

Numbers

IGNATIUS CATHOLIC STUDY BIBLE QUESTIONS

Welcome

“You are approaching the ‘word of God’. But for thousands of years, ... the Word of God has been approaching you.”

The following guide is provided to enhance your reading of Numbers using the *Ignatius Catholic Study Bible*. If you are new to this resource or to reading the Bible, we recommend you read the general Introduction before you begin. It explains what it means that Scripture is the Word of God as well as how we understand and interpret it as Catholics. It also introduces the special features of the Study Bible and tells how they can enrich your reading and study. Additionally, the *Introduction to the Pentateuch* (the five books of Moses, of which Numbers is the fourth) will provide valuable context for your reading.

A simple rhythm of prayer followed by reading and reflection is offered below to guide you through the book one chapter at a time. Questions draw attention to key footnotes and word studies to lead you into a deeper understanding of what you read and then prompt you to consider how to apply what you have learned. For a deeper dive, take advantage of additional features as you go: not just the other footnotes but also cross-references to Scripture and the *Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC)* that are provided above the footnotes as well as any maps, charts, or essays that are not touched on in the questions.

Don't miss these helpful icons as you read! They highlight footnotes that pertain to the Church's criteria for interpreting Scripture (see CCC 112–14):



Be attentive to the content and unity of Scripture

Notes marked with a Bible icon connect Old Testament passages and New Testament mysteries, fostering appreciation for God's unified plan.



Read Scripture in light of the Church's living tradition

This icon marks notes drawn from the Holy Spirit's guidance of Church teaching and the spiritual senses of scripture. Here you'll find official teaching as well as interpretations from Fathers, Doctors, and saints of the Church.



Be attentive to the “analogy of faith”

Explore notes marked with an icon of keys to learn how the mysteries of faith, revealed in Scripture and defined by the Church, clarify and connect with one another in a unified, coherent way.

May God bless you as you read his word!

of God,* did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped,⁷ but emptied himself,[†] taking the form of a servant,[‡] being born in the likeness of men.[§] And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross.[¶] Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name,^{||} that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,^{|||} and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Shinin

12 Therefore, obeyed, so now much more in salvation with f work in you, bo pleasure.

14 Do all th tioning,¹⁵ that y children of God crooked and per

2:9–11: Rom 10:9; 14:9; Eph 1:20–21. 2:13: 1 Cor 15:10. 2

2:7 emptied himself: The Greek verb *kenōō* means “empty out” or “render void”. The idea is, not that Christ divested himself of divinity when he united himself with humanity, but that he restricted his rightful exercise of certain divine abilities during his earthly life and accepted certain limitations of the human condition. In effect, the Son of God made himself poor in order to make us rich with his grace (2 Cor 8:9) (CCC 472). • Christ emptied himself by compressing the glory of his Godhead within our smallness. What he always was remained perfect and incomprehensible, but what he assumed was in proportion to the measure of our nature (St. Gregory of Nyssa, *Against Apollinarius*).

2:8 death on a cross: The ultimate indignity. Death by crucifixion was the most awful and degrading form of criminal execution in the ancient world. The Romans reserved it for slaves and insurrectionists. See note on Mk 15:24.

2:9 exalted him: By raising him from the dead, enthroning him in heaven, and clothing his humanity with divine glory. A similar destiny awaits all who humble themselves as Jesus did (3:21; Lk 14:11).

2:10 every knee should bow: An allusion to the divine oath in Is 45:23. • Yahweh swore that all peoples, to the very end of the earth, would acknowledge his Lordship and bow before him in homage. Paul moves Christ into the center of this prophecy as the divine Lord destined to be revered by all. **heaven ... earth ... under the earth:** The three principal realms in the world view of ancient Israel (Ex 20:4). Homage will come from all creatures great and small—the angels and saints above, the family of man and beasts spread over the earth, and the dead and the demons of the underworld.

serious that we pur sense of awe at sen the prospect of sinn Encouragement con readers that God's g desire (intention) at 21; CCC 308) (CC “work”, he address and trembling”, he good deeds were th not boast of your g within you (St. Aug 2:15 pervers • Deuterono poetic lawsuit that and ingratitude du

A Thing to Harpagmos (G in the Greek O Occurrences of “robbery”. Its considerable de the leading vi (1) Some, like

Prepare

Read the Introduction to Numbers, paying particular attention to the *Content and Themes of the book and the Christian Perspective on it*. What one thing stands out to you, that you would like to remember?

Read the Outline of Numbers to get an overview of the book. What are its major divisions?

Pray

Use the following questions to guide your reading of Numbers, going at a pace that is comfortable to you. Before you begin each new section, pray simply for the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit:

Come, Holy Spirit, open my heart to hear and receive these words as what they truly are, the Word of God. Enlighten my understanding and give me grace to put what I read into practice in my life. Amen.

Read and Reflect

Read and reflect on Numbers as follows:

- Pray before you read
- Read a section of biblical text by itself
- Read the text again, referring to the notes that accompany the text
- For deeper understanding and to aid in applying what you read, answer the questions that follow. The references at the top of each numbered question correspond to particular notes.

At the end of each chapter, review what you have written and linger where you feel drawn, asking the Lord to speak to your heart and into your life. What do you hear? Respond in prayer and ask his help to live what you hear in your attitudes and actions this week.

Numbers 1



For understanding

Numbers 1:2–46

- What does this chapter describe?
- What is the purpose of numbering the men of war?
- What will be the result of the refusal of this army to march against Canaan in chaps. 13–14?
- What does the census of 603,550 men of fighting age imply, and how should the figures in this chapter be taken?

Numbers 1:5–15

- How many assistants are selected from the tribes?
- How does the presence of archaic names seem to support the antiquity of the tradition?

Numbers 1:46

- What is the size of the Israelite army if the Hebrew word *'elep*h is correctly translated “thousand” throughout the chapter?
- What three complicating factors have caused scholars to question such a translation here and elsewhere in the Bible where very large numbers appear?
- Why do some argue that the census figures in Numbers are purposefully exaggerated?

Numbers 1:53

- Why do the Levites camp in square formation around the Tabernacle?
- What important truths are expressed by this arrangement?



For application

Numbers 1:2

- In our country, what is the purpose of a national census?
- How often does it occur?

Numbers

- Who is supposed to be counted?

Numbers 1:3

- The census in Numbers is to count every male fit for war from twenty years old and up. At what age is one allowed to be recruited for our army?
- What is the upper age for new recruits?
- What must recruits in a modern army be physically capable of doing?

Numbers 1:5–16

- Why do parish churches require that their members register their names?
- What are some of the uses to which your parish puts this information?

Numbers 1:51

- Read the note for this verse. Which are the sacraments that only priests are allowed to administer?

Numbers

- Which sacraments may lay persons administer (hint: there are two), and under what circumstances?
- How grave an offense would it be for a lay person publicly to simulate the celebration of the Mass?

Reflect

After reading and reflecting on this chapter, I hear the Lord saying to me:

My prayer response to him:

Numbers 2



For Understanding

Numbers 2:1–34

- How are the tribes assigned positions for camping and marching?

Numbers

- On the march, what order is followed for setting out?

Numbers 2:3

- Why does the east side hold the place of honor?

- Who holds this position in the outer and inner frames of the camp?

Numbers 2:5

- Which tribes camp on either side of the tribe of Judah?

- What tribes occupy the central position on the other three sides?



