O Holy Spirit of God, be my helper and guide. Through my prayerful meditation on Scripture, fill me with the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of right judgment and courage, the spirit of knowledge and reverence. Pour out within me the spirit of wonder and awe in your presence. I ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen

### Biblical Spirituality Overview

1. The **Power** of the Word of God (from Scripture + Tradition)
2. Thinking about **Spirituality**
3. Theme 1: **God Who Saves** – the Exodus as Distress – Deliverance – Community
4. Theme 2: **God is Sovereign** – Israel's Leaders Blessed by the Presence of God
6. **Living a Biblical Spirituality**: Prayer, Sabbath Rest, and Eucharist
"The Word of God is at the basis of all authentic Christian spirituality. We must never forget that all authentic and living Christian spirituality is based on the word of God proclaimed, accepted, celebrated and meditated upon in the Church."

I. Introduction:
The Power of God’s Word in Scripture

*Isaiah 55:10-11*

"Yet just as from the heavens the rain and snow come down and do not return there till they have watered the earth, making it fertile and fruitful, giving seed to the one who sows and bread to the one who eats, so shall my word be that goes forth from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but shall do what pleases me, achieving the end for which I sent it."

CCC 131

“And such is the force and power of the Word of God that it can serve the Church as her support and vigor, and the children of the Church as strength for their faith, food for the soul, and a pure and lasting fount of spiritual life.” Hence “access to Sacred Scripture ought to be open wide to the Christian faithful.”

*Uzziah and the Ark of the Covenant* – 2 Samuel 6:6-7, Numbers 4:15

*Moses at Burning Bush* – Exodus 3:5

The Power of God’s Word in Tradition
When has the course of your life been altered in response to a passage from Scripture?

If you had to offer a brief definition of spirituality for the RCIA group in your parish, what would you say?

II. Thinking About Spirituality

✓ Your definition?
✓ What makes it Christian?
✓ What makes it Biblical?
✓ Different Styles?
✓ Obstacles?
✓ Spiritual but not Religious?
✓ Spirituality in our modern culture?
✓ What does Holiness look like?
✓ As Catholics, can your spirituality be different than mine?
The Monk's Ladder – Guigo II

- Lectio / Reading
- Meditatio / meditation
- Oratio / prayer
- Contemplatio / contemplation

- Operatio / lived response (Binz)

Lectio - Reading

- Listening with the ear of our hearts

- Key question – “what does the text mean?”

- Literal sense – what the author intended to communicate given his culture, language and literary genre

Meditatio - Meditation

- God is offering me a message through this text

- Key Question – “...mean to me?”

- “chewing sweet and nourishing food” St. Augustine

- Ezekiel – “take this scroll and eat it” (Ez 3:3)
**Oratio - Prayer**

- “When you pray, go into your inner room, close the door and pray to your Father in secret” Mt 6:6

- **Key question** – “what do I want to say to God after reading and reflecting on this text?”

- “The desire to pray is itself prayer” St. Augustine

- “The Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes…” Rom 8:26

**Contemplatio - Contemplation**

- “The external word of God in Scripture awakens us to the interior Word of God in our inmost being” Thomas Keating

- **Key question** – “how can I simply be present to God?”

- “In contemplatio, the heart – the center of our being, and the place where we are most truly ourselves – is humbly exposed to him.” Binz

- It is a movement from conversation to communion.

**Operatio – Lived Response**

- “Be doers of the word and not mere hearers” James 1:22

- **Key question** – “how can I live out the word of God which I have heard in my heart?”

- a school of Christ, where we become another Christ – Gal 2:20 or Phil 1:21
Let your Scriptures be my chaste delight...
O Lord, perfect me and reveal those pages to me!
See, your voice is my joy. Give me what I love...
May the inner secrets of your words be laid open to
me when I knock.
This I beg by our Lord Jesus Christ in whom are
hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge
These are the treasures I seek in your books.

