

Sunday and Feast Day Liturgical Notes for Priests and Deacons

Suggestions for Leading Worship



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RE: Liturgical Suggestions for the Third Sunday of Lent

Sunday or Feast Day date: March 14-15, 2009

Dear Fathers and Deacons,

An Overview for this Sunday...

On the Third Sunday of Lent the Church celebrates the first Scrutiny for the catechumens who have been called to celebrate the Sacraments of Initiation at the Easter Vigil. Lent is both a season for the preparation of those who are to be baptized, and a season when the already baptized are renewed in their commitment to be sons and daughters of God and disciples of Christ.

There is a choice in *Lectionary* readings for this Sunday. Cycle A readings (which proclaims its Gospel pericope of the Woman at the Well – Jn 4:5-42) are an integral element in the celebration of the First Scrutiny. Cycle A readings should be used during the Mass where the Elect celebrate the Scrutinies. These readings take the place of the Cycle B readings at the Scrutiny mass. The prayers and exorcism of the first Scrutiny, as well as the Preface for the the Third Sunday of Lent in Cycle A (P 14), all reflect the images and themes of the Gospel of the Samaritan woman. It is an option to proclaim the Cycle A Readings at all Masses – not just the Scrutiny Mass. This option may eliminate the need to prepare two homilies and will enable to whole parish to be more united in its preparations for Easter.

However, it certainly is an option to proclaim the Cycle B readings (and its Gospel passage of Jesus driving the money changers out of the temple – Jn 2:13-25) at the Masses when the Scrutinies are not celebrated. The dramatic action of Jesus – driving out the merchants and money changers– is not the most shocking feature of this Gospel. Not only does Jesus cleanse the Temple, He replaces it. The place of God’s presence among people is no longer a building, but the “temple of Christ’s body” In Jesus, we encounter the living God.

Questions for Sharing Faith (Cycle B Readings)...

- 1) If Jesus were to visit me as His temple, what would need cleansing?
- 2) Not only does Jesus cleanse the temple, He replaces it. What does this mean to me?
- 3) Today’s Gospel quotes the Scripture: “Zeal for your house will consume me.”
What am I zealous for in my own life? What consumes my life?

Some Other Considerations as You Prepare...

- 1) Continue the Lenten pattern for the Introductory Rites which you established at the beginning of the season.
- 2) Both Opening Prayers for the Third Sunday of Lent focus on the Lenten disciplines of prayer, fasting and almsgiving.
- 3) For the Mass at which the First Scrutiny is celebrated, note that there is a Ritual Mass for the Scrutinies (in the Catholic Book Publishing Company edition of the *Sacramentary*, this is p. 826). This provides an Opening Prayer, Prayer Over the Gifts and Prayer After Communion which focus attention on those preparing for baptism.
- 4) The Scrutiny Rite may be found in the R.C.I.A. at nos. 141-156. The Scrutiny takes place after the homily and includes silent prayer, intercessions for the Elect, a prayer of exorcism, the laying on of hands, and the dismissal. Be sure to attend to the non-verbal elements of this rite – the silent prayer and the laying on of hands are powerful symbolic actions.
- 5) Note that the Preface for the Third Sunday of Lent is mandatory (when the Johannine Gospel about the Woman at the Well of Samaria is proclaimed) for use with the Cycle A readings. If Cycle B Readings are proclaimed, one of the Prefaces of Lent I or II (P8-P9) is more properly used.
- 6) A Solemn Blessing is given in the *Missal* for this Mass on the Third Sunday of Lent.

Sample Intercessions for the Third Sunday of Lent (Reflecting Cycle B Readings)

Priest: Let us come in prayer before the Lord our God, whose steadfast love embraces all generations.

Deacon (or other reader if there is no deacon):

1. That the temple of God's Church may ever be cleansed from within and fashioned more perfectly as the living image of the Risen Christ, we pray to the Lord.
2. That those who control worldly power and shape human wisdom may attend to the law of God and respond to the needs of the lowly, we pray to the Lord.
3. That the innocent victims of greed and violence may find, in Christ crucified, new strength in their suffering and, in Christ's disciples, wise allies in their struggle, we pray to the Lord.
4. That those among us whose work is in the marketplace may witness to the truth of the commandments, the wisdom of the Gospel, we pray to the Lord.
5. That our Lenten observance may increase our zeal for God's house and deepen our dedication to the word Jesus has spoken, we pray to the Lord.
6. That those who in life fashioned as living stones into the temple of Christ's body (especially _____) may be raised up to eternal joy, we pray to the Lord.

Priest: O God, whose foolishness is wise
And whose weakness is strong,
By the working of your grace in the discipline of Lent
Cleanse the temple of your Church
and purify the sanctuary of our hearts.
Let zeal for your house consume us
and obedience to your commandments absorb us,
that we may come to the Easter festival
prepared to renew our baptismal covenant.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Sample Intercessions for the Third Sunday of Lent (Reflecting Cycle A Readings)

Priest: Let us pray to God, whose love has been poured into our hearts,
through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.

Deacon (or other reader if there is no deacon):

1. That in the wilderness of this world, the Church may be a rock of God,
providing the waters of life to all who thirst, we pray to the Lord.
2. That those who control worldly power may attend to the law of God
and respond to the needs of the lowly, we pray to the Lord.
3. That the sick and all victims of violence may find in Christ crucified
new strength in their suffering, we pray to the Lord.
4. That the Messiah may bestow on our Elect the living water that will
become a spring of eternal life, we pray to the Lord.
5. That our Lenten observance may prepare us to renew our baptismal
vows, and with the Elect, to profess Jesus as the Christ, we pray to the
Lord.
6. That those who have died may be raised up from death to eternal joy in
God, we pray to the Lord.

Priest: O God, fountain of new life,
to the human race, parched with thirst,
You offer the living water of grace
that springs up from the rock,
our Savior, Jesus Christ.
Grant your people the gift of the Spirit,
that we may learn to profess our faith with courage and conviction
and announce with joy the wonders of your saving love.
We ask this through the same Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

(adapted from Prayers for Sundays and Seasons, Year B, P. Scagnelli, Chicago: LTP, 1997)