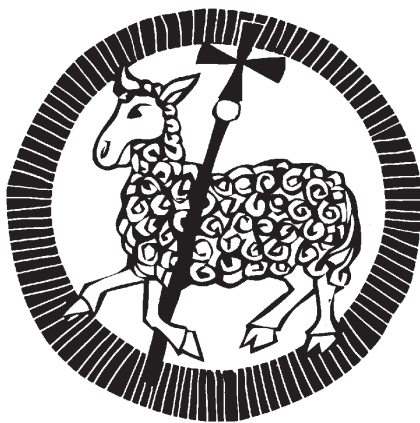


Catechumenate Session

APPRENTICES IN FAITH: A Resource for the OCIA
Fourth Sunday of Easter • Year C • May 11, 2025

O God,
you sent
your Son, Jesus,
to shepherd
and guide us.
May we delight
in hearing his voice.
May we follow
where he leads.
Amen.



Sunday Word

Acts 13:14, 43-52

Psalm 100:1-2, 3, 5

Revelation 7:9, 14b-17

John 10:27-30

The Word Is Preached to All

The Apostles Paul and Barnabas continue their missionary efforts. Jews and Gentiles, everyone and every place, will hear the Word as they preach it. Light shines forth. The Good News illuminates the promise of eternal life.

The Lamb Will Shepherd Us

John envisions a great multitude of believers. Every nation, race, people, and tongue are included in this people of faith, the sheep of God's flock.

Jesus and the Father Are One

Sheep hear the voice of their master. The shepherd calls and they respond. Jesus, the Good Shepherd, gathers us closely to himself, a closeness that cannot be disturbed or disrupted by any outsider. This closeness—on account of the total union between God the Father and Jesus—will not be shaken.

Church Teaching: The Divinity of Christ

Father and Son

Jesus reveals that God is his Father. We call God "Father" not only because he is the Creator but because he is eternally Father in relation to his only Son, who is eternally Son only in relation to his Father (see Matthew 11:27).

Heretical movements arose that denied this profound truth of the divine sonship of Jesus. Arius (d. 336) provoked the first great controversy over Christ's identity. He claimed Christ was not divine in the same sense that God the Father was. He asserted that Jesus was the highest of all creatures but still a created being with a beginning.

The Church combated this heresy, Arianism, and articulated clearly at the first worldwide, or ecumenical, council of bishops (at Nicea in 325) that Jesus, the Son of God, is one in being—that is, of the same divine substance (in Greek, *homoousios*) as the Father. In other words, there is not a God who is Father and a

different God who is the Son, Jesus. They are one, just as Jesus asserts in his ministry (see John 10:30).

The Early Church Defends This Truth

Saint Athanasius (d. 373), Bishop of Alexandria, joined the debate as the great defender of orthodoxy. Then in the latter part of the fourth century, Saint Basil of Caesarea (d. 379), Saint Gregory of Nyssa (d. 394), and Saint Gregory of Nazianzus (d. 390) furthered our understanding of the identity of Christ by brilliantly articulating Trinitarian teaching: there is One God, who exists in three equal Persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. These early Fathers of the Church rendered us an invaluable service in deepening our understanding of the divinity of Christ by providing a standardized vocabulary regarding God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, distinguishing between “particular person” (*hypostasis*) and “common substance or nature” (*ousia*).

Further Developments

Saint Augustine of Hippo (d. 430) added immensely to our understanding of the Holy Trinity. Whereas the starting point of the earlier Church Fathers focused on the distinct relations within the Trinity, Augustine began by focusing on the unity of the divine substance common to all Three Persons of the Blessed Trinity. Augustine used tripartite analogies such as *lover-beloved-love* and *memory-understanding-will* to illustrate how the same substance could be internally differentiated without dividing that substance. So, for example, loving and knowing are distinct operations of the soul, but there is only one soul that engages in these operations. Augustine’s influence was felt down through the ages, all the way to Saint Thomas Aquinas (d. 1274). Aquinas’s comprehensive treatment of the faith has, in turn, influenced modern-day theologians.

Distinctiveness of Church Teaching

Flowing from Scripture and in accord with the apostolic witness, the articulation of Christ’s divinity is highly nuanced, precise, and thoughtful. The early Fathers of the Church and subsequent theologians contributed to understanding this mystery of faith. At the same time, this saving truth is as elegant and simple as Jesus claims, “The Father and I are one” (John 10:30). Every time we pray in the name of the Trinity, even when we pray wordlessly making the Sign of the Cross, we celebrate this profound truth.

Key Terms

HERESY

The stubborn denial after Baptism of a particular truth of the faith that must be adhered to and embraced (see *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 2089).

ORTHODOXY

Term derived from two root words (Greek *ortho* for “right” or “true” and *doxa* for “praise,” “teaching,” and “opinion”) used by early Christians of the third century to distinguish the religious doctrine or teaching of the Church and heretical individuals or sects that rejected mainstream Christian belief.

FATHERS OF THE CHURCH

Theologians, thinkers, and writers in the early Christian centuries—especially in the fourth and fifth centuries—whose teachings were perceived as models of orthodoxy and as a witness to the Tradition of the Church (see *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 78).

Voices of Faith

Mark both of those words, *one* and *are*, and you will be delivered from Charybdis and from Scylla. In these two words, in that he said *one*, he delivers you from Arius; in that he said *are*, he delivers you from Sabellius; . . . there are both Father and Son. . . . And if *one*, then there is no difference of persons between them. —Saint Augustine

This brings us to . . . God’s Fatherhood. There is a unique sense in which Christ is the “image of God” (2 Cor 4:4; Col 1:15). The Fathers of the Church therefore say that when God created man “in his image,” he looked toward the Christ who was to come, and created [us] according to the image of the “new Adam,” the man who is the criterion of the human. Above all, though, Jesus is “the Son” in the strict sense—he is of one substance with the Father. He wants to draw all of us into his humanity and so into his Sonship, into his total belonging to God. —Pope Benedict XVI

Further Reading

***Catechism of the Catholic Church*:** 241 (Jesus, eternal Word with God), 242 (teachings of the councils of Nicea and Constantinople)

***United States Catholic Catechism for Adults*:** Chapter 7 (The Good News: God Has Sent His Son), especially the section entitled “True God and True Man,” pages 81–83

***Compendium—Catechism of the Catholic Church*:** 46 (Jesus reveals God as Father), 89 (Jesus, true God and true man)