

4. Salvation History and the People of God

God willed to give us hope by offering his creatures intimate union with himself, gradually revealed in a succession of covenants. We are saved from sin for this purpose, so that we might choose to respond in faith to his final covenant in the Son.

Key terms:

Covenant	A solemn agreement based on love with an exchange of promises. A solemn agreement based on love between God and human beings, established at various times in salvation history and culminating in the New Covenant in Jesus' Blood.
Salvation	The plan of God to free us from the slavery of sin and reconcile us to himself.

The Bible tells the story of God's plan to enter the life of His people and save human beings from sin and bring them to eternal life. The history of that saving plan as told through the Scriptures is called salvation history. Through a series of covenants, related in the Old Testament, God gradually reestablished a bond with humanity, promised many blessings and a future salvation. These solemn covenants were to prefigure and prepare the way for the coming of Jesus Christ; the Messiah would bring a full and final salvation to Israel and the world. God's covenant family expands and grows with each relationship, prefiguring God's ultimate plan to establish a universal family—a Catholic family! (The word "Catholic" means: a gathering of all of humanity into one covenant family of God.) There are eight major periods in salvation history:

Primeval History	Creation Accounts Adam & Eve – Original Sin Cain and Abel, Noah and the Flood The Tower of Babel
Patriarchs	Abraham and Sarah God makes three promises to Abram: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Land2. Royal Dynasty3. Worldwide Blessing Isaac, Jacob, Twelve Tribes of Israel

Egypt and the Exodus Israelites – freedom from slavery in Egypt
God’s covenant with Moses – the Law

The Promised Land The call of Joshua to lead.

Note the pattern that develops during this period.

- (1) the Israelites forget about God and are unfaithful to the Covenant;
- (2) they suffer at the hands of invaders;
- (3) they cry out to God for help;
- (4) God calls special leaders and warriors, called judges, to help deliver justice and defend the land against the invaders;
- (5) life is good for a while until the Israelites lapse into unfaithfulness and the cycle begins again.

Kingdoms of Judah and Israel Samuel
Anointing of Saul
Kings David & King Solomon
Split of the Kingdom
Prophets

Exile & Return Babylonian Exile
Ezekiel and Isaiah
Maccabees and the Return to Jerusalem

Life of Jesus Christ Jesus, the Son of God, the Messiah
Call of His disciples
Suffering, death and Resurrection

Early Christian Church Spread of the Good News of Salvation
Pentecost
Paul – persecutor – missionary
Early missionaries
Letters of instruction, correction, & encouragement to Christian communities and leaders.

Fulfilment in Jesus

The role of Jesus as the fulfilment of the scriptures: Connecting the life and mission of Jesus Christ as the fulfilment of the biblical narrative, bringing together Old Testament covenants and prophecies.

The new covenant: The concept of the new covenant, prophesied in Jeremiah 31:31, promises a transformative relationship with God, where laws are written on people’s hearts rather than on stone.

Jesus as the New Adam: The symbolism of Jesus as the New Adam, who, unlike the first Adam, succeeds in his test of faithfulness in the Garden of Gethsemane, thus reversing the curse of sin and death.

The Church as the Kingdom of God: The establishment of the Church as the new “Kingdom of God,” echoing the Kingdom of David, and tasked with continuing the mission of Christ on Earth.

Practical applications for today’s Christians: How ongoing engagement with scripture and active participation in the Church and community can help you live out the covenantal promises in our daily lives.

One Holy Catholic Church

All of the Old Testament covenants find full expression in the New Covenant which was made between Jesus Christ and his Church. The death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus is the climax of the biblical story, for this was God’s ultimate deed. The entire story of the Bible is Christ-centred. The Old Testament prophetically spoke of Jesus’ forthcoming, the Gospels describe his life on earth, the Epistles speak of life in light of his coming. This New Covenant is a worldwide covenant where God rules and reigns as the head of his one holy Catholic Church.

Salvation History — Suggested Questions for Discussion:

1. How does the old Testament prepare for the coming of Christ?
2. Read Genesis 12:1-3; 17:1-9; 22:1-18 and discuss why Abraham is so important in salvation history.
3. With reference to 2Samuel 7, discuss the significance of Jesus’ title ‘Son of David’.
4. Why is John the Baptist referred to as the last of the prophets?
5. What is God’s part in his covenant with us? What has been the part of his people in each of his covenants?
6. When did God first promise salvation? What evidence is there that the world even needs saving?
7. Why is Jesus’ total sacrifice a divine love story? How are we to participate in the sacrifice of Christ?

