

## Fourth Sunday of Lent - Lectionary: 31

### Reading I - [1 Samuel 16:1b, 6-7, 10-13a](#)

The LORD said to Samuel: “Fill your horn with oil, and be on your way. I am sending you to Jesse of Bethlehem, for I have chosen my king from among his sons.” As Jesse and his sons came to the sacrifice, Samuel looked at Eliab and thought, “Surely the LORD’s anointed is here before him.” But the LORD said to Samuel: “Do not judge from his appearance or from his lofty stature, because I have rejected him. Not as man sees does God see, because man sees the appearance but the LORD looks into the heart.” In the same way Jesse presented seven sons before Samuel, but Samuel said to Jesse, “The LORD has not chosen any one of these.” Then Samuel asked Jesse, “Are these all the sons you have?” Jesse replied, “There is still the youngest, who is tending the sheep.” Samuel said to Jesse, “Send for him; we will not begin the sacrificial banquet until he arrives here.” Jesse sent and had the young man brought to them. He was ruddy, a youth handsome to behold and making a splendid appearance. The LORD said, “There—anoint him, for this is the one!” Then Samuel, with the horn of oil in hand, anointed David in the presence of his brothers; and from that day on, the spirit of the LORD rushed upon David.

**Responsorial Psalm - [Psalm 23: 1-3a, 3b-4, 5, 6](#) R. (1) The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.**

### Reading II - [Ephesians 5:8-14](#)

Brothers and sisters: You were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light, for light produces every kind of goodness and righteousness and truth. Try to learn what is pleasing to the Lord. Take no part in the fruitless works of darkness; rather expose them, for it is shameful even to mention the things done by them in secret; but everything exposed by the light becomes visible, for everything that becomes visible is light. Therefore, it says: “Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will give you light.”

### Gospel - [John 9:1, 6-9, 13-17, 34-38](#)

As Jesus passed by he saw a man blind from birth. He spat on the ground and made clay with the saliva, and smeared the clay on his eyes, and said to him, “Go wash in the Pool of Siloam” — which means Sent —. So he went and washed, and came back able to see. His neighbors and those who had seen him earlier as a beggar said, “Isn’t this the one who used to sit and beg?” Some said, “It is,” but others said, “No, he just looks like him.” He said, “I am.” They brought the one who was once blind to the Pharisees. Now Jesus had made clay and opened his eyes on a sabbath. So then the Pharisees also asked him how he was able to see. He said to them, “He put clay on my eyes, and I washed, and now I can see.” So some of the Pharisees said, “This man is not from God, because he does not keep the sabbath.” But others said, “How can a sinful man do such signs?” And there was a division among them. So they said to the blind man again, “What do you have to say about him, since he opened your eyes?” He said, “He is a prophet.” They answered and said to him, “You were born totally in sin, and are you trying to teach us?” Then they threw him out. When Jesus heard that they had thrown him out, he found him and said, “Do you believe in the Son of Man?” He answered and said, “Who is he, sir, that I may believe in him?” Jesus said to him, “You have seen him, and the one speaking with you is he.” He said, “I do believe, Lord,” and he worshiped him.

# From Darkness to Light: The Mystery of Deification

## OUR NEW IDENTITY: THE "NEW CREATION"



**Deification (Theosis):**  
God became man so that humanity might participate in the divine nature.



**The Indwelling Spirit:**  
The Holy Spirit resides intimately within the believer, guiding them from the heart.



**A Permanent Seal:**  
Baptism leaves an indelible spiritual mark that configures the soul to Christ forever.

## The Holy Spirit's Presence Across Salvation History



**ADAM & EVE**  
Original innocence through the gift of sanctifying grace.



**KING DAVID**  
A powerful but intermittent anointing for leadership and prophecy.



**THE BAPTIZED**  
A permanent indwelling that transforms the person into a "new creation".

## OUR DIVINE TASK: LIVING THE LIGHT



**Total Reorientation of Life:**  
Discipleship requires a "cruciform" life mirroring Christ's self-emptying love.



**The Body as a Sacred Temple:**  
Recognizing the body as God's dwelling place fundamentally alters Christian morality.



**The Sacramental Engine:**  
Reconciliation and the Eucharist provide the ongoing power for participation in God's life.

