

Catechumenate Session

APPRENTICES IN FAITH: A Resource for the RCIA
Twenty-first Sunday in Ordinary Time • Year B • August 23, 2009

*Loving God,
faith in you
leads us away
from our former life
and into the new life
which Christ your Son
prepares for us
through the working
of the Holy Spirit,
a radiant life
in union with all believers,
the glorious life
of heaven itself
within us,
a foretaste
of the eternal kingdom.*

Sunday Word

Joshua 24:1–2a, 15–17, 18b • Ephesians 5:21–32 • John 6:60–69

Decide Today

Joshua challenges the people to commit to the Lord God. After all, it was God himself who led them out of slavery in Egypt and brought them into the Promised Land. Joshua challenges them, “. . . choose this day whom you will serve...as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord” (Joshua 24:15).

As they settle upon the land, their inheritance, they must choose to forsake idols and alien pagan ways. They must wholeheartedly embrace the living God.

Subordinate to One Another

Saint Paul explores from a Christian perspective the relationship between husband and wife. He takes this discussion and moves it to a whole new level by applying it to Christ and the Church.

This is the greatest mystery. Faith is not merely assent to abstract truths. Faith is a living relationship between persons wherein we subordinate ourselves to God and to other believers in truth, goodness, beauty, and love.

Catholic Doctrine: The Gift of Faith

Our Grounding in God

At first glance, it appears that faith rests with the individual since it involves someone who is proclaiming “I believe” or “I put my trust in God”; faith seems to underscore the I. Not so. Believing begins with God’s Revelation. We cannot know God, appreciate him, or be related to him without his self-revelation to us.

God communicates his loving plan of salvation most fully through Jesus Christ, his Son. By this self-communication, we are invited into ultimate truth and its significance for our own lives. So, while faith does indeed involve a personal adherence—a clinging to the One who is all truth and the ground of life—it also involves cooperation with God’s grace that moves us to believe.

Obstacles to Faith

Some people have great difficulty believing. Their doubt may arise from the inability to reconcile evil in the world with a good

God. Or it may result from misplaced fascination with worldly things. Or it may result from the scandal of the bad example of others. Or it may result from the willful refusal of divine love.

Regardless of the worldly obstacles to faith that surround us, the basic desire for God is planted in our hearts by the Creator. Only in God will our search for truth and happiness be satisfied.

Support for Faith

While faith is a personal act—the free response to the initiative of God who reveals himself—no one believes alone. Just as no one can live alone, people support one another in faith.

We do not give ourselves life. We also do not give ourselves faith. It is a gift from God handed down through the centuries from the Church. Each individual believer is therefore a link in a great chain of believers. An individual cannot believe without being carried by the faith of others, and each individual person contributes to support others in the faith.

Distinctiveness of Church Teaching

Faith is both personal and communal. But this personal act rests upon a communal, ecclesial reality—because it is the Church that believes first. The Church carries, nurtures, and sustains each person's faith in God. It is the Church which first confesses that Jesus is Lord. From that central confession we learn to proclaim the faith and acclaim Christ as Savior.

God alone saves us. But because we receive the life of faith through the ministry of the Church, she is our spiritual mother and teacher. We revere the Church as the mother and *locus* of our new birth. We believe in God alone as the author of that life.

The Church nurtures us in faith and hands on her treasures through:

- Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition;
- the Creed;
- the Seven Sacraments;
- the moral life;
- the life of prayer.

Key Terms

SACRED SCRIPTURE

The writings of the Old and New Testaments, the books in which the truth of God's Revelation is contained. Composed by human authors inspired by God the Holy Spirit, the Bible comprises 46 books in the Old Testament and 27 books in the New Testament. (See *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 105.)

CREED

Brief, authoritative summary statement or profession of the essentials of Christian faith. Early creeds were developed for use at Baptism whereby the faith was handed on to believers. The same creeds are in use today. The term "creed" comes from the Latin first word of its text *credo*: "I believe." (See *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 187.)

SEVEN SACRAMENTS

Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist, Anointing of the Sick, Reconciliation, Holy Orders, and Matrimony. These are signs of grace instituted by Christ and entrusted to the Church to dispense God's grace. (See *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 1131.)

Saintly Speak

O God, you are greatly to be praised. You encourage us to delight in your praise, for you have made us and we are yours. Our hearts are restless until they rest in you.

—Saint Augustine

Papal Speak

The human mind is hobbled sometimes by sensory overload and by disordered appetites and desires, and the consequences of sin in the world. So in the pursuit of the truth of God, we easily persuade ourselves that what we would not like to be true is false—or at least doubtful.

—Pope Pius XII

Furthermore . . .

Catechism of the Catholic Church: 31 (natural ways of coming to know God), 36 (knowledge of God through the Church), 84 (heritage of faith entrusted to the Church through Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition)

United States Catholic Catechism for Adults: Chapter 5 (I Believe in God) especially the sections entitled "Divine Providence" and "The Reality of Evil," pages 56–57

Compendium—Catechism of the Catholic Church: 25 (how we respond to God's Revelation), 27 (what faith in God means for the person in practice)