PRAAYER

Pray together Psalm 40 or Psalm 115 or Psalm 135

or

Gospel Reflection: Thirty First Sunday in Ordinary Time

Year A Mt. 23:1-12

Year B Mk. 12:28-34

Year C Lk. 19:1-10

The following format will be used for all Gospel reflections:

- Read the text aloud.
- Pause for a minute's silence.
- Read the text aloud again.
- Ask everyone to pick a word or a phrase that struck them. They just say the word or phrase without comment or discussion.
- Read the text again.
- Ask those present to comment on their word or phrase. What struck them about it? Why/how is it speaking to them?
- Continue with the discussion.

The following questions may be helpful:

What does this mean to me?

How does it make me feel?

Did I find the text disturbing/hopeful/confusing?

What images of God emerge for me?

What do I think that God is saying in this text?

What impact does this have on my life?

Scripture and Catechism Resources

Scripture

Gen. 1:26-2:24	God makes a covenant with Adam and Eve.
Gen. 9:1-17	God makes a covenant with Noah and his family.
Gen. 17:1-21	God makes a covenant with Abraham and his tribe.
Ex. 19:3-20:17	God makes a covenant with the Israelite nation and gives it the Law.
Ex. 24:7-8	The Israelites agree to obey God and Moses seals the covenant in blood.
2 Sm. 7:8-29	God makes a covenant with David and his kingdom.
Is. 54:5-10; 62:1-5	God loves Israel as his spouse and will never revoke his covenant.
Jer. 31:31-34	God promises to make a new covenant with Israel and Judah.
Hos. 2:14-20	God intends divine espousal with his chosen people.
Mt. 28: 18-19	Jesus commands the apostles to bring all the world into his Church.
Lk. 22:14-20	Jesus institutes the Eucharist, the sign of the new covenant in his blood.
Jn. 1:9-13	Jesus is the true light for all who believe in him and are born of God.
Jn. 3:5	Our rebirth of water and the Spirit is necessary to enter the Kingdom of God.
Jn. 10:16	Jesus intends that all belong to one flock, and he is their only shepherd.
Jn. 11:51-51	Jesus died not only for the Jewish nation but to gather all God's children into one.
Jn. 12:32-33	By his Passion and Death, Jesus will draw all humanity to himself.
Jn. 17:20-23	Jesus prays that all who believe in him will be one as he and the Father are one.
Rom 11:25-29	As well as the Gentiles, all Israel will be saved; to them the covenant was given
Gal 3:6-9	Those of faith are the sons of Abraham, who in his faith blessed all nations.
Eph. 3:8-11	God's plan from creation was to make himself known through the Church.
1Pt. 2:4-10	Become a spiritual house, a royal priesthood, and God's own people.
Rv. 19:6-9; 21:1-11	The final completion of salvation will be a great wedding feast, a total union of love.

Catechism

53-67	God reveals himself through a series of covenants, culminating in his Word.
238	God's covenantal relationship with the Israelites is that of a Father.
388	Jesus' Paschal mystery reveals the ultimate meaning of our sinful history.
758-762	God intended to establish the Church, his family, from the beginning of creation, and began gathering his people immediately after the sin of our first parents.
776	The Church is the instrument by which one People of God is built up.
781-786	The People of God are a unity; we belong by our Baptism and share Jesus' offices.
831	Just as humanity is one, the Church has the mission to make one People of God.
839-840	All; the covenants are the heritage of the Jews, including the New Covenant.
1080	God renewed the covenant in Noah; God began our salvation in Abraham.
1611-1612	God's covenantal relationship with his people is imaged by the marriage covenant.
2058-2061	The Ten Commandments are the terms of God's covenant with the Israelites.
2810	God's people are to be consecrated to him.

Some Important People in Salvation History

Primeval History

- Adam and Eve
- Cain and Abel
- Noah

Patriarchs

- Abraham and Sarah
- Isaac and Rebekah
- Jacob, Leah, and Rachel
- Joseph and his brothers
- Egypt and the Exodus
- Moses
- Pharaoh
- Miriam and Aaron

Settling the Promised Land

- Joshua
- Deborah
- Gideon
- Samson
- Ruth

Kingdoms of Judah and Israel

- Samuel
- King Saul
- King David
- King Solomon
- King Hezekiah
- King Josiah
- Elijah and Elisha
- Amos
- Hosea
- Isaiah
- Jeremiah

Exile and Return

- Ezekiel
- Ezra and Nehemiah
- Esther
- The Maccabees

Life of Jesus Christ

- Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ
- Mary of Nazareth
- John the Baptist
- Peter
- Mary Magdalene

Early Christian Church

- Peter
- Paul
- Barnabas
- Timothy
- Priscilla and Aquila