NotebookLM

## Summary

The liturgical readings and theological reflections for the Fourth Sunday of Lent center on the transformative power of Baptism and the profound concept of **deification** (or *theosis*). This process is not merely a moral "fresh start" but a fundamental ontological change where the human person becomes a "new creation," participating directly in the divine nature of God.

## Key takeaways include:

- **The Nature of Deification:** Drawing on Church Fathers and St. Thomas Aquinas, the sources assert that God became man so that man might become "gods" through grace—a participation in divine life from the "inside out."
- **The Role of the Holy Spirit:** Unlike the intermittent charismatic anointing of Old Testament figures like David, the New Covenant offers a permanent indwelling of the Holy Spirit, establishing the believer's body as a sacred temple.
- **Sacramental Reorientation:** Baptism is the gateway to this new life, but it requires active cooperation with grace through the "cruciform" path of discipleship, involving a radical commitment to personal holiness, chastity, and the ongoing nourishment of the Eucharist and Reconciliation.
- **The Blind Man as Paradigm:** The healing of the man blind from birth serves as a primary allegory for the "enlightenment" of Baptism, where the recipient is granted the "eyes to see" reality through the lens of God's truth.

## Conclusion: The Goal of the Christian Life

The ultimate end of the Christian journey is "eternal participation in God." This deification frees the individual from the "dominion of sin and death" and empowers them to live a life of "selfless, cruciform charity." It is a journey toward "full spiritual maturity," where the human person is no longer "ordinary" but sacred, possessing a "supernature" through union with Christ.

The readings for this fourth Sunday of Lent are overflowing with sacramental flavor; namely the Sacraments of Initiation; Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist.

When we're reflecting on the Word of God, considering the role and presence of the Holy Spirit throughout salvation history, we might ask if Adam and Eve had the Holy Spirit, or because of the anointing of David – was that the same as for us? As is the way of God, the answer is one that demonstrates an ever-evolving role and an unfolding understanding in us of this role. For the Christian who receive the Sacraments of Baptism / Confirmation, the possession of the Holy Spirit differs drastically from both Adam's original state and David's prophetic anointing, though they are nonetheless related. In the case of the first human persons, integral to the mystery of their original innocence, was the pure gift of sanctifying grace. Sanctifying grace, a strictly supernatural gift, is a permanent quality inherent in the soul that makes a person holy, pleasing to God, and capable of participating in the divine nature. Adam and Eve, because as St. Thomas Aquinas explains, their human nature was originally created in and for the life of grace, and this had unique, positive benefits for human nature itself.<sup>1</sup> It was the presence of sanctifying grace that elevated the human mind and caused reason to be supernaturally subject to God. As long as the mind remained subject to God through grace, the rest of the harmonious order of original justice (the body subject to the soul, and the passions subject to reason) was perfectly maintained. This of course did not happen. Original innocence gave way to original sin, resulting in the loss of this gift along with preternatural gifts like immortality and freedom from suffering - requiring redemption in Christ.

In the first reading, David is anointed with oil by Samuel, and his anointing is accompanied by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon him. We can say that the oil and the action of the Holy Spirit are one reality. The anointing of David was a signal to all the world that he had been given a special mission by God. King David, therefore, possessed the Spirit as a powerful but intermittent anointing for leadership and prophecy, yet one that did not prevent his fall into grave sin. David struggled with the dominion of sin under the law, whereas believers who are baptized into Christ Jesus are "*baptized into his death*". The old self is crucified so that the "*body of sin might be destroyed*," freeing the baptized from enslavement to sin and empowering them to "*walk in newness of life*".<sup>2</sup> Unlike the sporadic, charismatic presence that came upon Old Testament figures, the Holy Spirit in the New Covenant resides intimately within the believer. The Spirit is "*in our heart, in our soul*," continually guiding Christians so that they may become the "*true salt and the true light for mankind*".<sup>3</sup>

In the New Covenant, the relationship between the human person and the Holy Spirit is fundamentally transformed. John the Baptist prophesied this shift, declaring that while he baptized with water for repentance, Christ would "*baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire*".<sup>4</sup> The Sacrament of Baptism effects a profound spiritual transformation in the human person, by purifying the soul of all sins and the punishments due to them, although it does not remove the temporal consequences that affect human nature, such as suffering and the inclination to sin, even while the person is incorporated into Christ's Body the Church through sanctifying grace sealing the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, accompanied by an indelible character configuring the baptized to Jesus Christ, the ultimate "Anointed One," leading to new life as an

