

Catechumenate Session

APPRENTICES IN FAITH: A Resource for the RCIA
Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time • Year A • October 25, 2020

*All-powerful
and loving Father,
we have strayed
from your goodness,
but you rescued us
through your Son.
He suffered death
so that we might turn away
from sin and return to you.
May we always remain
your loving children.
Amen.*



Sunday Word

Exodus 22:20–26
Psalm 18:2–3, 3–4, 47, 51
1 Thessalonians 1:5c–10
Matthew 22:34–40

Show Compassion

God commands his people to extend his kindness and mercy to strangers. This is true for us today. Through our words and actions, we are to show compassion to all those in need. If we do not, God's wrath will consume us.

Imitate the Lord

Paul praises the members of the Christian community at Thessalonika for how they live the Gospel. They learned by imitating Paul's example, who, in turn, imitated the example of Christ.

Love God and Neighbor

When asked which Commandment is the "greatest," Jesus refers to two, linking them together. Jesus teaches us that we are to love God. And we are to love our neighbor.

Church Teaching: The Commandment to Love

Reciprocity and Mutuality

Jesus teaches us that the greatest Commandment is a two-fold command to love. This new, single Great Commandment has an enormous impact on our Catholic view of relationships between individuals and peoples.

The love with which we love God is only possible because God loves us first. How can we profess to love God yet then disrespect or show hatred toward our neighbor? God expects us to make a return on the gift of his love by being as compassionate, merciful, and kind to one another as he has been to us. This expected reciprocity is part of our covenantal relationship with God. We rely on God's grace and goodness, and he commands us to show compassion to not just our neighbors, but even to strangers.

God's Commandment to love one another points to our need for mutual love. This is true for our personal relationships as well as relationships between nations. Christ's Great Commandment

is to be followed in all aspects of the world. The Church, through her social doctrine, encourages social structures and practices that promote principles of social justice.

Principles of Social Doctrine

One of the permanent principles of the Church's social doctrine is the *common good*. This principle recognizes that we are social beings who thrive and grow by living together in society. The common good is the sum total of social conditions that allow people, either as individuals or as groups, to achieve their fulfillment completely. Therefore, every group in society must take into account and acknowledge the needs and legitimate aspirations of each individual.

The Catholic view is that we depend upon one another for the conditions of living, and need each other to respond to our callings from God. Society works toward the common good only when it is founded upon respect for the human person. This is another permanent principle of Catholic Social Teaching. This respect comes from the truth of human dignity, which is that every human being is created in God's image and likeness. Each person has a fundamental right to life, and must have access to basic necessities such as food, clothing, housing, freedom, health, privacy, and education.

Subsidiarity and solidarity, two other principles, serve to guide the equitable distribution of goods and remuneration for work rendered. *Subsidiarity* tells us that the most local group in society can best provide for individuals at that local level. The family is at the heart of society and has the right and responsibility to meet the needs of its members first. *Solidarity* guides the interdependent relationships between various groups, such as nations. Both principles are to reflect the origin of our relationship with God. This means that we are to love one another as God loves us—at every level, from our families and neighborhoods to among nations.

Distinctiveness of Church Teaching

The principles of Catholic Social Teaching require the stability of society or a social just peace. The concrete responsibility for one another's welfare rests with each person. We are to be brothers and sisters to one another. Indeed, if we want peace, we must constantly work for justice. That responsibility stems directly from Jesus' Great Commandment to love God and to show how we love the Lord by loving one another.

Key Terms

GREAT COMMANDMENT, THE

Refers to Jesus' combining the Commandments found in Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18; He established a single Commandment of love, revealing the fullness of the Law (see *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 2055).

NEIGHBOR

Refers to everyone but one's self; Jesus' teaching and example expands the notion of neighbor beyond family and clan to include all those in need, especially the poor and vulnerable (see *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 1825).

CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING (SOCIAL DOCTRINE)

Refers to the entire body of the Church's teaching regarding the right and just relationships within society, from individuals within the family to among nations (see *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 2422).

Voices of Faith

For the person who is grounded in the love of God clearly also loves his neighbor in all things himself. The kind of person who fulfills these two commandments experiences all the commandments.

—Saint Cyril of Alexandria

The measure of the greatness of a society is found in the way it treats those most in need, those who have nothing apart from their poverty.

—Pope Francis

Further Reading

Catechism of the Catholic Church: 1883 (subsidiarity), 1905 (common good), 1928 (social justice), 1930 (respect for the human person), 1939 (solidarity)

United States Catholic Catechism for Adults:

Chapter 24 (Life in Christ—Part Two), especially the section entitled "Consciousness of Solidarity and Social Justice," pages 325–327

Compendium—Catechism of the Catholic Church:

401 (social nature of the person), 403 (subsidiarity), 407 (common good), 411 (social justice), 435 (Jesus' Great Commandment)