

## SEGMENT SIX

### THEME: THE HISTORY OF SALVATION

### OPENING PRAYER / SCRIPTURE READING:

Psalm 77: 11 – 14

“I will call to mind the deeds of the Lord; yes, I will remember your wonders of old.” Psalm 77: 11

“Sing to the Lord, bless his name, tell of his salvation from day to day. Declare his glory among the nations; his marvelous works among all the peoples” Psalm 96: 2-3

### INSTRUCTORS' SUMMARY:

As Christians we believe that God's plan to save humanity is revealed in and through the events of human history. God is not a remote, distant being nor is He a pure philosophical abstraction. Rather Christians believe in a personal God who is love. And we believe that God, out of relentless love, chose to reveal Himself in a series of unfolding historical stages recorded for us in the books of the Bible. We call this biblical and historical record of God's words and actions the “history of salvation,” or “salvation history.”

The drama of the divine-human relationship unfolds in the history of salvation as God, over and over again, invites human beings into a **covenant relationship** with Him and with one another. This divine invitation of salvation extended to the human race from the beginning of the world continues to the end of time in spite of humanity's acceptance or rejection of that divine offer of love.

Salvation history unfolds *gradually* over thousands of years as God's love, forgiveness and mercy is revealed in successive stages. The plan of salvation begins with the creation of the world and continues with God's covenant with Abraham, the giving of the Law to Moses and the Exodus of the chosen people of Israel, and the subsequent sending of prophets and kings. Each stage of salvation history prepares humanity for the perfect fulfillment of God's saving plan in the person and mission of his Son, Jesus Christ.

- ❖ God is revealed to humanity gradually. He prepares humanity to welcome by stages his salvation that is to culminate in the person and mission of the incarnate Word, Jesus Christ. (CCC, 53)
- ❖ In the beginning God made himself known through the creation of the world. He invited Adam and Eve to a personal relationship with him. Although they disobeyed God and lost divine friendship, God continued to invite them into the communion, peace and happiness for which they were originally created. (CC, 54-55)
- ❖ Once the unity of the human race was broken by sin, God's plan of salvation was revealed in historical stages, part by part. First, God made an everlasting covenant with Noah (Genesis 9: 16) after the Flood. (CCC, 56-58)
- ❖ Then God chose Abraham and made a covenant with him and his descendants. To gather the scattered human race into one people God called Abram from his country and family and makes him Abraham, that is the "father of many nations." Abraham is our "father in faith," because he believed the promises God made to him.
- ❖ God then called and formed a nation of Israel, the People of God as His own chosen people. God invited this one people to recognize Him and serve Him as the one living and true God (monotheism). The history of salvation recorded in the Old Testament traces the journey of the Israelites as they accept or reject God in fidelity or infidelity to the covenant. (CCC 62)
- ❖ God liberated His people by freeing them from slavery in Egypt in the central event of the **Exodus**. At Mount Sinai, God establishes a covenant with Moses and gives Israel the divine law of the Ten Commandments. The commandments are an expression of being in a covenant relationship with God. (CCC, 62-63)
- ❖ God sends the prophets to the people of Israel and their message prepares them for the future hope of salvation. The prophets Jeremiah, Isaiah, Ezekiel, among others, proclaim a radical message of salvation from sin and from their infidelities. The promise of salvation will include all nations. (CCC, 64)
- ❖ Salvation history reaches its perfect fulfillment in the life and mission of Jesus Christ, who is the Son of God made man. What was spoken in promise to the prophets in successive stages, God has now spoken all at once by giving us His Son who inaugurates the New Covenant (CCC, 65).

## **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

The following questions may be used by the RCIA team to guide large or small group discussions during weekly RCIA meetings. They may also be given to the participants as a basis for personal reflection during the week.

1. How is God's faithfulness and love revealed in the history of salvation?
2. Why did God *gradually* prepare humanity over thousands of years for the revelation of his Son in Jesus Christ?
3. What connections or parallels do you see between your faith journey in the RCIA and the biblical history of salvation?

## **SCRIPTURE REFERENCES/QUOTATIONS:**

Hebrews 1: 1-3

Ephesians 1: 3-10

Genesis 3: 15

Romans 2: 6-7; Romans 11: 17-18, 24 - 28

Psalms 105; Psalm 136

“After God had spoken many times and in various ways through the prophets, “in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son” (Hebrews 1: 1-2)  
Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, *Dei Verbum*, 3-4

“Even when he disobeyed and lost your friendship you did not abandon him to the power of death...Again and again you offered a covenant to man”  
*Roman Missal*, Eucharistic Prayer IV, 118

“The Word of God dwelt in man and became the Son of Man in order to accustom man to perceive God and to accustom God to dwell in man” Saint Irenaeus (CCC, 53)

“O give thanks to the Lord, for He is good...to Him who alone does great wonders, for His steadfast love endures forever.” Psalm 136: 1 – 4

## **SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING:**

Universal Catechism, “*Stages of Revelation*” 54 - 73

Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, *Dei Verbum*, Chapters I

## **CLOSING PRAYER**

Psalm 150

“Praise the Lord for his mighty deeds, praise Him for this sovereign majesty” Psalm 150: 2