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<sup>1</sup> This original state of natural integrity was itself a result of the gift of grace, insofar as man was truly created in and for the life of grace, and this original state of grace had unique positive benefits upon the nature of man considered as such. Yet in Thomistic parlance, integral nature is not simply identical with the grace of original innocence (or "original justice"). For the notion of original innocence connotes among other things the genuinely supernatural gifts of divine life given to the first parents of man (supernatural friendship with God in faith, hope, and love, the infused virtues and the gifts of the Holy Spirit) none of which can be acquired by human powers. Integral nature, by contrast, denotes human nature in its fullness considered as nature, yet due to a development made possible by the presence of grace and under grace. In effect, for Aquinas, in distinction from many of his medieval contemporaries, human nature was created originally in a state of grace and for the life of grace and this had positive benefits for nature as such, that would not have existed except for the privileged effects conferred by the state of original justice. Vol. 8, No. 2 Thomas Joseph White, O.P. St. Paul Center for Biblical Theology Steubenville, OH 2010

<sup>2</sup> Romans 6:1-23

<sup>3</sup> Pope Francis, General Audience of 23 May 2018

<sup>4</sup> Matthew 3:11-12

adopted child of God with the gifts of the Holy Spirit for the empowering and engagement in mission.<sup>5</sup> Despite their profound connection, the Church makes a distinction between the permanent character (the seal) and the active indwelling (the grace) of the Holy Spirit. They are not strictly identical. The most critical practical distinction between the two concepts lies in their permanence in the soul. Because the sacramental character is an indelible spiritual sign, it can never be repeated or removed. It remains in the Christian forever as a permanent disposition for grace and a perpetual calling to serve the Church. While the mark is permanent, the active fruits or indwelling grace of the Holy Spirit can be lost through sin. As the Catechism explains, *"No sin can erase this mark, even if sin prevents Baptism from bearing the fruits of salvation"*.<sup>6</sup>

In the Psalm, King David sings of a truth about which he knows only the half. Psalm 23 is a foreshadowing of the anointing and indwelling of the Holy Spirit at Baptism which takes on the role of Christ as shepherd after his ascension. King David sings of his own experience of the Holy Spirit and how like himself as a shepherd, the Lord as the Good Shepherd, cares for his flock. *"He leads me beside still waters; he restores my soul"* are interpreted as the waters of Baptism, where the soul is washed, cleansed, and restored to life through the Spirit. *"You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows,"* symbolizing the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. In the New Covenant, this foreshadows the Anointing / Seal of the Holy Spirit received at Baptism / Confirmation. *"You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies"*, foreshadowing the Eucharistic table (Altar). Even while the believer lives in a "valley of the shadow of death" surrounded by spiritual enemies, the believer is nourished by the Shepherd's own body and blood. After Christ's ascension he is no longer physically present on earth. He promised the Holy Spirit as the "Helper" or "Counselor" to guide the church<sup>7</sup>. Therefore, the indwelling Holy Spirit takes on the active, internal role of the Shepherd, leading the sheep in *"paths of righteousness"* from within their hearts. *"Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life,"* represents the indwelling Spirit accompanying the believer on their journey of sanctification, guiding them until they ultimately dwell in the house of the Lord forever. Psalm 23 is a prophetic picture of the Sacramental life, where Jesus the Shepherd assigns the Holy Spirit to guide, feed, and protect his flock.

In the second reading<sup>8</sup>, St. Paul alludes to new life in Christ as new creations when he tells us that we have been brought out of darkness and made children of light. This is a baptismal reference in essence: it proclaims the sacramental passage from sin's darkness to Christ's illuminating grace, calling the baptized to live as children of light by exposing evil and bearing virtuous fruit. *The Sacrament of Baptism is the basis of the whole Christian life, the gateway to life in the Spirit, and the door which gives access to the other sacraments. Through Baptism we are freed from sin and reborn as sons of God; we become members of Christ, are incorporated into the Church and made sharers in her mission: "Baptism is the sacrament of regeneration through water and in the word."*<sup>9</sup> And so, *"This bath is called enlightenment, because those who receive this [catechetical] instruction are enlightened in their understanding...." Having received in Baptism the Word, "the true light that enlightens every man," the person baptized has been "enlightened," he becomes a "son of light," indeed, he becomes "light" himself.*<sup>10</sup>

