his kingdom. Too often we forget our calling and we grumble against God, quarreling with one another, testing the Lord.

For Reflection . . .

*What is your greatest need?
Are you basically an optimist or a pessimist? How so?
What helps you pray when you are really feeling down?*

Renew

Saint Paul tells us that we have been justified by faith. We have been made right with God through the Passion, the saving Death and Resurrection of Christ. Freed from the power of sin, we share in the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ.

In accordance with Christ, we are refashioned and our peace has been made with God, with one another, and with the entire world. What wondrous and renewed relationships we have because of Christ!

For Reflection . . .

*As a result of this initiation process, what relationships are changing for you?
What personal attitudes and habits in your life have undergone reform as your appreciation for Christ and his ways has deepened?*

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Church Teaching: Christ, the Living Water

In his encounter with the Samaritan woman at the well, Jesus assures her that he himself offers living waters. Then Jesus turns the discussion to the matter of her husbands, which leads to the matter of where true worship takes place.

The surprising turns in this discussion lead to deeper realizations. The woman, and through her all the Samaritans of that place, are being invited to espouse themselves in faith, to believe in the Good News which Jesus represents. They are invited to embrace the Father in spirit and truth by embracing the Son who reveals him.

Belief for Christians does not rest in some esoteric or hidden knowledge. Our belief stems from an encounter with the One to whom we ultimately give our hearts. In other words, belief is founded upon a relationship. That singular, saving relationship is nurtured by an entire community, the Church, and it is sustained through the life-giving waters of Word and Sacrament.

Distinctiveness of Church Teaching

Saint Augustine of Hippo (354–430) says, “How I wept, deeply moved by your hymns, songs, and the voices that echoed through your Church! What emotion I experienced in them! Those sounds flowed into my ears, distilling the truth in my heart. A feeling of devotion surged within me, and tears streamed down my face—tears that did me good.”

The Samaritan woman encountered Jesus at the well. We encounter the Lord in the liturgy. Jesus thirsts for our faith and therefore also invites our response in the liturgy. We hear his voice in the proclamation of the Gospel. It is his gaze of love which looks upon us in the Scrutiny celebration. We plumb the depths of the scriptural proclamation. We surrender to the divine power of the Scrutiny. The living waters of Christ flow through the liturgy.

Key Images and Symbols of the Season

THE DESERT—the arid wastelands in life wherein we sometimes grumble against God.

THE ROCK—Christ’s Law of Love, our firm foundation, our highest calling.

THE LAYING ON OF HANDS—the touch of the Holy Spirit which soothes and challenges and empowers.

THE WELL—the depths of faith which takes a lifetime to explore.

THE HARVEST—the spiritual blossoming in every time and place due to the proclamation of the Good News.

Preparing for Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist

As a result of your contemplation of and sharing about the Liturgy of the Word and the Scrutiny celebration, what moves within you? Where does your heart lead you?

How do you react to the belief that through the liturgy itself we encounter the living water of Jesus?

