Catechumenate Session

APPRENTICES IN FAITH: A Resource for the OCIA
Twenty-Third Sunday in Ordinary Time • Year C • September 7, 2025

God of life,
let your light shine upon us.
Teach us your holy Law,
that we might walk
the path
that leads to you,
so that embraced by you,
we might possess all that is
truly important.



Sunday Word

Wisdom 9:13-18b
Psalm 90:3-6, 12-17
Philemon 9–10, 12–17
Luke 14:25-33

Receiving Wisdom

We barely fathom the intentions of God, except in that he reveals to us what we need in order to direct our lives toward his will. The wisdom of God is a gift. We rejoice in that gift, receiving holy wisdom with humility, heeding its guidance carefully as we pursue the path of righteousness.

Seeking Closure

Paul has been imprisoned for the sake of the Gospel. Perhaps he knows that the trial will not go in his favor. He desires to send Onesimus back to his master, no longer as a slave but as a brother in faith. Paul seeks closure, divesting himself of those ties that will keep him from focusing single-mindedly on the kingdom.

Renouncing Possessions

The crowds are traveling along with Jesus. He teaches them the true orientation of disciples: all relationships and possessions are subordinated to the mission. Disciples count the cost of wholeheartedly investing in the kingdom, a cost that includes renunciation of self and one's possessions.

Church Teaching: Self-Renunciation

The Way of Jesus

Disciples are given a powerful example of self-emptying by the Lord Jesus himself, who obeyed his heavenly Father to the point of suffering and dying on the Cross. On his way to the saving events that transpired in Jerusalem, Jesus pointedly instructs his disciples not to flee from self-sacrifice but to choose it.

His way necessitates counting the cost of following him in discipleship, for his way leads us to embrace our own crosses. The kingdom planted among us by the Cross of Christ is guided by a calculus that measures all relationships and things by God's light and love.

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A shining light that exposes the fallacies of the world, a paradoxical love that entails gaining life by losing it in service, this kingdom calculus puts the mission of Christ before all else, including our most precious possession—our very self. Every Christian vocation—from pope to layperson—demands self-renunciation.

Detachment

Self-renunciation, in turn, depends on detachment. In the pursuit of the spiritual life, a stance of detachment assists in the necessary mastery of self so that both our inner core, the ego (our dearest "possession"), and all other "possessions" of family, primary groups, and physical goods do not end up possessing us. Detachment cultivates freedom in the life of Jesus' disciples so that they can embrace the Kingdom of God as their foremost priority. Detachment is also described by the Church as "poverty of heart." Fully fixing our hearts on Jesus, disciples prefer him to everything and everyone.

Does this mean that disciples are fixated on Christ to the exclusion of all things and of everyone else? Are disciples to move through life isolated and alone? Not at all. Detachment, or poverty of heart, means that Jesus Christ and all he encompasses—his Paschal Mystery, his kingdom, his saving mission of truth, compassion, justice, and love—act as the "lens" by which the disciple perceives and evaluates the world and everything in it. Our affections, relationships, and attachments are properly directly by the disciple's adherence to the Great Commandment of Jesus: "Love one another as I have loved you." Indeed, his example of selfless love and sacrifice motivates us in all we are and do.

Distinctiveness of Church Teaching

For disciples who practice self-renunciation, the Beatitudes of Jesus stand as a reminder that the world cannot be transfigured and offered to God without the healthy and holy renunciation of self. Self-renunciation, however, is not the end point. The ultimate goal of our earthly life and our pursuits are motivated in faith by the desire to be in total union with God throughout eternity. Thirst for God is only quenched by the waters of eternal life (see John 4:14).

Key Terms

BEATITUDES
A shorthand title for the preaching and teaching of Jesus in his Sermon on the Mount, where he outlines the way to happiness (see Matthew 5:1-12 and Luke 6:20-23). The Beatitudes illuminate the attitudes characteristic of Christian life and thus describe the vocation of all Christ's faithful (see *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 1716).

POVERTY
Condition of want experienced by the poor, whom Jesus calls "blessed." Christ has a special love for the poor. One of the vows taken by religious in pursuit of their vocation is poverty. Poverty of heart (or spirit) indicates a person's detachment from worldly things and the embrace of humility (see *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 2544).

VOCATION
The life calling we have in this world and the eternal destiny we have in the next. God creates the human person to love and serve him in this world and to be happy with him throughout eternity. The worldly vocation of the laity consists in directing temporal affairs toward God's will (see *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 989).

Voices of Faith

Whoever sees God has obtained all the goods of which he can conceive.

—Saint Gregory of Nyssa

If we think and live according to our communion with Christ, then our eyes will be opened. Then we will no longer be content to scrape a living just for ourselves, but we will see where and how we are needed. . . . [I]t is much better to be useful and at the disposal of others than to be concerned only with the comforts that are offered to us.

—Pope Benedict XVI

Further Reading

Catechism of the Catholic Church: 2544 (renunciation), 2546 (joy of the poor), 2548 (immoderate attachments), 2549 (mortification)

United States Catholic Catechism for Adults:
Chapter 34 (Tenth Commandment: Embrace Poverty of Spirit), especially the section entitled "Where Your Treasure Is, There Also Will Your Heart Be (Mt 6:21)," pages 449–450

Compendium—Catechism of the Catholic Church:
532 (poverty of spirit), 533 (our true happiness)

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