In the Catholic Sacrament of Baptism, the human person is brought into the life of Christ and salvation, are now spiritually regenerated. St Paul, primarily found in 2 Corinthians 5:17 and Galatians 6:15, calls this person "a new creation", signifying a total transformation where the old sinful life passes away and a new, restored life begins. If we are to understand what we are becoming as this new creation, then we must

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<sup>5</sup> Catholic Church, [Catechism of the Catholic Church](#), Second Edition (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2019), #1262

<sup>6</sup> Catholic Church, [Catechism of the Catholic Church](#), Second Edition (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2019), #1272

<sup>7</sup> John 14:16-17

<sup>8</sup> Ephesians 5:8-14

<sup>9</sup> Catholic Church, [Catechism of the Catholic Church](#), Second Edition (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2019), #1216

<sup>10</sup> Catholic Church, [Catechism of the Catholic Church](#), Second Edition (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2019), 312.

explore the words of St. Thomas who taught, *"The only-begotten Son of God, wanting to make us sharers in his divinity, assumed our nature, so that he, made man, might make men gods"*.<sup>11</sup>

All of this leads to what, in Catholic theology, is referred to as the concept known as deification or divinization. Divinization is the profound spiritual reality wherein a human person is elevated by the grace we have received in Baptism to actually share in the life and nature of God. *"For the Son of God became man so that we might become God"*,<sup>12</sup> to understand divinization, one must look at the reason Jesus Christ came into the world. The Catechism explains that the Word became flesh specifically to make us *"partakers of the divine nature."*<sup>13</sup> It was God's will that through Christ, humanity should have access to the Father and *"become sharers in the divine nature"*.<sup>14</sup> The Church illustrates this profound mystery using the words of prominent saints and early Church Fathers.

In the Preface to Book V of *Adversus Haereses*, Saint Irenaeus refers to *"Jesus Christ, who did, through His transcendent love, become what we are, that He might bring us to be even what He is Himself"*.<sup>15</sup> This divinization is not something we can achieve on our own; it is a free gift initiated in the sacrament of Baptism, which, as we are familiar with saying, is the gateway to life in the Spirit.<sup>16</sup> The soul is replenished with divine grace, which is a *"divine quality inherent in the soul."* This grace acts as a brilliant light that effaces the stains of sin and invests the soul with divine beauty.<sup>17</sup> By participating in the grace of Christ, the Christian becomes an adopted son or daughter and is given the ability to legitimately call God "Father," in union with the only begotten Son.<sup>18</sup> Introducing the baptized person into the intimacy of the Trinitarian life.

The doctrine of deification (or theosis) is not merely an abstract theological concept; it dictates the practical, moral, and spiritual trajectory of a Christian disciple's life. Far from promoting a flight from the world or an exaltation of the self, deification is the profound process by which a believer is transformed through grace to share intimately in the life of the Holy Trinity. Knowing and understanding this is essential to understanding how we are no longer of this world and yet remain in this world. In the daily life of a Christian disciple, this transformative participation in the divine nature carries several vital implications.

The Christian understanding of divinization comes about not through our own efforts alone, but with the assistance of God's grace working in and through us. It inevitably involves an initial awareness of incompleteness and even sinfulness, in no way an exaltation of the self. Furthermore, it unfolds as an introduction into the life of the Trinity, a perfect case of distinction at the heart of unity. This all comes about as the result of a personal encounter, an offer of a new kind of life. Life in Christ is not something so personal and private that it is restricted to the realm of consciousness. Nor is it merely a new level of awareness.

Because deification brings the human person into direct contact with the holiness of God, it fundamentally alters our moral and ethical posture toward the world. However, contrary to modern western thought regarding the perfection of the human person, we cannot achieve the holiness for which we were made and to which we are called through solitary or purely intellectual human effort. It is entirely dependent upon the agency of the Son and the Holy Spirit dwelling within us. To sustain the rectification of the soul

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<sup>11</sup> St. Thomas Aquinas, *Opusc.* 57, 1-4

<sup>12</sup> St. Athanasius, *De inc.* 54, 3: PG 25, 192B

<sup>13</sup> Catholic Church, [Catechism of the Catholic Church](#), Second Edition (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2019, #460

<sup>14</sup> Catholic Church, [Catechism of the Catholic Church](#), Second Edition (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2019, #51

<sup>15</sup> St. Irenaeus, *Adv. haeres.* 3, 19, 1: PG 7/1, 939.

