

Catechumenate Session

APPRENTICES IN FAITH: A Resource for the RCIA
Second Sunday of Easter (Sunday of Divine Mercy) • Year B • April 7, 2024



*O God,
you challenge us
to be one in heart
and mind.*

*You challenge us
to obey your
Commandments of love.*

*You challenge us
to live as peacemakers.*

*May the Risen Lord
show us the way!*

© 1994, Archdiocese of Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, art by Steve Erspamer, SM.

Sunday Word

Acts 4:32-35

Psalm 118:2-4, 13-15, 22-24

1 John 5:1-6

John 20:19-31

Great Favor

The early Church experiences the great favor of God, bearing witness to the Risen Lord Jesus. Their lives are changed for the better as members of the community who share all things in common.

Begotten by God

The message expressed by Saint John in his letter is simple and profound: love binds us to the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Love engenders belief and thus also binds us as one.

Lavished with Peace

The Risen Lord appears to the disciples. He greets them with words of peace, standing in their midst, calling them to belief in himself and in his Resurrection.

Church Teaching: The Challenge of Peace

Biblical Instruction on Peace

The Church's teaching on peace rests on a scriptural foundation. Peace is not merely a negative—that is, the absence of conflict. Rather, it is the perfection of the Covenant between God and his people that brings about the well-being of individuals and the whole community of faith. Such peace is expressed by the Hebrew term *shalom*.

This word refers to a total harmony with nature, humanity, God, and self that issues forth in justice. It is experienced in a fruitful land and in a generous people who look after the needy. This land and its people are showered by the grace of God, secured, free from fear, protected from harm.

The New Testament picks up this strong thread. Jesus ushers in God’s kingdom of peace. He is the very presence of God among us. He brings to fulfillment what we cannot achieve on our own—the peace of a people covenanted to their Creator. This peace is the gift of the Risen Christ to his Church.

The Modern Day Church and Peace

The Magisterium of the Church has spoken frequently with regard to peace. Pope John XXIII addressed all people of good will in his encyclical *Pacem in Terris* (1963). He urged a concerted effort by all nations to reduce the threat of mass destruction.

Pope Paul VI, in his encyclical *Populorum Progressio* (1967), passionately decried the exploitation of the Third World. He appealed to developed countries, saying that *development* is the modern term for *peace*.

The bishops of the United States also issued a pastoral letter in 1983 on the subject of peace. In *The Challenge of Peace*, the U.S. bishops taught that the use of nuclear weapons against a general population (noncombatants) is immoral and deterrence is justified only in the context of negotiations and progress toward disarmament.

Distinctiveness of Church Teaching

Our Catholic understanding of peace—even the highly technical discussion that appears in *The Challenge of Peace*—is founded on respect for all human life. How we view peace and peacemaking rests upon the absolute value and intrinsic worth of each human being. Pope John Paul II took up the themes expressed by his predecessors linking peace with respect for life. For without peace prevailing among peoples, the development of human life in all its aspects cannot take place.

Key Terms

BISHOPS’ CONFERENCE

Ecclesiastical grouping of neighboring dioceses that share the same culture and language, usually within a country or distinct region, which meets together to further the bishops’ work (see *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 887).

ENCYCLICAL

Papal letter addressing pastoral concerns sent to the bishops, all the faithful, and the whole world expressing Church teaching (see *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 892).

MAGISTERIUM

From the Latin *magister* (teacher), it denotes the living, teaching office of the Church that interprets God’s Word, whether in its written form of Scripture or in the form of Tradition (see *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 890).

Voices of Faith

When Christ greeted his holy disciples with the words “peace be with you,” by peace he meant himself, for Christ’s presence always brings tranquility of soul. . . . The peace of Christ which passes all understanding is in fact the Spirit of Christ, who fills those who share in him with every blessing.

— Saint Cyril of Alexandria

Excessive economic, social, and cultural inequalities among peoples arouse tensions and conflicts, and are a danger to peace. . . . To wage war on misery and to struggle against injustice is to promote, along with improved conditions, the human and spiritual progress of [all men and women].

— Pope Paul VI

Further Reading

Catechism of the Catholic Church:

1941 (aiding peace), 1990 (peace as foundation of common good), 1424 (peace as gift of God), 2442 (peacemakers)

United States Catholic Catechism for Adults:

Chapter 24 (Life in Christ—Part Two), pages 332–333

Compendium—Catechism of the Catholic Church:

480 (Jesus and peace), 481 (peace in this world), 482 (requirements for peace)