

Sprinkled Clean, A New Heart

What We Found

- Our sealed guesses were opened, and every one caught a facet: cleansing, drowning, life, humility, birth. Then God answered in the first person.
- Ezekiel 36:25–27 is the promise the whole Old Testament pattern was building: *I will sprinkle clean water upon you... a new heart I will give you... I will put my spirit within you*. Water, heart, Spirit: every verb God's.
- The renewal is for the sake of God's holy name, not our merits (Ezekiel 36:22): no foothold for boasting.
- Deuteronomy's promise that God would circumcise hearts (Session 4) is resolved: same surgeon, same organ, and now the instruments are named.
- Hebrews 10:22 says it of Christians in the present tense: *hearts sprinkled clean... bodies washed with pure water*. The promise kept its own vocabulary.
- The answer is complete except for one thing: the promise still had to be kept in person. That is where we are headed.

Voices of the Church

St. Cyril of Jerusalem • *Catechetical Lectures, Lecture 3*

St. Cyril, preparing candidates for the font, teaches in substance that Baptism works on both levels the prophets promised: the water cleanses the body while the Spirit seals the soul, so that, hearts sprinkled and bodies washed with pure water, we may draw near to God. For Cyril the font is not a picture of Ezekiel's promise; it is the appointment where the promise is kept.

St. Cyprian of Carthage • *To Donatus*

St. Cyprian, describing his own adult conversion, teaches in substance that before his baptism he thought a new heart impossible: he despaired that a man so entangled in his habits could ever be different. Then, he says, the birth of the new man in the water of regeneration washed away the stains of his former life, light poured into a reconciled heart, and what he had thought impossible became, by God's gift, what he could do. The heart of stone was not persuaded out of him; it was taken out of him.

The Church's Liturgy • *The Sprinkling Rite (Asperges)*

On Sundays the Church may replace the penitential act by sprinkling the whole assembly with blessed water while they sing words drawn from tonight's promise-world, above all Psalm 51: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Week after week, the Church walks through her congregations recalling Baptism in Ezekiel's own gesture: clean water, sprinkled on the people.

Live It This Week

- Keep your opened My Guess page somewhere visible this week (a Bible, a mirror, a dashboard) as a record that God answers carried questions.
- Pray Ezekiel 36:26 once each day over one specific stone in you, naming it: *A new heart give me, O God, here*.
- At Sunday Mass, if the sprinkling rite is used, or at the holy water on entering, receive the water deliberately as tonight's promise in motion.

Memory Verse

A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will take out of your flesh the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.

Ezekiel 36:26 (RSV2CE)

Before next session: Read Mark 1:1–11 and John 1:19–34. After five centuries of waiting beside the promise, someone appears at a river.

Catechism references: 715, 1215, with 694 held over from Session 1