

Catechumenate Session

APPRENTICES IN FAITH: A Resource for the RCIA
Thirteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time • Year B • June 30, 2024



*O God,
you are the author of all life
and it is in you
that we live and move
and have our being.
Protect and strengthen
the life you have given us
through your Son Jesus
by the gift of the
Holy Spirit.*

Sunday Word

Wisdom 1:13-15; 2:23-24
Psalm 30:2, 3-6, 11-13
2 Corinthians 8:7, 9, 13-15
Mark 5:21-43 or 5:21-24, 35b-43

Life-Giving God

God is life-giving and upholds us in that life. Death entered the world through sin and evil, not by God. Indeed, God rescues us from eternal death and makes of our dying a passage from this life to the life beyond.

Gracious God

Saint Paul refers to the “gracious act” of Jesus. The Son of God took upon himself the Cross and died for our sakes. Risen, he opens for us the gates of everlasting life. Should we not then treat one another with great compassion and kindness as we assist one another in embracing that new life?

Healing God

This Gospel episode contains a healing within a healing! Can the power and loving-kindness of Christ be made any clearer than by this double healing? God desires our health, well-being, and life.

Church Teaching: The Sanctity of Human Life

God Is the Author of Life

Catholics treat human life as holy. We believe every human life is sacred because from the first moment of life, from conception, our very being is involved with and relates to the awesome action of God. This relationship between God and the human creature remains in force from conception to death. God, in other words, is a person’s sole end. Therefore, God alone is the Lord of life; no one can claim to have the right to directly destroy an innocent human life.

The first book of the Bible indicates from its first verses that God is our Creator. Continuing with the story of Cain’s murder of his brother Abel, the Bible reinforces the message that God alone is the author of life. As creatures we are dependent on one another to uphold the gift of life.

This dependency on God and one another is enshrined in the Fifth Commandment (see Exodus 20:13 and Deuteronomy 5:17). In

the Sermon on the Mount (see Matthew 5:21-22), Jesus himself recalls this prohibition against killing and expands it to include warnings about anger, hatred, and a vengeance that leads one to commit violent and murderous acts. But avoiding violence and refraining from murder are only one part of the Church's comprehensive message on the sanctity of life.

Two Ways

Pope John Paul II, in his encyclical *Evangelium Vitae* (*The Gospel of Life*), reminds us that the *Didache*, the most ancient non-biblical Christian writing, exhorts us to a comprehensive perspective on the sacredness of human life. It describes "two ways"—the way of life and the way of death. It says there is a great difference between the two.

This ancient document urges Christians to follow the way of life, which is the way of Christ. It specifically says Christians should not kill, or put a child to death by abortion, or kill the child once he or she is born. It condemns the way of death as lacking compassion for others. People who embrace the way of death drive away the needy, oppress the suffering, care only for the rich, and unjustly judge the poor.

The *Didache* thus links the Commandment against murder to a holistic Christian view of life. In the same way, Pope John Paul II proclaims in his encyclical that our task is to confront all men and women with the Gospel of life, making it penetrate throughout society. How do we do this? We are to present human life as

- A life of relationship
- A gift of God
- The fruit and sign of God's immense love
- Revealing the "face" of Christ because each human person has a unique relationship with the Savior
- Ennobled and fulfilled by the sincere gift of self to others.

Distinctiveness of Church Teaching

The sanctity of human life forms the basis for Catholic teaching on many other topics, such as our interdependence, the common good, respect for the human person, equality and justice, and the need to transcend an individualistic morality. This comprehensive thread in our teaching protects the most vulnerable among us—the unborn, the newly born, the aged, the sick, and the poor. Believers choose to shield the weak from those who are strong in society by seeking to halt abortion, infanticide, suicide, and euthanasia.

Key Terms

ABORTION

Intentional termination of a pregnancy by killing an unborn child (see *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 2271).

EUTHANASIA

Direct action or omission that causes the death of a handicapped, sick, or dying person (see *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 2277).

SUICIDE

Willfully taking one's own life; the one committing this sin is nevertheless buried from the Church with compassion (see *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 2283).

Voices of Faith

Now it was necessary that human beings should in the first instance be created. Once they were created, they were to grow. And as they grow, they are strengthened, and as they are strengthened, they flourish. Once they are flourishing, they then can recover from the disease of sin. And once they have recovered, they are glorified, and after they are glorified, they see their Lord . . .

—Saint Irenaeus

The Church knows that this Gospel of life, which she has received from her Lord, has a profound and persuasive echo in the heart of every person—believer and nonbeliever alike—because it marvelously fulfills all the heart's expectations while infinitely surpassing them.

—Pope Saint John Paul II

Further Reading

Catechism of the Catholic Church: 1700 (dignity of every human person), 1878 (God is the end goal of every person), 1929 (respect for each person), 2258 (sacredness of human life)

United States Catholic Catechism for Adults: Chapter 29 (Fifth Commandment: Promote the Culture of Life), especially the section entitled "Respect Human Life," pages 389–390

Compendium—Catechism of the Catholic Church: 466 (respect for human life), 467 (legitimate self-defense), 470 (acts forbidden by Fifth Commandment)

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