

Catechumenate Session

APPRENTICES IN FAITH: A Resource for the RCIA
Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time • Year B • January 29, 2012



O God,
you alone are holy.
You alone are all-good
and all-powerful. Soften
our hearts to hear your
Word. Open our eyes to
see the truth of your Son,
Jesus. Continue to reveal
your love for us. Amen.

Sunday Word

Deuteronomy 18:15–20
Psalm 95:1–2, 6–7, 7–9
1 Corinthians 7:32–35
Mark 1:21–28

God's Prophet

The legacy of Moses endures because God promises that he will continue to raise up a prophet to help guide the people. God will put his word in the mouth of the prophet whose preaching will convey the message intended by the Lord.

God's Teaching

Marriage for Paul was difficult, and so marriage was a distraction for him. Paul instructs the Christian community to be as free as possible of worldly ties. The believer's focus is to be entirely on the Lord and his coming.

God's Holy One

The miracle Jesus performs leads the people to see his teaching in a new light. His teaching does not contain mere words. His teaching, full of authority, is one of action that effects healing.

Church Teaching: Prophet, Teacher and Lord

Effective Teaching

In today's Gospel reading, Jesus teaches in the synagogue, and the people are amazed. They contrast how he teaches with that of the scribes. Even before he casts out the unclean spirit, the assembly responds favorably to his teaching as one with authority and power. After the miracle, they again react with amazement. Jesus' teaching is new in that his is effective. His teaching heals, and his healing teaches.

The people, wondering about this new teaching of Jesus, ask, "What is this?" The Church would answer this question by saying that Jesus is uniquely the Son of God. His long list of titles and attributes underscore his singular significance. Among that long list of titles are three in particular that draw our attention due to this Sunday's Scriptures. Jesus is Prophet, Teacher and Lord.

Prophet

Similar to Moses, Jesus mediates between God the Father and humanity. As prophet, Jesus' words and works have effects by divine power. Unlike Moses, Jesus Christ is the eternal Word of God made flesh among us.

There is only one single utterance in whom God fully expresses himself to humanity: Jesus, the Christ. He is, therefore, the final perfect and unsurpassable Word.

Teacher

Jesus' own disciples address him as teacher. As his public ministry unfolds, people flock to hear him speak. His teaching opens up the mystery of God to all who listen.

His teaching is more than content. It is more than a series of lessons, parables and preaching. The teaching of Jesus is comprised of his entire life. His teaching ministry includes his suffering, Death, Resurrection and Ascension. He thereby powerfully teaches us that God loves us, reconciles us to himself, offers us a share in the divine life of the Holy Trinity, and proposes to us a model of holiness.

Lord

His disciples and others also referred to Jesus as Lord. The name of God, YHWH, which is never to be uttered, is rendered *Kyrios* or "LORD" in the Septuagint. By addressing Jesus as LORD, then and now, believers acknowledge his divinity. The power, honor and glory due to God the Father are due also to Jesus. His name is above every other name.

Distinctiveness of Church Teaching

Through his prophetic and teaching roles, Jesus unfolds his reign as Lord over all. His place among us has not changed even though he has ascended to Heaven. We strive to listen to Jesus with our whole mind, heart and soul. We are to commit our entire lives to him in obedience. Trusting totally in Jesus Christ, we are drawn up into divine love and transformed by God's grace.

Key Terms

MOSES

Leader chosen by God to bring the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt; he was given the law which includes the Ten Commandments (see *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 204).

SCRIBES

This group depicted in the New Testament as part of the religious leadership; learned ones who were literate and versed in the law of Moses (see *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 575).

SEPTUAGINT

Greek translation of Hebrew Scriptures made by Jewish scholars which predates Christianity, used later by Greek Christians (see *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 213).

Voices of Faith

This is the true faith of human blessedness, to proclaim God and man, to acknowledge Word and flesh; not to fail to recognize God because he is man or to fail to see the flesh because he is the Word.

—Saint Hilary of Poitiers

Indeed, there are so many false images of God, a violent God. . . . [The point,] therefore, is recognizing God who has shown us his face in Jesus, who suffered for us, who loved us to the point of dying, and thus overcame violence.

—Pope Benedict XVI

Further Reading

Catechism of the Catholic Church: 427 (Christ who teaches), 446 (Lord), 461 (Word became flesh), 783 (Christ as prophet)

United States Catholic Catechism for Adults:

Chapter 7, especially the section entitled "Doctrinal Statements," pages 85–86

Compendium—Catechism of the Catholic Church:

84 (Lord), 85 (the Word became flesh), 101 (the life of Christ)