For Application

Numbers 2:1–34

- As you look at a modern map, which two points of the compass help you to calculate the direction of travel?

- As you consider the note for these verses along with the accompanying chart, which points of the compass appear to be the most important for the Israelites?

Numbers 2:2

- Why does Moses command the sons of Israel to camp facing the tent of meeting rather than facing outward?

- What should be the focal point for a parish regardless of its territorial layout?

Numbers 2:3

- According to the note for this verse, the entrance to the Tabernacle faced east. What makes this orientation appropriate for worship?

- Why is it an ideal that Christian churches face east (*ad orientem*)?

Reflect

After reading and reflecting on this chapter, I hear the Lord saying to me:

My prayer response to him:

Numbers 3



For Understanding

Numbers 3:5–10

- Who are put in charge of assembling and disassembling the Tabernacle as well as moving and maintaining it?
- Because the great majority of Levites are not priests from the line of Aaron, what are they forbidden to do?
- How do they serve instead?
- How does Numbers describe them?

Numbers 3:12

- What change does this verse formalize?
- Prior to this national act of apostasy, who were consecrated to serve the Lord as ministers of worship, and how did the sons of Levi become replacements for them?
- From that point on, how was the tribe of Levi entrusted with the duties of covenant worship?

Numbers 3:14–37

- When the tribe of Levi is numbered by a census, which three Levitical clans are assigned duties for transporting the Tabernacle from Sinai to Canaan, and what are their duties?

Numbers 3:43

- Since the enrollment of 22,273 first-born males is noticeably small for a nation that is two million strong, what is the improbable result of taking the numbers at face value?

- What are two solutions to this problem?



For Application

Numbers 3:5–10

- What similarities do you see between the duties of the Levites and those of deacons?

- How might the restoration of the permanent diaconate after Vatican II be considered a divine gift to the Church?

Numbers 3:9

- Within a diocese, to whom are deacons responsible for their service?

Numbers

- Unless a deacon serves the bishop directly (for example, as a member of the bishop's staff), how do they serve the diocese?

Numbers 3:44

- The Lord distinguishes the first-born sons of Levi from those of the rest of Israel, and he selects only the former for his service. What choice do male members of the Levites have?
- How are men selected for the Catholic priesthood and diaconate?
- How does one know whether the Lord is selecting him for sacred service?

Numbers 3:46–47

- Read the note for v. 47. To what tribe did Jesus belong?
- Since he was not a Levite, what would the price of his redemption have been?
- What irony do you see in this circumstance?

Reflect

After reading and reflecting on this chapter, I hear the Lord saying to me:

My prayer response to him:

Numbers 4



For Understanding

Numbers 4:3

- What are the age limits for Levitical ministry?
- In other passages, at what age does eligibility for service begin?
- What may be reasons for these adjustments?

Numbers 4:5

- Why must the priests ready the sacred furnishings of the Tabernacle before the Kohathites can transport them through the wilderness?

Numbers 4:6

- Which furnishings of the holy and most holy place are wrapped in blue coverings, and which of the outer court are wrapped in purple?

- What do these colors perhaps symbolize?



For Application

Numbers 4:3, 23, 39

- Why start the term of service in the Tabernacle at age thirty?

- How old was Jesus when he began his public ministry?

- What connection might there be between that age and his New Covenant high priesthood?

Numbers 4:5–6

- Read the note for v. 5. Given these requirements, why do you think David's first attempt to bring the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem turned out as it did (2 Sam 6:3–7)?

What should David and his entourage have known?

Numbers 4:7–8

- How are the utensils (plates, dishes, cups) for transporting the bread of the Presence to be carried?

- How are chalices used for the celebration of the Eucharist to be treated, in distinction to other vessels used at Mass, such as patens and communion cups?

- Why treat the chalice differently from other vessels?

Numbers 4:20

- The sons of Kohath, who were tasked with carrying the covered items from the sanctuary, were forbidden from looking at them under pain of death. What did these items include (vv. 5–15)?

- How did they represent the face of God?

- What was the penalty for looking at the face of God?

Reflect

After reading and reflecting on this chapter, I hear the Lord saying to me:

My prayer response to him:

Numbers 5



For Understanding

Numbers 5:2

- How long were persons in a state of ritual uncleanness exiled from the camp?

- What was exclusion from the camp intended to safeguard?

Numbers

- What were some sources of uncleanness?
- How does this law inform the vision of the New Jerusalem in the Book of Revelation?

Numbers 5:5–10

- With what do these verses deal?
- What provision is made here?
- What is the purpose behind these precepts?

Numbers 5:11–31

- What does this trial by ordeal for a wife suspected of adultery seek to determine?
- How is the woman tested?
- What does the rite stress, among other things?

Numbers

- Why did Moses make the people drink the water of ordeal?

- Why was the law of the water of ordeal derived from Moses' action?

Numbers 5:18

- Why would the priest unbind the woman's hair?

- What is the water of bitterness?



For Application

Numbers 5:3

- The note for v. 2 cites Rev 21:27, where “nothing unclean shall enter” the heavenly Jerusalem because of God's presence there. What, then, are the alternatives for those who are unclean at the time of death?

- How should one prepare to avoid exclusion from the New Jerusalem?

Numbers 5:7

- Where in the NT is the Catholic practice of confessing sins to a priest supported?

Numbers

- Can a priest ever refuse absolution? If so, why would he do that?

- The penances imposed in confession are usually fairly light. What is their purpose?

Numbers 5:11–13

- The scenario presented in these verses can raise numerous issues for a marriage. What are some of them?

- If the offending spouse repents before the other learns of the affair, what virtues would be required to restore the integrity of the marriage?

Numbers 5:29–31

- Who bears the burden of this law?

- To whom is the ninth commandment addressed (Deut 5:21)?

- How does Paul describe the relations between husband and wife (Eph 5:21–32)?

Reflect

After reading and reflecting on this chapter, I hear the Lord saying to me:

My prayer response to him:

Numbers 6



For Understanding

Numbers 6:1–21

- What do these verses describe?
- To what way of life is a Nazarite consecration similar?
- How long could the commitment last, and what did it require?

Numbers

- What do parallels with laws in Leviticus imply?

- Whom do notable Nazarites in Scripture include?

Numbers 6:5

- What does long hair give the Nazarite?

- How may uncut hair be viewed?

Numbers 6:13–20

- What are required for the completion of a Nazarite vow?

- What does the rite describe?

Numbers 6:24–26

- What does the Priestly Benediction invoke?

- Who is the source of these blessings, and who mediates them?

Numbers

- What does the threefold repetition of LORD suggest to Christian faith?



For Application

Numbers 6:1–8

- In our culture, what most often prompts a man or woman to enter religious life?

- Before any vows are taken, what is the period of preparation?

- What vows does the man or woman then make, and what is their duration?

Numbers 6:5

- Nazarite men were expected to wear their hair long. In the Christian economy, how does St. Paul regard long hair on a man (1 Cor 11:14)?

- If, as he says, long hair on a woman is her glory (1 Cor 11:15), why do women in religious life typically cover their hair (1 Cor 11:10)?

Numbers 6:25–26

- Since the Lord is invisible, what is meant by the Lord’s “face” or his “countenance” in this blessing?

- In your prayer, how do you envision the Lord’s face?

- How should one “face” the Lord in prayer?

Reflect

After reading and reflecting on this chapter, I hear the Lord saying to me:

My prayer response to him:

Numbers 7



For Understanding

Numbers 7:1—9:15

- What events does this narrative flashback cover?
- How does the flashback begin and end?
- When do the events that it records occur?

