

# Catechumenate Session

APPRENTICES IN FAITH: A Resource for the OCIA  
Fifth Sunday of Easter • Year C • May 18, 2025

*Almighty God,  
compassionate  
without measure,  
open the door of faith to all,  
that your Church  
might be built up  
into a worldwide  
community of love.  
Amen.*



## Sunday Word

Acts 14:21-27

Psalm 145:8-9, 10-11, 12-13

Revelation 21:1-5a

John 13:31-33a, 34-35

### God Builds Up His Church

Paul and Barnabas continue their missionary activity. As a result, more Gentiles accept the Good News. God opens the door of faith and the Church is called together, formed by grace.

### God Wipes Away Every Tear

The Lord dwells with his people. He wipes away our tears, for in his holy city, the New Jerusalem, there will be no more death, mourning, wailing, or pain. The old order has passed away. In Christ all is made new.

### God Loves That We Might Love

Jesus gives his disciples a New Commandment: love one another. Christ has first loved us that we might learn how to love each other.

## Catholic Teaching: Christ's New Commandment

### The Old Law

The Covenant God made with the people of Israel is given expression through the Law of Moses. In its broadest scriptural sense, the Mosaic Law was considered as contained in the first five books of the Old Testament—because the Law itself could not be seen apart from the foundational narrative of Israel's election as God's people. But in a more narrow scriptural sense (injunctions prohibiting certain behavior and sets of procedures for dealing with specific issues), the Law of Moses was considered to be the Decalogue and the biblical texts immediately following it (Exodus 20:22–23:33).

This Law symbolized the way God kept faith with the people and, in turn, the way they would keep faith with God. It not only expressed how people related to God but how they were to relate to each other. In other words, the Law of Moses structured relationships within the community. For example, lying, stealing, and adultery were forbidden by the Decalogue. Also, the way in which clans and families could go about exacting revenge

was regulated so that the people would not endlessly engage in blood feuds, tearing the social fabric completely apart (see Exodus 21:23-25). The code of behavior stipulated by the Law of Moses was thus seen not only as a challenge and an obligation but as a great gift to the whole community.

### ***The New Law***

Jesus offers a new perspective, a succinct interpretation of the entirety of the Law, by commanding his disciples to love one another as he himself has loved them. This distinctive approach to the Law was not unknown to the Old Covenant. It is recorded in the Old Testament (see Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18). But the novelty of Jesus' New Commandment rests upon two things. First, he employs it to sum up the *whole* of the religious law. Second, in his own person, by his life, mission, and his own sacrifice, Christ *incarnates* this Commandment. Thus, based in the heritage of the Old Covenant, the "new" command of Jesus is given to his disciples to be lived as a law of grace, a law of freedom.

This new Law of Christ and the Gospel do not negate the old Law but perfect it and open believers to the full potential of the first Covenant. And while the shape of the new Law can be discerned in the New Testament Scriptures, it is not codified in a series of prescriptions so much as brought to life by the action of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Church. As Saint Paul writes, we "put on" the new person of Christ in Baptism (see Galatians 3:27). So, the New Commandment of love is etched upon our hearts by not only pondering Sacred Scripture but by partaking of the living tradition of discipleship in a Church formed by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in Christ.

### ***Distinctiveness of Church Teaching***

The New Commandment of love is given explicit form by the example of Jesus, who teaches his disciples to love as he loved them. He showed them this love through the years of their mission together. He also symbolized this amazing love (reported in the verses just prior to this Sunday's Gospel) by washing their feet at the Last Supper and later by dying on the Cross.

Eucharist, as presented in John's Gospel, is the sacred meal that celebrates our following in the way of Christ's love. It is the way of service and self-sacrifice for others.

### ***Key Terms***

#### **LAW**

Rule of conduct established by competent authority to protect the common good. Biblically, the moral law is the parental instruction of God, setting forth the ways that lead us to happiness and prohibiting those ways that lead to evil and destruction. Divinely revealed law can be found in the Old Testament, especially in the Decalogue, and in the New Testament in the teaching of Christ. The moral law finds its fullness and unity in Christ himself (see *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 1953).

#### **DECALOGUE**

The Ten Commandments (literally, the "ten words") revealed by God to Moses. To be faithful to the teaching of Jesus, the Decalogue is interpreted from the perspective of the New Commandment given to us by Christ to love God and one another (our neighbor) wholeheartedly (see *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 2055).

#### **COMMANDMENT**

Norm of moral or religious action, especially the Decalogue given by God to Moses. Jesus sums up all the Commandments in his twofold command to love God and love neighbor (see *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 2052).

### ***Voices of Faith***

The law of Moses mandated the necessity of loving our brothers as ourselves, yet our Lord Jesus the Christ loved us far more than he loved himself. Otherwise, he would never have . . . undergone for our sakes the exceptional bitterness of his death. . . . Christ commands us to love as he did, putting neither reputation, wealth or anything else before love of our brothers and sisters . . .

—Saint Cyril of Alexandria

Jesus shows that the commandments must not be understood as a minimum limit not to be gone beyond, but rather as a path involving a moral and spiritual journey toward perfection, at the heart of which is love (cf. Col 3:14).

—Pope Saint John Paul II

### ***Further Reading***

***Catechism of the Catholic Church***: 1967 (law of the Gospels fulfills the Old Law), 1983 (New Law and Holy Spirit)

#### ***United States Catholic Catechism for Adults***

Chapter 23 (Life in Christ—Part One), especially the section entitled "Love, Rules, and Grace," page 318

#### ***Compendium—Catechism of the Catholic Church***

292 (Eucharist and love of neighbor), 401 (love of neighbor cannot be separated from love of God), 435 (Jesus' interpretation of Mosaic Law)