– St. Augustine, Confessions

OPENING PRAYER

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6. Living a Biblical Spirituality: Prayer, Sabbath Rest, and Eucharist

a. How would you characterize your spirituality? What makes it distinctive? Would you say you lean more toward a contemplative or apostolic style spirituality?
b. What have been major contributors from your past that have helped to shape your spirituality?
c. As you read in Psalm 73 has there been a time of “Sabbath awakening” in your life?
d. Would you agree with Downey’s comment above in #12 about the separation of religion and spirituality in today’s culture? What value does your parish and Catholic tradition add to your spirituality?
e. How do you react to the challenges of the prophets to spiritual and liturgical complacency?
f. How do you keep the Sabbath holy?
g. What role have the Scriptures played in your day-to-day spiritual life?
“Theological meaning in the Exodus story grows out of this social context in oppression. When human resources seem defeated by the oppressive and self-serving power of empire (Pharaoh), there is yet the power of God as a source of hope and possibility for new life.” TIOT, 103

**Key Themes of the Exodus Event**

1. **Election - chosen**
2. **Deliverance - saved**
3. **Covenant – holy relationship**
4. **Law – divine guidance**
5. **Wilderness – struggles with fidelity**
6. **Presence – living with God**
Saving Theology

God is viewed as savior/redeemer. What then does it mean to be human? Saving theology finds its expression in the covenant at Sinai. The goal (Deut 4:1) is life. Israel is saved from Egypt in order to live and worship God. Covenant obligations foster life through their relationship with God. In the NT, saving theology finds its fulfillment in Jesus as Redeemer and Savior, saving us from the slavery to sin and death. He is the new Moses who gives us a new covenant in his blood and a new covenant law (Mt 5-7).

Jesus as Universal Savior in Luke’s Gospel

“Today, a savior has been born for you...” Lk 2:11

Theme 2: God is Sovereign

1. God is Creator, King, Master of the Universe – Ps 93 etc.
2. Humans are made in God’s image/likeness – Gen 1:27
3. A + E (i.e. SIN) violate right relationship on all levels – Gen 2-3
4. Kings anointed/sent to represent God to make things right – Ps 2, 110, 72, 2 Sam 7
5. God’s presence: King, Temple, Jerusalem – Ps 46, 48, 76, Ex 25
6. God’s presence in Jesus as King, Temple – Mt 1, Jn 1 + 18
7. Blessing Theology/Spirituality
Theme 3: God’s Elusive Presence

1. The EXILE detached people from their spiritual moorings
   Psalm 137
2. Prompted spiritual renewal after realizing infidelity as cause
3. Exile Paradigm:
   a) upheaval and loss,
   b) disorientation and uncertainty,
   c) hope + vision of restoration

Elusive Presence of God?

1. “One of the most fundamental issues of spirituality: how do we recognize the presence of God? Is the God whom we know a God who is near, or a God who is far off? When we feel the absence of God, how do we explain this? In what sense can we talk of a God who is both present and absent?”
2. “For the exiles, more painful than any physical hardship was the overwhelming sense that they were cut off from God and the traditional means of access to the divine realm (Temple, sacrifice, pilgrimage).” - Eileen Schuller

Truly, you are a God who hides yourself, O God of Israel, the Savior - Isaiah 45:15

For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, my thoughts higher than your thoughts – Isaiah 55:8-9
• O the depths of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! – Romans 11:33

• “A God who is totally accessible to finite human beings would, by definition, not be God” E. Schuller

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?  
Psalm 22:2, Mark 15:34

Conclusion: Living Biblical Spirituality

1. **Prayer** – keeping God at the center in relationships w/ God, self, others, creation in order to sustain Life, Peace, and Justice and to thrive as the humans God created us to be, cf. Gen 1-3

2. **Sabbath Rest** – as a means to avoiding spiritual amnesia. Remember God’s saving activity and welcome the fullness of life in his blessing

3. **Eucharist** – a ritual memorial inviting us to partake in God’s saving and blessing presence in our past, present and future