Numbers 7:3

- What do the tribes donate to the sanctuary, and how will the Levitical clans of Gershon and Merari use them?

Numbers 7:12–83

- How do the leaders from the twelve tribes present their gifts to the sanctuary?
- What do the donations from each tribe include?
- What order does the giving follow?

- What is the point here?

Numbers 7:89

- What does Moses' hearing the Lord's voice suggest about why he stands outside the veil that conceals God's presence in the most holy place?

- What is the mercy seat?



For Application

Numbers 7:1–4

- When a new parish is established before a church building can be erected, the liturgy may have to be offered in more than one physical location. What would need to be transported to each location for the sacrifice of the Mass to be offered?

- Who might be given responsibility for bringing the necessary equipment to each location?

Numbers 7:12–83

- The note for these verses says that “every tribe has a stake in divine worship, and so every tribe contributes to the necessities of liturgical service.” What is your stake in divine worship at your parish?

Numbers 7:89

- Why would the Lord want to speak to you personally?

- How do you hear the voice of the Lord?

- How can you distinguish between your own feelings or preferences and what the Lord would actually say?

Reflect

After reading and reflecting on this chapter, I hear the Lord saying to me:

My prayer response to him:

Numbers 8



For Understanding

Numbers 8:2

- What are the seven lamps?
- How do priests tend the lamps?
- What does the lamp illuminate?
- What does it perhaps symbolize?

Numbers 8:5–22

- How does the induction ceremony of the Levites differ from the ordination ceremony of Aaronic priests?
- Being appointed but not anointed, the Levites are authorized to perform what services?

Word Study: *Lay* (8:10)

- What does the Hebrew verb *samak* mean?
- How is the verb often used in Scripture?
- How does the ritual dedication of the Levites appear to mimic the gesture of laying hands on a sacrificial victim?
- How is this similar to the Christian practice of ordination by the laying on of hands?

Numbers 8:19

- How did the Levites probably assist the sons of Israel at the tent of meeting?
- What kind of barrier did the Levites form around the Tabernacle?



For Application

Numbers 8:2–4

- According to the note for v. 2, what was the purpose of the lampstand in these verses?

- According to the visions of John in Rev 2–3, what is the meaning of a lampstand?

- What does John expect from a lampstand?

Numbers 8:7

- Why do certain rituals, such as blessings, call for the sprinkling of holy water?

- What cleansing, if any, is being done by this action?

Numbers 8:10

- Read the word study for this verse. Why does the Torah require the priest or the worshiper to lay his hands on the head of the victim?

- When the bishop lays his hands on an ordinand, what is he doing?

Numbers

- When laying on of hands is done as part of a prayer service, such as a healing service, what is the intention of the prayer?

Numbers 8:19

- How are deacons intended to be a gift to the priests with whom they serve?

- What atonement can they make among the poor of the parish?

Reflect

After reading and reflecting on this chapter, I hear the Lord saying to me:

My prayer response to him:

Numbers 9



For Understanding

Numbers 9:1

- What is the first month of Israel's calendar?

- When is the current episode set?

Numbers 9:2

- What did the Passover celebrate, and where was it placed in the calendar of liturgical feasts?

- When was the paschal lamb sacrificed?

Numbers 9:6

- What does contact with the dead cause, and what does it force the defiled person to do?

- What are individuals in a state of ritual uncleanness forbidden to do?

- What does this law allow one who is unclean to observe?

Numbers

- What does the fourteenth day of the second month constitute?

Numbers 9:15–23

- What does the Lord, present in a pillar of cloud and fire, do for Israel?

- What does he determine?

- According to St. Bede, what is the pillar of fire, and where does it light our way?



For Application

Numbers 9:2–3

- Although Passover is no longer celebrated with the sacrifice of a lamb, how is it observed among Jews today?

- Why do Christians wish to observe Passover by means of an adapted Seder service?

Numbers 9:10–12

- If you are required to work or are on a journey during a Sunday or holy day of obligation, are you still required to assist at Mass?

Numbers

- What can you do if there is no realistic opportunity to attend Mass on that day?

Numbers 9:14

- If someone who is not Catholic attends Mass, what is this person allowed to do?

- Why does the Church restrict such a person from receiving Communion?

Numbers 9:15–23

- According to the note for these verses, the pillar of fire allegorically represents the divine grace that guides us on our spiritual journey toward heaven. How does one come to recognize stages in the spiritual journey? For example, what is the role of a spiritual director?

- What are some spiritual books that can provide guidance in spiritual growth?

Reflect

After reading and reflecting on this chapter, I hear the Lord saying to me:

My prayer response to him:

Numbers 10



For Understanding

Numbers 10:2

- What were the silver trumpets used to do?

- What have archeologists discovered in the tomb of Tutankhamun?

- As in ancient Israel, for what were they used?

Numbers 10:10

- What festival was celebrated on the first day of every month?
- To what does the Hebrew *zikkaron* refer here?
- Why is history recalled?

Numbers 10:14–28

- What do these verses describe?
- What information is given about the exact position of the Levites in the caravan?

Numbers 10:29

- Who is Hobab?
- What did the family of Reuel do for Moses after his flight from Egypt?
- What was Hobab recruited to do?



For Application

Numbers 10:2–7

- What messages can external church bells be used to send?

- Within Mass, why are bells sometimes rung during the liturgy?

Numbers 10:10

- In the celebration of Mass or the Divine Liturgy, what is remembered?

- What does remembrance mean in this context?

Numbers 10:31

- Although one may live a fruitful Christian life without a spiritual director, why would it be useful to employ one?

- What qualities should a trained spiritual director have?

Numbers 10:35

- Several psalms call upon God to “arise” (Ps 7:6; 9:19; 10:12; 17:13; 68:1; 132:8). In general, what are they asking God to do?

- When you ask God to become active in your life, what do you expect him to do for you?

Reflect

After reading and reflecting on this chapter, I hear the Lord saying to me:

My prayer response to him:

Numbers 11



For Understanding

Numbers 11:4

- Who are “the rabble”?
- Since ironically the caravan is crowded with flocks and herds, what explains Israel’s unwillingness to slaughter them?

Numbers

- What underlies the food crisis in Egypt in Gen 47:13–17?
- According to St. Augustine, what should the Israelites have asked God to do rather than satisfy their evil desires?

Numbers 11:16

- Who are the seventy men that the Lord tells Moses to select?
- What are they chosen to do?
- In NT times, how does the Sanhedrin follow this model?

Numbers 11:25

- What is the point about the prophesying occurring here?
- How may this episode underlie Jesus' appointment of 70 men?

Numbers 11:29

- Why does Moses not feel threatened by others receiving the gift of prophecy?

Numbers

- When does the prophet Joel announce this very thing?
- When are the prophetic words of Moses and Joel finally realized?



For Application

Numbers 11:2

- What is your practice of intercessory prayer? For example, how often do you pray for others, and how do you pray for them?
- What part does thanksgiving play in your prayer for them (Phil 4:6)?

Numbers 11:11–15

- What is Moses' attitude toward God in these verses?
- How do his complaints resemble some of your own?
- What changes of approach would foster greater faith in God?

Numbers 11:17

- In this verse, the Lord promises to “take some of the spirit which is upon you and put it upon” the seventy elders. Does that mean that Moses will lose some of the spirit that is upon him?
- What spirit is the Lord speaking about?
- How much of it will remain on Moses, and how much will be on the elders?

