

RCIA: SESSION TWENTY-ONE

THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT: 1ST SCRUTINY; THE NICENE CREED

Week: 06/03/23 – 12/03/23

- 1. The Scrutinies:** ‘The scrutinies, which are solemnly celebrated on Sundays and are reinforced by an exorcism, are rites for self-searching and repentance and have above all a spiritual purpose.’¹

The scrutinies are meant to uncover, then heal all that is weak, defective, or sinful in the hearts of the elect; to bring out, then strengthen all that is upright, strong and good.

Three scrutinies are celebrated – on the Third, Fourth, and Fifth Sundays of Lent. Through the celebration of these scrutinies ‘the elect should progress in their perception of sin and their desire for salvation.’²

When the scrutinies happen on these three Sundays the texts and readings for Mass are always those given for the scrutinies in the Missal or for the Lectionary in cycle ‘A’. The gospel texts on these three Sundays present Jesus the Redeemer, who is the living water (encounter with the Samaritan woman in the first scrutiny), who is the light of the world (encounter with the man born blind in the second scrutiny), and who is the resurrection and the life (the raising of Lazarus in the third scrutiny).

Each of the scrutinies contain a rite of exorcism. Through these rites the elect ‘receive new strength in the midst of their spiritual journey and they open their hearts to receive the gifts of the Saviour.’³

¹ International Commission on English in the Liturgy, *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, (Veritas 1987) No. 128.

² Ibid. No. 130.

³ Ibid. No. 131.

2. **The First Scrutiny:** This takes place on the Third Sunday of Lent after the homily. Ideally the homily will have explained the meaning of the first scrutiny in the light of the Lenten liturgy and the spiritual journey of the elect.

See Appendix 1 for The Celebration of the First Scrutiny

3. **The Nicene Creed:** This creed was first adopted at the first council of Nicea in 325. In 381, it was amended at the first council of Constantinople. The amended form is also referred to as the Nicene Creed, or the **Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed**. The Nicene Creed is more explicit and more detailed than the Apostles' Creed.

The Nicene Creed and other summaries of faith are called 'creeds' on account of what is usually the first word in Latin of these summaries: *credo* ('I believe').

Faith is first professed during Baptism. 'The symbol of faith is first and foremost the *baptismal* creed. Since Baptism is given *in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit*, the truths of faith professed during Baptism are articulated in terms of their reference to the three persons of the Holy Trinity.'⁴ Hence the Creed is divided into three parts: belief in God the Father; belief in Jesus Christ, the only Son of God and belief in the Holy Spirit.

Sometimes we may think of faith as an assent to doctrines; in other words an intellectual acceptance of statements of Church teaching. 'But faith, hope and love are *theological virtues*, meaning that they concern primarily our relationship with God and affect our relationships with one another. We believe first of all not in statements, however important and central, but in God, and we believe not only with our minds but with our whole selves.'⁵

The elect will be encouraged to commit *The Apostles' Creed* to memory as they will recite it publicly prior to professing their faith in accordance with that Creed on the day of their baptism. *The Nicene Creed* will be explained to the elect and both it and the *Apostles' Creed* will be presented to them at the First Scrutiny.

The Nicene Creed

I believe in one God,
the Father almighty,

⁴ Ibid. No. 189.

⁵ Share the Good News, No. 44.

maker of heaven and earth,
of all things visible and invisible.

I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ,
the Only Begotten Son of God,
born of the Father before all ages.

God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father;
through him all things were made.
For us men and for our salvation
he came down from heaven,
and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary,
and became man.

For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate,
he suffered death and was buried,
and rose again on the third day
in accordance with the Scriptures.
He ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

He will come again in glory
to judge the living and the dead
and his kingdom will have no end.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son is adored and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.

I believe in one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church.
I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness of sins
and I look forward to the resurrection of the dead
and the life of the world to come.
Amen.

Gospel Reflection Sunday 12th March is the Third Sunday of Lent, Year A (Jn. 4:5-42). The first scrutiny is celebrated on the Third Sunday of Lent and this scrutiny is intimately connected with the Gospel of the Sunday, Cycle A, and draws on the richness of the Gospel text for inspiration.

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? Do 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?

GOSPEL READING

Reader: The Lord be with you.

Response: And with your spirit.

Reader: A reading from the holy Gospel according to John.

Response: Glory to you, O Lord.

