

Naaman and the Waters of Cleansing

What We Found

- What nearly kept Naaman from his cure was not the command's difficulty but its humility: *My father, if the prophet had commanded you to do some great thing, would you not have done it?* (2 Kings 5:13).
- The cure came through the appointed means: the Jordan and not the finer rivers of Damascus, seven washings, *according to the word of the man of God*: word and water together: the pattern Baptism will fulfill.
- He came up with *the flesh of a little child* (2 Kings 5:14): not repaired but reborn.
- Jesus himself preached Naaman as a sign that God's grace reaches the outsider (Luke 4:27), and the Church holds both truths together: God has bound salvation to Baptism, and he himself is not bound by his sacraments (CCC 1257).
- Christian tradition reads Naaman's leprosy as a figure of sin, never as a verdict on the sick: Jesus refused the inference from suffering to guilt (John 9:3).

Voices of the Church

St. Ambrose of Milan • *On the Mysteries*

St. Ambrose, whom the group met at the waters of creation, sets Naaman before the newly baptized and teaches in substance that the story exposes the eye's poverty: Naaman saw ordinary water and doubted; he obeyed, and was cleansed. Not every water heals, Ambrose insists, but the water that carries the grace of Christ; what matters at the font is not what the eye sees but what the word of God does.

A fragment under the name of St. Irenaeus • *Fragments* (no. 34 in the *Ante-Nicene Fathers* collection)

An ancient fragment handed down under the name of St. Irenaeus reads Naaman as the Christian's own biography, teaching in substance: as Naaman the leper was cleansed of his leprosy by washing, so we, lepers in sin, are cleansed of our old transgressions by means of the sacred water and the invocation of the Lord, being spiritually regenerated as newborn babes.

The Church's Lectionary • *Monday of the Third Week of Lent*

Each Lent, on a single weekday morning, the Church sets tonight's two texts side by side at Mass: the first reading is Naaman's cleansing in the Jordan (2 Kings 5), and the Gospel is Jesus at Nazareth holding Naaman up as the sign of grace reaching the outsider (Luke 4). The pairing this session builds is not the study's invention; it is the Church's own lectionary, praying the two scenes together over her people.

Live It This Week

- Go to Confession this week if you are able: the humblest appointed mercy in your reach. If it has been years, tell the priest exactly that; you will be received like Naaman at the river.
- Each day this week, pray the servants' question over one resistance of yours: *if he had commanded some great thing, would I not have done it?*
- Find your parish's baptismal font before or after Mass, put your hand on it, and thank God that grace has an address.
- Bring your sealed My Guess page next week. We open them together.

Memory Verse

So he went down and dipped himself seven times in the Jordan, according to the word of the man of God; and his flesh was restored like the flesh of a little child, and he was clean.

2 Kings 5:14 (RSV2CE)

Before next session: Read Ezekiel 36:16–38. And bring your sealed My Guess page from Session 1: next week we open them together.

Catechism references: 1216, 1218, 1257