Numbers 11:23

- What does the Lord mean by the question in this verse?
- What is the expected answer?
- How would that answer apply to your own prayer?

Numbers 11:29

- How has the Lord given the gift of prophecy to all his people?
- Through which sacraments is this gift given?

- How is charismatic prophecy different from the ordinary preaching of the word of God?

Reflect

After reading and reflecting on this chapter, I hear the Lord saying to me:

My prayer response to him:

Numbers 12



For Understanding

Numbers 12:1

- Who are Miriam and Aaron?

- What is a Cushite?

Numbers

- Since elsewhere Moses is said to have married Zipporah, who is a Midianite woman, what has been argued concerning her identity?

Numbers 12:2

- How do Miriam and Aaron both impart divine instruction to Israel?

- Although initially they protest Moses' choice of a wife, what does their challenge to the unique authority of Moses become?

- What is at issue?

Numbers 12:7

- Who belongs to “all the house of Israel” (Ex 40:38)?

- In ancient Israel, how was a patriarch's extended family known?

- To what is Moses likened?

- The Book of Hebrews recalls this passage to claim what about Jesus?

Numbers 12:9–16

- Why is Aaron spared punishment?

- How is Miriam quickly disciplined?



For Application

Numbers 12:2

- Of the seven capital sins, which one are Aaron and Miriam most likely committing here?

- Why is this sin so pernicious (CCC 2538–40)?

Numbers 12:3

- Considering that Moses could be very stern in his leadership, as in the golden calf aftermath, in what sense is he meek according to the note for this verse?

- Why should meekness be a desirable quality in a leader?

Numbers 12:7

- The 20th century was blessed with four popes who were canonized. Since each of them was controversial in some way, what virtues set them apart from other servants entrusted with the welfare of the Church?

Reflect

After reading and reflecting on this chapter, I hear the Lord saying to me:

My prayer response to him:

Numbers 13



For Understanding

Numbers 13:8

- What does Joshua's birth name mean?

- How did Moses expand his name?

Numbers

- What does the new name Joshua mean?

Numbers 13:21

- What does the expression “wilderness of Zin to Rehov” designate?

- What would be the total distance to Rehov and back?

Numbers 13:22

- Where is Hebron?

- How was it remembered?

- Which clan lived in the vicinity?

- What was the city of Zoan also called, and when was it founded?

Numbers 13:32

- How do ten of the twelve spies demoralize the people?

- What is the result?



For Application

Numbers 13:8

- According to the note for this verse, Moses at some point changed Hoshea's name to Joshua (v. 16). What was Jesus' intent in changing Simon's name?

- In Scripture, what does the change of one's name by a leader usually mean?

Numbers 13:17–20

- From a military standpoint, what is Moses directing the spies to learn?

- Why does he direct them to bring back some of the fruit of the land?

Numbers 13:27–30

- How balanced is the report the spies give Moses?

- On which side does Caleb stand?

Numbers

- Although most of the spies are opposed to him, what is his intervention trying to accomplish?

Numbers 13:32–33

- Considering the mixed report the spies initially give Moses, what choice of action do those bringing the evil report implicitly want?
- What sin are they unwittingly committing?
- If you are faced with positive and negative alternatives for a course of action, how would you try to determine the Lord's will?

Reflect

After reading and reflecting on this chapter, I hear the Lord saying to me:

My prayer response to him:

Numbers 14



For Understanding

Numbers 14:1–45

- What does this chapter describe?
- What do the tribes do at Kadesh?
- On both occasions, when the Lord released a plague among the people, what did Moses do?
- Why does the NT recall the tragedy at Kadesh?

Numbers 14:13–19

- How does the apostasy of Israel put the Lord's reputation at risk?
- Why does Moses apply this rhetorical pressure to the Lord?

Numbers 14:22

- What are the ten times the Israelites grumble or rebel against the Lord and Moses after leaving Egypt?

Numbers 14:34

- Into what span of time will the forty days of spying stretch?

- What distinction does the Kadesh episode illustrate?



For Application

Numbers 14:18

- What sorts of parents' iniquity does the Lord visit "upon [their] children, upon the third and upon the fourth generation?" How might alcoholism or adherence to the occult be examples of this?

Numbers 14:28

- Read this verse carefully. What petition did the people say in the Lord's hearing that he will now grant?

- Why is it important to be careful what you pray for?

Numbers 14:29–30

- According to Heb 3:19, why was this generation of people unable to enter the Promised Land?

Numbers

- How does lack of faith impede the action of grace?

Numbers 14:40–45

- What motivated the sons of Israel to take matters into their own hands despite Moses' warning?
- Why was their mission impossible?
- Against which virtue is presumption a sin (CCC 2091)?

Reflect

After reading and reflecting on this chapter, I hear the Lord saying to me:

My prayer response to him:

Numbers 15



For Understanding

Numbers 15:1–16

- Which offerings are added to the repertoire of animal sacrifices described in Lev 1–3?
- In connection with what will the required amount of grain and wine increase?
- When will these laws be observed?
- When may Paul have had this and similar episodes in mind?
- What pattern does the Pentateuch reveal in regard to the yoke of the Torah?

Numbers 15:14

- Who is meant by the word “stranger”?
- Although he is not required to participate in the worship of the Tabernacle, what must he do if he chooses to participate?

Numbers 15:22–31

- How does the Mosaic Law distinguish between sins?
- What do inadvertent sins require?
- What about deliberate ones?

Numbers 15:38

- How are tassels made, and where are they worn?
- What is the purpose of these decorations?
- What are the other two visual reminders in Numbers intended to restrain Israel from sin?
- In NT times, where might Jesus have worn tassels?



For Application

Numbers 15:1–16

- Read the note for these verses. If you are a parent, how does the pattern of making the yoke of the Torah a little heavier every time Israel sins accord with your experience of raising children?

- How well does this strategy work?

Numbers 15:15–16

- Why does the Lord enact one rule for everyone, including outsiders?

- How do the rules for distributing the Eucharist apply to non-Catholics who wish to attend Eucharistic liturgies?

- Why is this not a lack of charity?

Numbers 15:30–31

- What kind of sin does a person who deliberately misses Mass on Sundays or holy days of obligation commit?

- What happens in the soul of a person who commits such a sin (CCC 1855–59)?

Numbers 15:32–36

- Why is the action of the man gathering sticks considered an infraction worthy of death?
- What purpose does his stoning serve?
- Since those in the congregation who take part in the stoning act deliberately, why are they not guilty of murder?

Reflect

After reading and reflecting on this chapter, I hear the Lord saying to me:

My prayer response to him:

Numbers 16



For Understanding

Numbers 16:1

- Who is Korah, and of what clan is he a member?
- Being Levites, what role do Korah and his fellow clansmen fill?
- How is Korah mentioned in the NT?

Numbers 16:40

- What priestly actions are forbidden to Levites and lay people?
- What are some things that only the high priest can do?

Word Study: *Sheol* (16:30)

- As the realm of the dead, with what is Sheol closely connected?
- To what do men descend after death?
- How does the Bible picture Sheol?
- Despite the apparent finality of death, what confidence in the power of God does Scripture display?
- When is this faith verified?

Numbers 16:46

- Why does Aaron hurry out to incense the camp?
- What is the stark contrast between this and the preceding episode?

Numbers

- According to St. Caesarius of Arles, how do the actions of Aaron, who stands between the living and the dead, prefigure the priesthood of Christ?



