

Doctrinal Session

APPRENTICES IN FAITH: A Resource for the RCIA
Law, Grace, and the Magisterium of the Church

Catechist Preparation

Clarifying the Essentials

Grace justifies us, that is, it wipes away our sins and enables us to share in the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus and Baptism into his Paschal Mystery.

- ◆ The primary work of grace is conversion as we turn away from sin and live the Good News of Jesus Christ. (See *Catechism of the Catholic Church* [CCC] 1989.)
- ◆ Justification flows from the initiative of God as he offers us forgiveness and reconciliation in Christ. (See CCC 1990.)

Justification has been accomplished in the Passion, Death and Resurrection of Christ.

- ◆ Jesus became the sacrifice that atones for our sins and restores us to righteousness. (See CCC 1992.)
- ◆ Justification establishes cooperation between God's grace and our freedom. (See CCC 1993.)

Why is This Important?

The moral law, a work of divine Wisdom, details for us the prescriptions and rules that lead to happiness with God. It forbids behavior that leads away from God. Without this guidance we would flounder.

Moral guidance begins with God's grace and our justification, which flows from Christ. It provides the sure footing for our cooperation with God's will. The Magisterium, or teaching office of the Church, clarifies and illuminates the moral law. The Church also offers us a model of holiness in the Virgin Mary as well as in other outstanding Christians, such as the martyrs and saints.

*[God] is always a giver . . .
It is not enough for me
that he has given me grace once;
he must always give it to me.*

SAINT JEROME

Doctrinal Session Guide

(Approximately 60 minutes)

Prepare the space, placing chairs in a circle. Establish a focal point with a candle, an open Bible, and a symbol for justice. Provide name tags and refreshments.

Welcome

Greet people as they arrive. Allow time for conversation. Pray: *Good and gracious God, source of life, we give you thanks and praise you for the blessings you have bestowed on us. Guide us as we seek to know, love, and serve you.*

Engage

Write the words "law," "grace," and "justification" on a large sheet of paper. Invite the group to brainstorm all words and feelings (positive and negative) associated with these words. Then ask the participants what questions their brainstorming raises regarding law, grace, and justification.

Teach

Summarize or invite the group to read Church Teaching. Then discuss the following:

- ◆ Natural law is written in the heart by God. It keeps life in right order.
- ◆ Revealed moral law has been given to us in stages, through history.
- ◆ The Church, through the magisterium, offers guidance and directives for living a moral life.
- ◆ The ten commandments, the great commandment of love, and the beatitudes provide prescriptions for right living.
- ◆ Mary is an outstanding model of moral living as well as the saints.

Apply

Invite the participants to share what they understand to be the essence of Church teaching about law, grace, and the magisterium of the Church.

Pray

Reflectively read Deuteronomy 5:6-17, Matthew 5:3-12, and Matthew 22:35-40.