<sup>16</sup> Catholic Church, [Catechism of the Catholic Church](#), Second Edition (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2019, #1213

<sup>17</sup> Catechism of the Council of Trent, Pope Pius V *The Sacraments - Baptism - Importance of Instruction on Baptism* 1566

<sup>18</sup> Catholic Church, [Catechism of the Catholic Church](#), Second Edition (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2019, #1997

and the restoration of the divine image, we must be grounded in the art of prayer and the contemplative dimensions of the Christian life. This discipleship also requires an ongoing, bodily, and spiritual participation in the sacramental life of the Church, particularly the Sacraments of Reconciliation and Eucharist, which serve as the primary and ongoing engine for participation in the life and power of God.

Thereby becoming more perfectly conformed to the incarnate, crucified, and resurrected Christ. Our life must mirror the self-emptying love of Christ. We are not merely called to follow in outward imitation, but to a deep, internal conformity to the One who became a servant to the point of giving Himself on the Cross. Progress in deification has a deeply "cruciform" shape. As disciples we are called to share progressively in the communion of Christ's suffering, death, and resurrection, allowing the paschal mystery to dictate our daily actions and response to trials. Because deification is both a divine "gift and task," we are summoned to actively overcome earthly passions and diligently practice virtue. This transformation drives us toward full spiritual maturity, which is uniquely expressed and sustained by the theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity. Our active cooperation with the work of the Holy Spirit in and through us is a cooperative relationship between divine grace and human freedom.

The Holy Spirit dwells within the hearts of the faithful "as in a temple," guiding them, praying within them, and bearing witness to their divine adoption. This profound theological reality applies both to the individual believer and collectively to the entire Church, bringing humanity into direct participation with the divine life while demanding a radical commitment to personal holiness. The Scriptures explicitly identify the physical human body as this sacred space. St. Paul teaches that the body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within the believer, meaning that the Christian no longer belongs to themselves, but to God who dwells within them.<sup>19</sup> Because God is infinitely holy, the temple in which they reside must also be kept holy and pure. Recognizing oneself as a Temple of the Holy Spirit fundamentally alters Christian morality, particularly regarding the human body. We are called to shine with the splendor of virtue, especially chastity, because "chaste and holy things befit the temple".<sup>20</sup> The Scriptures and tradition issue a severe warning: if anyone defiles or destroys the temple of God through lust, sin, or malice, God will destroy that person, for God's temple is holy.<sup>21</sup>

Ultimately, the implication of deification in the life of a Christian disciple is a total reorientation of one's existence. By being transformed by grace, the disciple becomes a "son in the Son," freed from the dominion of sin and death, and empowered to live a life of selfless, cruciform charity. It transforms the disciple's earthly life into a continuous preparation for their ultimate end: eternal participation in God, which alone can fulfill the deepest desires of the human heart.

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<sup>19</sup> 1 Corinthians 6

<sup>20</sup> *Divinum Illud Munus*, Pope Leo XIII, 1897

<sup>21</sup> 1 Corinthians 3:17-18

## Glossary of Key Terms

Term	Definition
<b>Baptism</b>	The sacrament of regeneration through water and the word; the gateway to the Spirit and the basis of the whole Christian life.
<b>Deification (Theosis)</b>	The profound spiritual reality where a human person is elevated by grace to share in the divine life and nature of God.
<b>Indelible Character</b>	A permanent spiritual seal or mark received in Baptism and Confirmation that configures the person to Christ and cannot be removed.
<b>Original Justice</b>	The harmonious order of the first humans where the body was subject to the soul and the passions were subject to reason.
<b>Paschal Mystery</b>	The mystery of Christ's suffering, death, and resurrection that dictates the "cruciform" shape of a disciple's life.
<b>Preternatural Gifts</b>	Gifts such as immortality and freedom from suffering possessed by Adam and Eve before the fall.
<b>Sanctifying Grace</b>	A strictly supernatural, permanent quality inherent in the soul that makes a person holy and capable of participating in divine nature.
<b>Siloam</b>	A pool in Jerusalem meaning "Sent"; the site where the man born blind washed away the clay to receive his sight.
<b>Son of Man</b>	The title used by Jesus in the Gospel of John when asking the healed man for a profession of faith.
<b>Temple of the Holy Spirit</b>	The theological concept that the physical human body is a sacred space inhabited by God, demanding radical holiness and purity.