For Application

Numbers 16:3

- Since Christ has made of his Church “a kingdom, priests for his God and Father” (Rev 1:6), in what sense are the lay faithful also priests?

- How do they exercise the common priesthood of the faithful (CCC 1546)?

Numbers 16:8–10

- How does the common priesthood of the faithful differ from the ministerial priesthood?

- What is the role of the ministerial priesthood in the life of the faithful (CCC 1120, 1547)?

Numbers 16:13

- Dathan and Abiram question the legitimacy of Moses’ authority. How did Moses acquire his authority (Ex 3:10)?

- From whom did the apostles receive their authority to cast out demons (Lk 9:1) or even to forgive sins (Jn 20:22–23)?

Word Study: *Sheol* (16:30)

- If in OT times both the wicked and the righteous went to Sheol after death, what would have been the motivation for living a righteous rather than a wicked life?
- In Christian belief, what is the fate of the wicked after death (CCC 1023)?
- What is the fate of the righteous (CCC 1033)?

Reflect

After reading and reflecting on this chapter, I hear the Lord saying to me:

My prayer response to him:

Numbers 17



For Understanding

Numbers 17:1–13

- What does this chapter say about Aaron and his sons?

- Why is the miracle of the budding rod deemed necessary in the aftermath of Korah's rebellion?

Numbers 17:4

- Where are the rods deposited?

- Where does Moses meet with the Lord?

Numbers 17:8

- What happens to the rod of Aaron?

- Where is it thereafter kept?



For Application

Numbers 17:2

- What are some examples of devices by which we recognize a person's authority or position? For example, what would we look for to identify a police officer?

- Why are such devices important for a society?

Numbers 17:13

- Why did the Lord threaten with death anyone other than ordained priests from coming near the Tabernacle?

- Since the coming of the Son of God in human flesh, how near are we allowed to come to the Lord?

Reflect

After reading and reflecting on this chapter, I hear the Lord saying to me:

My prayer response to him:

Numbers 18



For Understanding

Numbers 18:3

- Which vessels are included here?
- Though the Levites were charged with transporting these items on the wilderness march, what restriction was placed on them?
- Who bears responsibility if they allow the Levites to encroach upon their domain?

Numbers

- What happens to Levitical or lay trespassers?

Numbers 18:15

- When were the first-born sons consecrated to the service of the Lord?

- But when the Levites were selected to replace them in ministry, what did the parents of every first-born male have to do?

Numbers 18:21

- What is the tithe?

- For what do the Levites receive this from the lay tribes?

- What is the income tithe supposed to represent?

Numbers Topical Essay: Priesthood in the Old Testament

- In what two phases does the narrative of Scripture reveal a historical development of the priesthood?
- During the patriarchal age, how was the priesthood rooted in the family, and what priestly activities did the Patriarchs perform?
- How did priestly leadership overlap with family headship?
- How did the family priesthood change to a clerical priesthood in the days of Moses?
- How long does the “covenant with Levi” (Mal 2:4) remain in effect?
- In terms of responsibilities, what activities did the priests of Aaron’s line perform?
- Since in the OT we see both a domestic priesthood and a clerical priesthood, what, if anything, is changed in terms of priestly functions?



For Application

Numbers 18:2–4

- According to the *Catechism*, how are deacons supposed to serve those in the ministerial priesthood (CCC 1570)?

- What are they restricted from doing?

Numbers 18:7

- In Matthew's Gospel, Jesus speaks of those who make themselves "eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven" (Mt 19:12), adding that "not all men can receive this precept, but only those to whom it is given" (Mt 19:11). What is he telling his disciples?

- Why does he present celibacy as a gift?

Numbers 18:19

- Read the note for this verse. Jesus speaks of salt losing its taste (Mt 5:13). In Matthew's context, what does he mean?

- If salt signifies the permanence and indestructibility of the covenant, how does it lose its taste?

- Does it cease to be salt?

- How can the saltiness of the covenant be restored?

Numbers 18:26–30

- According to these verses, how much of what the Levites receive in tithes from the people are they in turn to give to the priests?

- What is the “hallowed part” (v. 29) of the tithes they are to give, and what is left to them?

- What do you think deacons should do with the stipends they receive for their service?

Reflect

After reading and reflecting on this chapter, I hear the Lord saying to me:

My prayer response to him:

Numbers 19



For Understanding

Numbers 19:1–22

- What is the rite of the red heifer, and of what does the purifying agent consist?
- Who must be purified with this water, and why?
- According to the Book of Hebrews, why does the cleansing power of Christ's blood far exceed the potency of the red heifer ashes (Heb 9:11–14)?
- According to St. Bede, what makes the heifer ritual a sacrament of the Lord's Passion?

Numbers 19:2

- What does the redness of the cow probably signify?
- What is the key element in the ritual?
- What do some scholars suggest about the color of the cow?

- Why must the heifer never have borne a yoke?

Numbers 19:7

- Who are all those made unclean in the heifer ritual?



For Application

Numbers 19:1–6

- In modern Judaism, the sacrifice of a red heifer is associated with the rebuilding of the Jerusalem Temple; coincidentally, some fundamentalist Christians pray that that rebuilding will usher in the Second Coming of Jesus. How does the Church anticipate the Second Coming (CCC 675–77)?

Numbers 19:7–10

- According to Heb 9:13–14, how effective are the ashes of a red heifer in purification from sin?

- When does the liturgy provide for the distribution of ashes?

- What is its purpose?

Numbers 19:20

- What are some of the uses of holy water in the Christian life?

- What sacrament does the water itself recall (CCC 1668)?

Reflect

After reading and reflecting on this chapter, I hear the Lord saying to me:

My prayer response to him:

Numbers 20



For Understanding

Numbers 20:1

- Where is the wilderness of Zin?

Numbers

- When do the events in this verse take place?
- To which point in Numbers does the narrative now jump?
- How does the context make this clear?

Numbers 20:11

- What were God's specific instructions to Moses about obtaining water from the rock?
- What perhaps was Moses' reason for striking the rock twice?
- Whatever the case, what did Moses actually do?
- According to St. Augustine, what was the significance of the rock that was struck twice?

Numbers 20:12

- What will keep Moses and Aaron out of the Promised Land?

Numbers

- Why is their lack of faith especially serious?

- Where will both men die?

Numbers 20:26

- Which garments are meant here?

- How long had Aaron been wearing these sacred garments?

- Who is now installed as Aaron's successor in the high priestly office?



For Application

Numbers 20:8–9

- For what did Moses often use his rod at God's command (Ex 4; 7–8; 14)?

- How did Moses use it the first time he drew water from the rock in Exodus 17:1–7?

Numbers

- If God did not intend Moses to use the rod to strike the rock, why take it there?

- What did the rod symbolize?

Numbers 20:12

- Psalm 95 uses this incident as a warning not to harden our hearts whenever we hear the Lord's voice (Ps 95:8). How did unbelief or distrust work to harden Moses' heart?

- How does it harden our hearts?

Numbers 20:24

- How is Aaron implicated in the rebellion at Meribah?

- Since he merely accompanies Moses to the rock, how does he share Moses' unbelief?

- According to the note for v. 12, what makes his disbelief so serious?

Reflect

After reading and reflecting on this chapter, I hear the Lord saying to me:

My prayer response to him:

Numbers 21



For Understanding

Numbers 21:3

- To what is the Hebrew place-name Hormah related?