4:5 Jesus came to the Samaritan town called Sychar, near the land that Jacob gave to his son Joseph.

4:6 Jacob's well is there and Jesus, tired by the journey, sat straight down by the well. It was about the sixth hour.

4:7 When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, 'Give me a drink'.

4:8 His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.

4:9 The Samaritan woman said to him, 'What? You are a Jew and you ask me, a Samaritan, for a drink?' – Jews, in fact, do not associate with Samaritans.

4:10 Jesus replied: 'If you only knew what God is offering and who it is that is saying to you: Give me a drink, you would have been the one to ask, and he would have given you living water'.

4:11 'You have no bucket, sir,' she answered 'and the well is deep: how could you get this living water?'

4:12 Are you a greater man than our father Jacob who gave us this well and drank from it himself with his sons and his cattle?'

4:13 Jesus replied: 'Whoever drinks this water will get thirsty again;

4:14 but anyone who drinks the water that I shall give will never be thirsty again: the water that I shall give will turn into a spring inside him, welling up to eternal life'.

4:15 'Sir,' said the woman 'give me some of that water, so that I may never get thirsty and never have to come here again to draw water.'

4:16 'Go and call your husband' said Jesus to her 'and come back here.'

4:17 The woman answered, 'I have no husband'. He said to her, 'You are right to say, "I have no husband";

4:18 for although you have had five, the one you have now is not your husband. You spoke the truth there.'

4:19 'I see you are a prophet, sir' said the woman.

4:20 'Our fathers worshipped on this mountain, while you say that Jerusalem is the place where one ought to worship.'

4:21 Jesus said: 'Believe me, woman, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem.

4:22 You worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know: for salvation comes from the Jews.

4:23 But the hour will come – in fact it is here already – when true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth: that is the kind of worshipper the Father wants.

4:24 God is spirit, and those who worship must worship in spirit and truth.'

4:25 The woman said to him, 'I know that Messiah – that is, Christ – is coming; and when he comes he will tell us everything'.

4:26 'I who am speaking to you,' said Jesus 'I am he.'

4:27 At this point his disciples returned, and were surprised to find him speaking to a woman, though none of them asked, 'What do you want from her?' or, 'Why are you talking to her?'

4:28 The woman put down her water jar and hurried back to the town to tell the people.

4:29 'Come and see a man who has told me everything I ever did; I wonder if he is the Christ?'

4:30 This brought people out of the town and they started walking towards him.

4:31 Meanwhile, the disciples were urging him, 'Rabbi, do have something to eat;

4:32 but he said, 'I have food to eat that you do not know about'.

4:33 So the disciples asked one another, 'Has someone been bringing him food?'

4:34 But Jesus said: 'My food is to do the will of the one who sent me, and to complete his work.

4:35 Have you not got a saying: Four months and then the harvest? Well, I tell you: Look around you, look at the fields; already they are white, ready for harvest! Already

4:36 the reaper is being paid his wages, already he is bringing in the grain for eternal life, and thus sower and reaper rejoice together.

4:37 For here the proverb holds good: one sows, another reaps;

4:38 I sent you to reap a harvest you had not worked for. Others worked for it; and you have come into the rewards of their trouble.'

4:39 Many Samaritans of that town had believed in him on the strength of the woman's testimony when she said, 'He told me all I have ever done',

4:40 so, when the Samaritans came up to him, they begged him to stay with them. He stayed for two days, and

4:41 when he spoke to them many more came to believe;

4:42 and they said to the woman, 'Now we no longer believe because of what you told us; we have heard him ourselves and we know that he really is the saviour of the world'.

Reader: The Gospel of the Lord.

Response: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Appendix 1

THE CELEBRATION OF THE FIRST SCRUTINY (Third Sunday of Lent)

(WITHIN MASS)



DIOCESE OF MEATH

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RCIA, 137-143

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LITURGY OF THE WORD

READINGS

137. The texts and the readings for Mass are always those given for the first scrutiny in the Missal and the Lectionary for Mass among the ritual Masses, "Christian Initiation: The Scrutinies."

(Vol. III, p. 5, which simply cross-refers to Vol I, pp. 245-250)

HOMILY

138. *After the readings and guided by them, the celebrant explains in the homily the meaning of the first scrutiny in the light of the Lenten liturgy and of the spiritual journey of the elect.*

INVITATION TO SILENT PRAYER

139. *After the homily, the elect with their godparents come forward and stand before the celebrant.*

Celebrant: **I now invite the Elect with their Godparents to come forward.**

The celebrant first addresses the assembly of the faithful, inviting them to pray in silence and to ask that the elect will be given a spirit of repentance, a sense of sin, and the true freedom of the children of God.

