

# Catechumenate Session

APPRENTICES IN FAITH: A Resource for the RCIA  
Third Sunday of Lent • Year B • March 3, 2024

*Lord God,  
you write your Law  
upon our hearts,  
the Law of Love  
made clear for us  
in your Son,  
Jesus Christ,  
who suffered death  
and was raised  
that we might have life  
and have it abundantly.  
Amen.*



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## Sunday Word

Exodus 20:1-17

Psalms 19:8, 9, 10, 11

1 Corinthians 1:22-25

John 2:13-25

## Covenant of Mercy

Through the prophet Moses, God gives his people the Law. Those who are faithful to God's Laws will know his mercy and love. God's love is everlasting!

## Proclaim the Good News

Saint Paul reminds us that we are called to proclaim a message that seems "foolish," for the heart of the Good News is Christ crucified. The cornerstone of faith is thus revealed as a stumbling block for those who refuse to believe.

## The New Household

Jesus cleanses the Temple and promises a sign: his own body will be raised up after three days. In Christ's Resurrection from the dead, a new household of faith will be constituted, fulfilling the Covenant.

## Church Teaching: The Ten Commandments

### New Covenant from the Old

The original Law, given to us through Moses, has not been abrogated so much as it has been completed and fulfilled in Jesus Christ, the ultimate lawgiver. Recall last Sunday's Gospel episode of the Transfiguration, where Jesus was seen by his disciples to be in conversation with Moses and Elijah, figures representing the Law and the prophets. The voice from Heaven instructs the disciples to listen to God's Son. They see that he is now alone, for he himself is the fullness of the eternal Father's plan of Salvation. Thus Jesus is the new Covenant, which has been established with all of humankind.

## The Ten Words

The Decalogue, or the Ten Commandments, literally means in Hebrew “the ten words.” These “ten words” exist in two forms, or versions (see Exodus 20:1-17 and Deuteronomy 5:6-21). Multiple forms point not only to the importance of the Ten Commandments but also to the long history of reflection on and development of their significance.

The idea of a law given by God cannot be separated from the idea of God’s election of Israel and his Covenant with the people. Out of love, God chose a particular people, set them apart, and entered into a covenantal relationship with them. Divine wisdom provides the basic terms of this Covenant by means of his Law. God’s Law illuminates for the Chosen People what God required for their proper conduct.

The Ten Commandments spell out the conditions whereby the people might grow and flourish. Eventually, as Israel reflected upon its relationship with God, “the Law” came to be equated with not just the Decalogue but the first five books of the Old Testament. This collection represented divinely inspired instruction and guidance for Israel.

## Christians and the Decalogue

From a believer’s perspective, the Ten Commandments are holy, good, and spiritual. Its perfection is found in the New Law given in Christ: by the example of his life, his mission, and the ongoing teaching handed down by the Church through the Holy Spirit.

## Distinctiveness of Church Teaching

The Law contained in the first five books of the Old Testament can be seen in three ways. First, it gave birth to a Chosen People and provided form and substance to the relationship between God and God’s people. Second, it offered Israel a goal for living that was in accord with their high calling by God. Third, the Law prepared the way for the Good News of Jesus Christ.

## Key Terms

### CHOSEN PEOPLE

Descended from Abraham, trustees of the divine promise called to prepare for the time when God would gather all his children into the Church (see *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 62).

### NEW COVENANT

Eternal Covenant definitively established in Christ that fulfills the Old Covenant (see *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 66).

### ELECTION

Israel is elected by God’s loving initiative to be his Chosen People, that they might point to the future gathering of all God’s faithful into the Church (see *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 762).

## Voices of Faith

We should also know that the ten commandments of the law are also fulfilled by the two gospel precepts, love of God and love of neighbor.

—Saint Caesarius of Arles

Only by giving ourselves do we receive our life. In other words: only the one who loves discovers life. And love always demands going out of oneself, it always demands leaving oneself. . . . Only the love of God, who loses himself for us and gives himself to us, makes it possible for us also to become free, to let go, and so truly to find life.

—Pope Benedict XVI.

## Further Reading

**Catechism of the Catholic Church:** 52 (God reveals himself to us), 64 (formation of Israel in expectation of New Covenant), 2056 (full meaning of Decalogue revealed in Christ)

### United States Catholic Catechism for Adults:

Chapter 24, especially the section entitled “God’s Law as Our Guide,” pages 327–328

### Compendium—Catechism of the Catholic Church:

8 (stages of God’s Revelation), 9 (full, definitive Revelation in Christ), 419 (Old Law and Salvation)