

CHURCH, THE PEOPLE OF GOD REFLECTION

SPEAKER PREPARATION MATERIAL

Speaker: Adult Team Member

Length: 20-30 minutes

Time: Second reflection of Rise Day

Scripture: 1 Peter 2:9-10

Previous Reflection: God, A Community of Love

Following Reflection: Christian Life

Setting:

The participants have heard that God is a community of love and that each person is invited to share in that community through the Church. To understand the People of God, the Church, we want to know both those who have gone before us as well as those who are with us now. This is the full body of the Church. At the Paschal Vigil Prayer Service at the end of Die Day, we renewed our baptismal promises as a group. Later, within the Covenant Rite, we will be invited to renew this commitment individually.

Progression:

The previous reflection offered participants an experience of our Triune God as a community of love. Through Baptism we have all been invited to become part of the community of God and the Church. Now the participants are invited to contemplate what a deeper commitment may mean.

Purpose:

Our understanding of our life in the Church is a communal way of life. Jesus did not select those who would become part of his first earthly family because of talents or abilities, power or prestige. He chose them purely because he loved them and wished to share his life-giving love. Jesus first drew persons into his circle of friends by being a true friend and sharing with them his Father's love. Jesus calls people into his family the same way today. Participants have an opportunity to claim their faith and membership in the Christian community in a very personal way.

Within this family of God, we are nourished and connected and drawn into a living entity – the Church. Here we have a wonderful “family tree” which has its roots in Jesus. The family tree includes countless holy men and women who have lived and are presently living completely for Christ and his Church, the communion of saints. Through our baptism we are invited to have a relationship with these holy men and women.

Jesus modeled three very important roles, which his Body, the Church, also fulfills. In the

priestly role, Jesus calls us to lead a life of self-sacrificing love, inspiring us to become his eyes, his ears, his heart, and his hands, continuing his presence on earth. In his prophetic role, Jesus invites us to stand with him—in word and deed—on the Gospel values he proclaimed. Jesus’ kingly role challenges us to be responsible leaders, servant leaders caring for others through our words and actions, for leading all other people into his presence by our witness, bringing others closer to Jesus. We were anointed into these three roles at our Baptism. Now it is our own personal decision to freely choose to walk in Jesus’ company and share responsibility for the Church, God’s family. Your reflection aims to prepare the candidates for the Covenant Rite, which follows.

Faith Awareness:

Participants may be letting go of an image of the Church as an impersonal organization. An image of the Church we now embrace is the People of God, a community united through sacraments, scripture, and the communion of the saints. The Church is made up of our brothers and sisters in Christ whether living or dead; this is our family and our companions on the journey.

Response:

As part of the Church, the People of God since Baptism, participants are being invited to become active members. Joyfully and with all their hearts, they may wish to say “yes” to follow Christ’s invitation. They may see the Covenant Rite as their opportunity to renew their baptismal commitment.

Scripture for further reflection:

1 Cor 12:27

Col 1:24

Eph 1:22-23

1 Peter 2:5

Eph 5:21

2 Cor 5:15

Col 1:24

1 Cor 16: 13-14

John 13:12-15

Covenant Rite: As we were baptized into this family of God as children, we are now invited to reaffirm our birthright and express our gratitude for all that Jesus offers us through his Church where God dwells in his people. (Celebrate the Covenant Rite.)

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OUTLINE

After reading and praying with the scripture for this reflection, please study the outline carefully. Time constraints may require you to be selective. As you develop your stories and examples, consider the points in bold as most essential to the purpose of your sharing and the continuity of the weekend.

Scripture: Make sure to read 1 Peter 2:9-10 from the enthroned Bible at the point in your reflection where you feel it is most apropos.

But you are “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people of his own, so that you may announce the praises” of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were “no people,” but now you are God’s people; you “had not received mercy” but now you have received mercy. (1 Peter 2:9-10)

Introduction: The speaker can begin with a story to explain what the Church means to you.

I. What is Church?

- A. It is all of these: a building, an institution, the People of God, a community of believers—the Body of Christ. An important function of our family in faith (the Church) is to form us in the faith.
- B. Without delving into stories, explain how your understanding of Church has grown over time.
- C. At its origins, the Church was created by Jesus and modeled on the community of love found in the Holy Trinity. Our unity and individuality as Church reflects our God, who is a community of love.

II. Share your personal experience of Church.

- A. How has being a part of our Catholic community made an impact in your life and helped you encounter God?
- B. Why is being a part of the Church, a community of believers, important to you?
- C. Who have been your personal guides or mentors from this faith community that have drawn you closer to the Church and deepened your relationship with Jesus?

III. The Church holds up guides/mentors called saints who accompany us on our journey of faith.

- A. Who is your favorite saint who serves as a model of a holy life? (Keep it real; these are ordinary people who lived ordinary lives in holy ways.) Pope Francis calls us

to imitate the humble day-to-day saints whom he referred to as “the middle class of holiness.”

- B. At Confirmation, which saint name did you choose? Share the inspiration that this saint was for you in your life.
- C. Invite participants to think about their own patron saint and jot down their name and why they have been an inspiration.
- D. Someone else who journeys with us, along with our living faith community and the communion of saints, is Mary. Just before he died, Jesus identified Mary as the mother of the Church and entrusted all of us to her care. That is why we continue to foster such a warm and sacred closeness to her.

IV. Through our Baptism, we became full members of Christ’s Church.

- A. At our Baptism, we were both welcomed into a family of faith and challenged to practice our faith and live holy lives. The Holy Spirit is invited into our souls and transforms us.
- B. Share an experience of a baptism in your parish that was memorable to you. Point out that the parents and godparents are asked, “Is it your will that the child should be baptized in the faith of the Church?” Later, the priest or deacon anoints the child to be priest, prophet, and king.
 - 1. Christ invites us to offer sacrifices to God and to share him freely with others—this is our priestly role.
 - 2. Christ invites us to be a witness to his love by our actions and words—this is our prophetic role.
 - 3. Christ invites us to be servant-leaders, following his example—this is our kingly role.
- C. Share a short story about someone you witnessed living out their baptismal call through a priestly, prophetic, or kingly role.

“To belong to the Family of God created for us by Jesus is not to become a Christian but to become Christ.” St. Augustine (quote from original manual)

Note to speaker: Following the discussion after your reflection, the candidates will be invited in The Covenant Rite to affirm their membership in the Family of God, the Church that began at Baptism.

Questions for discussion or journaling:

- 1) What do you ask of the Body of Christ (the Catholic faith community) to help you live out your baptismal call?
- 2) What graces would you ask God for, so as to fulfil your calling to be priests, prophets, and kings?