

Catechumenate Session

APPRENTICES IN FAITH: A Resource for the OCIA
Second Sunday of Easter (or Sunday of Divine Mercy) • Year C • April 27, 2025

*O God,
your mercy is boundless,
your love is everlasting.
By your Holy Spirit,
bring us up from death
and the netherworld
to share in
the new life of your Son
and the peace
of your kingdom.
Amen.*



Sunday Word

Acts 5:12-16

Psalms 118:2-4, 13-15, 22-24

Revelation 1:9-11a, 12-13, 17-19

John 20:19-31

People Are Touched by Signs and Wonders

After the Ascension of the Lord and the coming of the Holy Spirit, the Apostles continue the mission of Jesus. They heal the sick and care for the poor. Esteemed by the people for their ministry, more believers join the community of the faithful.

A Vision of the Christ Who Touches

On Sunday, the Lord's day, John finds himself overwhelmed in spirit and caught up in a powerful vision. He sees one like the Son of Man, Jesus Christ, living eternally and glorified as the first and last, holding the keys to death and the netherworld. In the vision, Christ touches John and commands him to be unafraid and to write down what he sees.

To Touch the Wounds of the Risen Lord

Thomas the Apostle doubts the other disciples who tell him that they have been visited by the Risen Lord. When Christ visits again, he invites Thomas to put his finger into the wounds of his glorious hands and to put his disbelieving hand into the wound made by the soldier's lance. With this encounter, Thomas sets aside his doubt. Thomas' acclamation of faith expresses our own belief: the Risen Christ is Lord and God!

Church Teaching: Believing, an Ecclesial and Human Act

Ecclesial Act

Thomas is absent when the Risen Lord first visits the others. Because he is absent, Thomas persists in having doubts. The second time the Lord visits, Thomas is present and amid the community. As clarified by the Gospel, what makes the difference for Thomas—and moves him from doubt to acceptance of faith—is his inclusion in the community of believers. In other words, no one can believe alone just as no one can live alone.

We do not give ourselves faith any more than we give ourselves life. Believers respond to the gift of faith as part of a community

of believers and therefore should hand on the gift of faith to others. Each individual believer is thus a link in the great chain of believers. One's own belief in the Risen Lord cannot occur without being carried and supported by the belief of others. In turn, one's own faith helps and assists others in faith.

In this communal sense, faith, or the act of believing, is ecclesial. This heritage and gift of faith, entrusted to the whole Church, is the reason why the Church herself is described as the household of the faithful. We are a family constituted by Baptism, a household dedicated to the Lord.

Human Act

Believing is an authentically human act. It is not contrary to our human dignity to believe what other persons tell us about themselves or their intentions, or to trust their promises regarding a shared life in marriage. Similarly, it is not contrary to our human dignity to believe what God tells us through Revelation and trust the divine promises fulfilled in Christ, which lead to new, redeemed life in the Risen Lord.

In this individual sense, faith, or the act of believing, is personal. Moved by grace and with the help of the Holy Spirit, each of us has been invited into a relationship of love. That divine love is freely given, and the free, authentically human individual response is described as faith.

Distinctiveness of Church Teaching

Faith is both an "I believe" and a "we believe." The gift of faith is a relationship wherein the person trusts the truth of that which has been revealed in Jesus Christ. It is a precious truth handed down by those first witnesses to the Resurrection and afterward from generation to generation in the Church.

It is the Church that believes initially and so transmits, nourishes, and sustains an individual's faith. It is the Church that first confesses the Lord as did the first disciples who said to Thomas, "We have seen the Lord" (John 20:25). As a mother teaches her children to speak and to understand and communicate, the Church teaches us the language of faith in order to introduce us to the understanding and lived reality of faithfulness.

Key Terms

BELIEF

Act of the intellect whereby one puts trust or confidence in a person or thing, crediting the other with veracity. Scripture describes faith as a trusting human response to God's self-Revelation. The Old Testament often speaks of faith in terms of personal obedience or loyalty to the Word of God. The word *amen* comes from a Hebrew word for faith, *aman*, which denotes the kind of reliability, stability, and firmness that a child ascribes to a parent. The most common New Testament Greek term for faith is *pistis*, which conveys the idea of trust, conviction, or truthfulness.

HOUSEHOLD OF THE FAITHFUL (OF GOD)

Description for the community of believers, the Church, which originates in the New Testament. (See Ephesians 2:19 and 1 Timothy 3:15, both of which refer to the "household of God.") God's household (in Greek, *oikia*) is established in Christ. This description grows out of the Old Testament descriptions of "the people" of God.

Voices of Faith

[Thomas] touches his flesh, he proclaimed his divinity. What did he touch? The body of Christ. Was the body of Christ the divinity of Christ? The divinity of Christ was the Word; the humanity of Christ was soul and flesh. Thomas could not touch the soul, but he could perceive it, because the body that had been dead was moving about alive. But that Word is subject neither to change nor to contact, it neither regresses nor progresses, neither fails nor flourishes. . . . That is what Thomas proclaimed. He touched the flesh, he invoked the Word, because "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:14).
—Saint Augustine

It was not an accident that that particular disciple was not present. The divine mercy ordained that a doubting disciple should, by feeling in his Master the wounds of the flesh, heal in us the wounds of unbelief. The unbelief of Thomas is more profitable to our faith than the belief of the other disciples. For the touch by which he is brought to believe confirms our minds in belief, beyond all question.
—Pope Saint Gregory the Great

Further Reading

Catechism of the Catholic Church: 144 (faith as obedience to God), 154 (faith as a human act), 181 (faith as an ecclesial act)

United States Catholic Catechism for Adults:

Chapter 4 (Bring About the Obedience of Faith), especially the section entitled "Believe in the Lord Jesus," pages 37–39

Compendium—Catechism of the Catholic Church: 27 (faith in practice), 30 (faith as both a personal and ecclesial act)