Celebrant: **Today the Church calls the Elect to conversion.
To deepen their resolve to hold fast to Christ
and to carry out the decision to love God above all.
Let us all pray at this time in silence for them
to be given a spirit of repentance,
a sense of sin
and strength of will to live in true freedom as children of God.**

The celebrant then addresses the elect, inviting them also to pray in silence and suggesting that as a sign of their inner spirit of repentance they bow their heads or kneel; he concludes his remarks with the following or similar words.

Celebrant: **My dear Elect, I invite you to join your prayers to this community of faith, and to kneel as we intercede to God on your behalf.**

The elect bow their heads or kneel, and all pray for some time in silence. After the period of silent prayer, the community and the elect stand for the intercessions.

INTERCESSIONS FOR THE ELECT

140. Either of the following formularies, options A or B, may be used for the intercessions for the elect and both the introduction and the intentions may be adapted to fit various circumstances. During the intercessions the godparents stand with their right hand on the shoulder of the elect.

EXORCISM

141. After the intercessions, the rite continues with one of the following exorcisms.

A.

The celebrant faces the elect and, with hands joined, says:

Celebrant: **God of power,
you sent your Son to be our Saviour.
Grant that these catechumens,
who, like the woman of Samaria, thirst for living water,
may turn to the Lord as they hear his word
and acknowledge the sins and weaknesses that weigh them down.
Protect them from vain reliance on self
and defend them from the power of Satan.
Free them from the spirit of deceit,
so that, admitting the wrong they have done,
they may attain purity of heart
and advance on the way to salvation.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.**

All: **Amen.**

If done conveniently, the celebrant lays his hands on each one of the elect.

Then, with hands outstretched over all the elect, he continues:

Celebrant: **Lord Jesus,
you are the fountain for which they thirst,
you are the Master whom they seek.
In your presence**

they dare not claim to be without sin,
for you alone are the Holy One of God.
They open their hearts to you in faith,
they confess their faults
and lay bare their hidden wounds.
In your love free them from their infirmities,
heal their sickness,
quench their thirst, and give them peace.
In the power of your name,
which we call upon in faith,
stand by them now and heal them.
Rule over that spirit of evil,
conquered by your rising from the dead.
Show your elect the way of salvation in the Holy Spirit,
that they may come to worship the Father in truth,
for you live and reign for ever and ever.

All: Amen.

DISMISSAL OF THE ELECT

142. If the Eucharist is to be celebrated, the elect are normally dismissed at this point by use of option A or B; if the elect are to stay for the celebration of the Eucharist, option C is used; if the Eucharist is not to be celebrated the entire assembly is dismissed by use of option D.

A.

The celebrant dismisses the elect in these or similar words:

Celebrant: Dear elect, go in peace, and join us again at the next scrutiny. May the Lord remain with you always.

Elect: Amen.

B.

As an optional formulary for dismissing the catechumens, the celebrant may use these or similar words.

Celebrant: My dear friends, this community now sends you forth to reflect more deeply upon the word of God which you have shared with us today. Be assured of our loving support and prayers for you. We look forward to the day when you will share fully in the Lord's Table.

C.

If for serious reasons the elect cannot leave and must remain with the baptized, they are to be instructed that though they are present at the Eucharist, they cannot take part in it as the baptized do. They may be reminded of this by the celebrant in these or similar words.

Celebrant: Although you cannot yet participate fully in the Lord's Eucharist, stay with us as a sign of our hope that all God's children will eat and drink with the Lord and work with his Spirit to re-create the face of the earth.

D.

The celebrant dismisses those present, using these or similar words.

Celebrant: Go in peace, and may the Lord remain with you always.

All: Thanks be to God.

LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST

143. When the Eucharist is to follow, intercessory prayer is resumed with the usual general intercessions for the needs of the Church and the whole world; then, if required, the profession of faith is said. But for pastoral reasons these general intercessions and the profession of faith may be omitted. The liturgy of the Eucharist then begins as usual with the preparation of the gifts. In the Eucharistic prayer there is to be a remembrance of the elect and their godparents (see ritual Mass "Christian Initiation: The Scrutinies").