In military contexts, what is supposed to be done with items that fall under the ban?

- Decades earlier, what did Hormah mean for the Israelites, and what does it mean now, 40 years later?

Numbers 21:4–9

- What incident is narrated here?
- Once a confession of sin comes forth and Moses intercedes for the people, what does the Lord do?
- Why is the manufacture of this image not a violation of the Decalogue?
- How is the bronze serpent a prophetic image of the Cross?
- According to St. Justin Martyr, what did the bronze serpent announce?

Numbers 21:21–35

- Whose kingdoms does Israel's army wipe out?
- Whom does Israel not dispossess?
- How does this accord with the Abrahamic covenant?

Numbers 21:29

- Who is Chemosh?

- How is this known?



For Application

Numbers 21:5

- According to the note for this verse, “this worthless food” refers to manna. Why did God initially provide manna for food?

- As with the Israelites’ contempt for manna, what improper attitudes do some Catholics today have toward the Eucharist?

- How would you describe your devotion to the Eucharist?

Numbers 21:9

- How is the bronze serpent as a sign different from the Rod of Asclepius (one serpent on a pole, dedicated to Asclepius, the god of medicine) or the caduceus (two serpents on a pole, dedicated to Hermes, sometimes used as a symbol of medicine)?

Numbers

- What effect does looking with faith on a cross or crucifix have on you?

Numbers 21:24, 35

- According to Ps 135, who actually slew Sihon and Og?

- If it is the Lord who wins victories for us, what is our role in the battles?

Reflect

After reading and reflecting on this chapter, I hear the Lord saying to me:

My prayer response to him:

Numbers 22



For Understanding

Numbers 22:5

- Who is Balaam?
- On the surface, Balaam appears virtuous and submissive to the Lord, but what is he underneath?
- How does this come out later?
- Where is Balaam mentioned outside the Bible?
- How does the NT remember Balaam?
- What river is meant here?

Numbers 22:6

- What role do these parallels suggest about Balak and the Moabites?

Numbers

- In the end, what did both find themselves powerless to do?

Numbers 22:7

- What do the Midianite elders from Arabia do, despite the fact that Moses married into a Midianite family?

- When will Midian regret its involvement in the Balaam affair?

Numbers 22:21–35

- Why is the story of Balaam and his talking donkey more than comic relief?

- Theologically, what does the story prepare us to do?



For Application

Numbers 22:6

- What is a curse?

- How does Balak's request illustrate what a curse is intended to do?

Numbers

- How is a curse the mirror opposite of a blessing?

Numbers 22:7

- The note for this verse describes divination as a “popular superstition in the ancient Near East”. What is divination?
- Why is this superstition so popular today?
- According to the *Catechism*, what is wrong with it (CCC 2116)?

Numbers 22:19–20

- Do you think Balaam genuinely hears the direction of the Lord, or is he excusing himself for accepting Balak’s money (v. 21)?
- What does 2 Pet 2:15 say about his behavior?
- Have you ever rationalized accepting an opportunity that you should have rejected? If so, why did you do it?

Numbers 22:21–35

- Many preachers use the episode of Balaam’s donkey to point out the folly of stubbornness in the spiritual life. How would you apply the story to your own life?

- How can obstacles reveal the path the Lord wants us to take?

Reflect

After reading and reflecting on this chapter, I hear the Lord saying to me:

My prayer response to him:

Numbers 23



For Understanding

Numbers 23:7–10

- Of the four oracles of Balaam, what are oracles 1 and 2?

- What are oracles 3 and 4?

- From where do these inspired sayings come?

Numbers 23:9

- Why is Israel a nation apart from the other nations?

Numbers 23:19

- Why is the Lord perfectly honest and truthful when he speaks?

- Indeed, what does the Lord hate?

Numbers 23:24

- What makes Israel “the hungry lion”?

- When is a similar image used of a hungry lion?



For Application

Numbers 23:9

- According to this oracle, Israel is a people that does not reckon itself among the nations. What does that mean?
- Why did God elect Israel among all other nations?
- How do modern Jews regard themselves?

Numbers 23:13

- Balak claims that Balaam does not see the whole situation and moves to a better location where all of Israel is visible. In personal prayer, how often do we complain that God has not seen all that we face?
- How much of our prayer is an effort to give him a better view?
- How well does that work?

Numbers 23:19

- What does the Church teach about change in God (CCC 42, 212)?

Numbers

- When promises that God makes in Scripture, such as that the Davidic dynasty will last forever, appear to have failed (Ps 89), who or what has actually changed?
- How do we sometimes confuse our image of God with the way we experience things?

Numbers 23:24

- Jesus is sometimes described as a lion (Rev 5:5). How does that identification fit Balaam's description?
- Whose prey does he devour, and whose blood does he drink?

Reflect

After reading and reflecting on this chapter, I hear the Lord saying to me:

My prayer response to him:

Numbers 24



For Understanding

Numbers 24:7

- What promise does the mention of “his king” recall?
- Combined with the allusion to Gen 49:9 in 24:9, at what does the prophecy hint?

Numbers 24:15–24

- What does Balaam’s fourth and final oracle envision?
- Who first accomplished victories over Moab, Edom, and Amalek?
- How do Jewish and Christian tradition see David?
- How does Balaam’s fourth oracle stand in the background of Matthew’s infancy story?

Numbers 24:17

- Of what is a star symbolic?

Numbers

- From which prophecy does the image of a scepter come?
- How does the Greek LXX translate “scepter” in this verse?
- Who are the sons of Sheth?

Numbers 24:24

- Who are the Kittim?
- In later times, with whom were the Kittim identified?
- Who are the people of Eber?



For Application

Numbers 24:3-4

- What does Balaam mean by saying that his “eye is opened”, that his eyes are “uncovered”?

Numbers

- When you have your eyes opened to a situation, what is actually happening?

Numbers 24:13

- Balaam repeatedly claims that he must speak whatever the Lord tells him to speak. How does inspiration work?
- Does it compel the one who receives it, or can one experience the inspiration of God and reject it?

Numbers 24:17

- Who is the “him” that Balaam sees, but not now?
- While the star can represent a future king, which king would an OT reader of the Hebrew Scriptures have in mind?
- Which would a Christian reader have in mind?

Reflect

After reading and reflecting on this chapter, I hear the Lord saying to me:

My prayer response to him:

Numbers 25



For Understanding

Numbers 25:1–18

- What earlier apostasy does the one at Peor mirror?
- How does it show that the children of the Exodus generation make the same mistake as their parents?
- Which laws against idolatry does Israel violate?

Numbers 25:4

- To what is hanging violators probably a reference?

- Since Numbers gives no indication that Moses carried out this order, what does it suggest that Phinehas' zeal served to accomplish?

Numbers 25:9

- How do Israelite casualties escalate with each successive rebellion in the wilderness?

Numbers 25:13

- Why does the Lord award Phinehas a covenant of priestly succession?

- How does this new arrangement narrow the scope of the old one?

- Though the covenant does not go into immediate effect, how does it unfold in several steps?

- What are the virtues of Phinehas most remembered in later times?



For Application

Numbers 25:1–3

- What has this second generation of Israelites learned from the first generation, if anything?
- While the daughters of Moab were seducing Israelite men, what were the daughters of Israel doing to prevent them?
- What does human readiness to stray toward other gods say about fidelity to truth?

Numbers 25:7–8

- What is the virtue of zeal, and how does Phinehas exemplify it?
- How did Jesus show zeal?
- What are some ways you can show zeal for the faith in the face of an immoral society like ours?

