

# Catechumenate Session

APPRENTICES IN FAITH: A Resource for the RCIA  
Sixth Sunday of Easter • Year B • May 5, 2024



*Eternal God,  
You reveal your saving  
power to the nations  
in Christ, your Son.  
He laid down his life for  
our sakes.  
May we follow his example  
as we open ourselves  
to your enduring love.*

## Sunday Word

Acts 10:25-26, 34-35, 44-48

Psalm 98:1-4

1 John 4:7-10

John 15:9-17

### *Inclusive Love*

Peter visits the house of a Gentile, Cornelius. He preaches the all-inclusive love of God. All are amazed that the Spirit descends upon the Gentiles present who live there. Clearly, the saving sacrifice of Christ is meant for all peoples.

### *Divine Love*

John clarifies that just as God loves us, we must love one another. But our human love is only made possible because God loved us first and sent his Son Jesus to save us from our dire situation of sinfulness.

### *Joyful Love*

The self-sacrificing love that Jesus has shown us in his Cross is not dour and somber. It is a joyful love, the same sort of love that he enables in our own lives through his Resurrection.

## Church Teaching: Love, the Soul of the Apostolate

### *Sent Forth*

The Greek term *apostolos* means “one who is sent out” or “messenger.” It refers to the Twelve (minus Judas Iscariot and adding Matthias) after Jesus’ Ascension. Saint Paul, in his letter, also describes himself as an Apostle who received a special calling from Christ to witness to the Good News and thereby build up the Church.

Down through the ages, the whole Church can be described as apostolic in that through the successors of Peter and the other Apostles (the bishops), it has remained in communion of faith and life with its origin. The Church is also apostolic in that it does not seek to serve itself but is sent forth to every land and people for the sake of the world’s Salvation.

## *Everyone Contributes to the Mission*

All members of the Church—not just the pope and the bishops—are exhorted to respond to the call of God in spreading the Good News by word and deed. All the baptized are encouraged to put their lives at service to the Reign of God and to build up the Kingdom of Christ throughout the earth.

Indeed, the apostolate of pastors within local Church communities cannot be effective without the assistance of the lay faithful. The laity themselves help to proclaim to all men and women the message of Salvation by the conduct of their lives and the individual witness they give to the Good News of Jesus Christ. In their conduct, they are to imitate Jesus and become powerful heralds of the faith in the ordinary circumstances of the world—politically, socially, economically, and culturally.

## *Sharing the Gift*

We are inheritors of a magnificent grace, or gift, in Christ. God's love has been communicated to us through the sacrifice of Jesus, a sacrifice that frees us from sin and death. The gift is such an abundant gift that it must be shared. Hoarding is contradictory to Christianity. Thus believers engage in the apostolate, radiating the faith, hope, and charity that have been poured out by the Holy Spirit into hearts of all members of the Church. And the precept of charity, which is the Lord's greatest Commandment, urges all Christians to work for the glory of God by serving the needs of others.

## *Distinctiveness of Church Teaching*

The apostolate may take many forms and exhibit a wide variety of efforts and activity. Those forms, efforts, and activities, prompted by the Holy Spirit, can be dramatic and spectacular as well as low-key and simple. Whether dramatic or low-key, each effort is precisely what is needed in order to advance humanity toward the Kingdom of God. Love is the soul of the apostolate, the love of God. That love permeates the entire Church and draws us ever onward toward communion with one another and with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

## **Key Terms**

### **APOSTOLATE**

Activity of believers that fulfills the apostolic nature of the Church by working to further the dominion of Christ throughout the world (see *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 863).

### **CHARITY**

Theological Virtue through which we love God for his own sake and our neighbor as ourselves (see *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 1822).

### **LAY FAITHFUL**

The laity, refers to all the baptized, except those ordained and those who belong to religious orders approved by the Church (see *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 897).

## **Voices of Faith**

There is nothing equal to unanimity and concord, for so one is manifold. . . . what nature cannot do, love can. . . . Do you see what an increase-giving thing is love? This is better than all power or riches, this is more than health, than light itself, it is the groundwork of good courage.

— Saint John Chrysostom

Through their participation in the prophetic mission of Christ, "who proclaimed the kingdom of his Father by the testimony of his life and by the power of his word," the lay faithful are given the ability and responsibility to accept the gospel in faith and to proclaim it in word and deed. . . . They are also called to allow the newness and the power of the gospel to shine out everyday in their family and social life . . .

— Pope John Paul II

## **Further Reading**

### ***Catechism of the Catholic Church:***

858 (Apostles' mission), 863 (entire Church is apostolic), 871 (lay faithful called to participate in the Church's mission), 905 (laity proclaim Christ)

### ***United States Catholic Catechism for Adults:***

Chapter 11 (Four Marks of the Church), especially the section entitled "The Laity," pages 134–135

### ***Compendium—Catechism of the Catholic Church:***

175 (Apostle), 177 (Christian faithful), 188 (vocation of the lay faithful)

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