Numbers 25:11

- What does Scripture mean by calling the Lord a jealous God?

Numbers

- How are jealousy and anger related?

- How personal a threat is Baal to the Lord that he should consider consuming Israel in his wrath over their defection?

Numbers 25:14–15

- Why are the Israelite man and the Midianite woman considered important enough to be named here?

- Since apparently several thousand Israelites were implicated in the apostasy at Peor, why are these two singled out?

Reflect

After reading and reflecting on this chapter, I hear the Lord saying to me:

My prayer response to him:

Numbers 26



For Understanding

Numbers 26:1–51

- When is this census of the Conquest generation taken?
- What is its purpose?
- How does the size of this army compare with that of the previous generation?

Numbers 26:12

- How drastic a reduction in numbers does the tribe of Simeon exhibit?
- Of what perhaps was the recent apostasy of Zimri the Simeonite indicative?

Numbers 26:19

- As in the census at Sinai, which tribe appears to be the strongest and supply the greatest number of men to the Israelite army?

Numbers 26:57

- Why is the tribe of Levi numbered separately from the twelve lay tribes?



For Application

Numbers 26:12

- Read the note for this verse. How does immoral behavior weaken a community?

- Among leaders, how might a moral weakness such as sexual promiscuity weaken them in other areas of life, including leadership?

Numbers 26:55–56

- What is your experience of dividing possessions or activities by lot among a group of people?

- Why choose lots for distribution rather than have a leader apportion everything?

Numbers 26:65

- Why do only Caleb and Joshua remain of the generation that left Egypt?

- Although Moses is still alive, what does the future hold for him?

Reflect

After reading and reflecting on this chapter, I hear the Lord saying to me:

My prayer response to him:

Numbers 27



For Understanding

Numbers 27:5–11

- What legal provision is made in this chapter?

- Without this provision, what will happen?

Numbers

- What was the legal solution to this foreseeable problem?

Numbers 27:12

- Where is the mountain of Abarim?

- Why could Moses look upon the blessings of the Promised Land only from a distant height?

Numbers 27:18

- Why was Joshua the predictable choice for Moses' successor?

- With what has the Spirit of God endowed Joshua?

- Who were others endowed with the Spirit?

- What does the laying on of hands signal, and what does the rite of succession from Moses to Joshua resemble?

Numbers 27:21

- What was the Urim?

Numbers

- Along with its counterpart, the Thummim, where was it kept?
- Though Moses received divine revelation directly from the Lord, from whom will Joshua receive it?



For Application

Numbers 27:5–11

- When circumstances change, how does law change? For example, in the Book of Hebrews, why would a change in the priesthood necessitate a change in the law (Heb 7:12)?
- Since the priesthood envisioned there is the Levitical priesthood, what legal change was necessary to validate the priesthood of Jesus, a non-Levite?

Numbers 27:15–17

- How is Moses' provision for leadership of the chosen people analogous to the succession of bishops in the Church?
- Although Moses selects a specific individual, what is his main concern, and why is that important?

Numbers 27:18

- The note for this verse lists some of the gifts of the Spirit given to Joshua. What are some of the gifts of service listed by Paul for those who possess the Spirit of God (Rom 12:6–8; Eph 4:11)?

- What additional service gifts can you think of?

Reflect

After reading and reflecting on this chapter, I hear the Lord saying to me:

My prayer response to him:

Numbers 28



For Understanding

Numbers 28:1—29:40

- How does Num 28–29 supplement the liturgical calendar of Lev 23?

Numbers

- Of what is attending to liturgical matters on the eve of the Conquest a reminder?

Numbers 28:1–8

- How often is a lamb sacrificed in the Tabernacle?
- What is the name for this liturgy?
- What other elements are offered?

Numbers 28:11

- How does every month begin?
- How is the first day of each new month determined?

Numbers 28:26

- When is the “feast of weeks” celebrated?

- What offering is central to this feast?



For Application

Numbers 28:2

- The introductory note for 28:1—29:40 refers to the sanctification of time and the rhythms of worship in each season. In the Catholic liturgical calendar, what are the major seasons of the liturgical year?

- How does each season influence the daily life of faith?

Numbers 28:3–8

- Ordinarily, weekday Masses follow a schedule of feasts and other observances distinct from the Sunday schedule. What are some feasts the Church in your area is celebrating right now?

- Why do many pastors and spiritual directors recommend voluntary attendance at daily Mass?

Numbers 28:16–25

- How many days are dedicated to remembrance of the Lord's Passion at the Passover season?

- What do we call this week?

- How are the days of that week celebrated?

Numbers 28:26

- What is the Christian version of Israel's Feast of Weeks (the seven weeks between Passover and Pentecost)?

- What do we call it?

- What two feasts bracket this period at the beginning and the end?

Reflect

After reading and reflecting on this chapter, I hear the Lord saying to me:

My prayer response to him:

Numbers 29



For Understanding

Numbers 29:1

- Which is the seventh month?
- What feast occurs on the first day of the seventh month?
- What does the requirement for “a holy convocation” suggest?
- What does the requirement for “no laborious work” mean as distinct from “a solemn day of rest” (Lev 23:3)?

Numbers 29:7

- What occurs on the tenth day of the month?
- What does it mean for the congregation to “afflict yourselves”?

Numbers 29:13–34

- What is to be done during the seven days of the Feast of Booths?

- What numbers of sacrificial victims are required?



For Application

Numbers 29:1

- The introductory note for this verse distinguishes two sorts of work one must avoid on feast days. According to the *Catechism*, on which days are Catholics obliged to rest from work?
- What sort of labor is prohibited, and why (CCC 2042)?

Numbers 29:7

- In your church, when is fasting and penance required of the faithful?
- What fast should Catholics observe in order to prepare for the worthy reception of Communion?
- How does fasting before Communion prepare one for its reception?

Numbers 29:12

- What two feasts of the Church calendar have eight days of celebration attached to them?

- What are these eight days called?

- What is their purpose?

Reflect

After reading and reflecting on this chapter, I hear the Lord saying to me:

My prayer response to him:

Numbers 30



For Understanding

Numbers 30:1–16

- What does this chapter cover?

Numbers

- Who is given legal authority to cancel or approve the obligations of a woman's vows?

Numbers 30:2

- What is a vow?

- What obligation does one who vows accept?

- What is an oath?

- Because oaths call upon God as a Witness and Enforcer, what does the one who swears an oath knowingly accept?

Numbers 30:13

- To what can a woman's vow to afflict herself refer?

- If the context supports a vow of sexual abstinence, who would need to consent to it?

- Why do these issues not affect widows or divorced women?

- According to the Law, how quickly would Joseph have had to approve or disapprove such a vow?

Reflect

After reading and reflecting on this chapter, I hear the Lord saying to me:

My prayer response to him:

Numbers 31



For Understanding

Numbers 31:6

- Who is Phinehas, and what was he the first to do?

- What vessels are meant here?

Numbers

- To what does carrying these holy items into battle point?

Numbers 31:18

- Who are to be spared in the coming battle?

- Against whom were these actions taken?

Numbers 31:27

- Who shares the spoils of war?

- What taxes are levied on these groups, and to whom are they given?

Numbers 31:54

- Where are the Midianite jewelry and precious metals that were confiscated in battle kept?

- What other memorial items are kept in the sanctuary?



For Application

Numbers 31:6

- The note for this verse points to the “close connection between worship and warfare”. How would you describe that connection?

- In what ways does the connection between worship and warfare still hold? For example, what is the connection between spiritual warfare and worship in your personal life?

Numbers 31:17

- Why would Moses order all the male children of Midian to be killed but allow the girls to live? (Hint: What would the male children grow up to become?) What would the reaction be among most nations if such an order were to be carried out by an army today?

Numbers 31:18

- Why allow Israel to keep the virgin girls alive “for yourselves”?

- Assuming some form of sexual abuse (such as prostitution) is out of the question, what would their fate be (see 2 Kings 5:2 for an example)?

Reflect

After reading and reflecting on this chapter, I hear the Lord saying to me:

My prayer response to him:

Numbers 32



For Understanding

Numbers 32:1–42

- What do the tribes of Reuben and Gad bargain to obtain?

- On what condition does Moses agree?

- To whom did the lands of the Transjordan once belong?

Numbers 32:7

- What does Moses fear?

- Why is his concern for national morale real?

Numbers 32:28

- Since Moses will die before Israel's entrance into Canaan, to whom does he entrust the land agreement?

Numbers 32:30

- What will happen if Reuben and Gad fail to participate in Israel's conquest of the Promised Land?



For Application

Numbers 32:7–9

- What happens in a family when one of the siblings appears to receive favored treatment over the others?

- Is the rebellion that Moses fears based only on the probable military weakness, or is there more to it?

Numbers

- How would the other tribes be likely to regard the commitment of Gad and Reuben?

Numbers 32:20–27

- What is involved in making a compromise?

- When can compromise become a fault, and when can it be beneficial?

- Which is it in this case?

Numbers 32:30

- According to the text, if Gad and Reuben do not fulfill their promise, what will happen to their inheritance?

- What does Moses say will then happen to the land the two tribes desire?

- What is he assuming will actually happen?

Reflect

After reading and reflecting on this chapter, I hear the Lord saying to me:

My prayer response to him:

Numbers 33



For Understanding

Numbers 33:1–49

- What is the subject of this chapter?

- To what do the 40 encampments between Rameses and Moab correspond?

- How does tradition sometimes arrive at the number of 42 stations?

Numbers

- According to Origen of Alexandria, how do the 42 encampments signify stages in the spiritual life?

Numbers 33:52

- What kind of war will the war against Canaan be?

- What must Israel do after clearing the land of its pagan occupants, and what will this call for?

Numbers 33:55

- What will failure to rid the land of Canaanites mean?



For Application

Numbers 33:2

- What is your experience of keeping a diary or journaling the events of your life?

- What do you hope to learn from that process?

- How can journaling the details of your spiritual life help you in your relationship with God?

Numbers 33:8

- Exodus 15:25 says that God put Israel to the test at Marah. What happened there?
- What pattern of sinful behavior began there among the Israelites?
- Why does God sometimes put his people to the test?

Numbers 33:15

- What is the sin of apostasy (CCC 2089)?
- Why is the rebellion that took place in the wilderness of Sinai while Moses was receiving the Law called an apostasy (Ex 24; 32)?
- How did Moses “stand in the breach” so as to resolve the situation (Ex 32:30—34:9)?

Numbers 33:52

- In a secular age like ours, what objects, shrines, or symbols must be demolished in one’s private life in order to dedicate one’s soul to God?

Numbers

- Of what importance is the leading of the Lord in the effort to eradicate sinful patterns of life?

Numbers 33:55–56

- What are the most troublesome areas of character formation in your life?

- How does the Lord's warning to Israel in these verses apply to the growth of your spiritual life?

Reflect

After reading and reflecting on this chapter, I hear the Lord saying to me:

My prayer response to him:

Numbers 34



For Understanding

Numbers 34:1–12

- What are specified in these verses?
- What did Israel claim but fail to do until the time of David and Solomon?
- How is Canaan described here?

Numbers 34:5

- What is the Brook of Egypt?

Numbers 34:12

- What border does the Jordan form?
- Thus, what land does Canaan technically comprise, and what does it not encompass?

Numbers 34:16–29

- With what are the tribal leaders of the Conquest generation tasked?

- Why are only ten tribal names listed?



For Application

Numbers 34:1–12

- Moses is apportioning the land of Canaan as if Israel already has possession of it. What is the homeland the Lord has promised to you?

- How much of it is already in your possession?

- When will its conquest be complete?

Numbers 34:16–29

- According to the *Catechism*, what is the role of the Church's leadership structure (her hierarchy) with regard to her members (CCC 773)?

- How do members of the hierarchy lead the People of God toward their homeland in heaven (CCC 873)?

Reflect

After reading and reflecting on this chapter, I hear the Lord saying to me:

My prayer response to him:

Numbers 35



For Understanding

Numbers 35:11

- What are cities of refuge?

- What do these six safety zones afford for the manslayer?

Numbers 35:12

- What does the Hebrew word *go'el* mean, and what is he called upon to do?

Numbers 35:25

- Whose death ends the period of refuge for the manslayer?
- What is the rationale for this if the manslayer is innocent of murder?
- What if the killer is a murderer?
- According to St. Ambrose, like the high priest whose death atones for the manslayer, what does the death of Christ as the true high priest free the baptized to do?

Numbers 35:31–32

- Why cannot money buy freedom for a manslayer when a human life has been lost, even accidentally?



For Application

Numbers 35:9–11

- How are the biblical cities of refuge similar to and different from the sanctuary cities that have arisen in this country since the 1970s?

Numbers

- For whom do our sanctuary cities provide refuge?

- Who designates these cities as places of safety?

Numbers 35:12

- Read the note for this verse. According to v. 19, what is one of the principal duties of the avenger of blood?

- Why is this duty not a violation of the fifth commandment (Ex 23:7)?

Numbers 35:30

- Why is more than one witness required before a manslayer can be put to death?

- At Jesus' trial before the high priest, what was the charge against him?

- How many witnesses came forward (Mt 26:59–60)?

Reflect

After reading and reflecting on this chapter, I hear the Lord saying to me:

My prayer response to him:

Numbers 36



For Understanding

Numbers 36:1–9

- What does Moses rule regarding women who inherit property?
- Otherwise, what would happen?
- What are these inheritance regulations designed to do?

Numbers 36:3

- What does the complaint of the daughters of Zelophehad assume?

Numbers 36:4

- In the Jubilee Year, what happens to lands that were sold off in times of financial crisis?

- But since marriages involve no property sales, what happens to lands acquired by husbands from their brides?



For Application

Numbers 36:6

- Why must a Catholic who wishes to marry a baptized person from another Christian tradition obtain the permission of ecclesiastical authority?

- What are some of the difficulties that can ensue from such a marriage?

- What does permission to marry presuppose from both parties (CCC 1634–35)?

Numbers 36:7

- As sons and daughters of God, what is our inheritance?

- Why is Jesus reluctant to get involved in disputes over physical inheritance?

- What danger does he see in them (Lk 12:13–21)?

Numbers 36:12

- How are inheritance priorities handled in your family? For example, what steps would you or your family take to ensure that valuable or important properties remain within the family?

- If no other family members were left, to whom would you leave these things?

Reflect

After reading and reflecting on this chapter, I hear the Lord saying to me:

My prayer response to him:



Review and Respond

To complete your study of Numbers, prayerfully read it straight through, focusing on the biblical text alone. What stands out to you?

Ask the Holy Spirit to speak to your heart. What is your response to him?