

Catechumenate Session

APPRENTICES IN FAITH: A Resource for the OCIA
Sixth Sunday of Easter • Year C • May 25, 2025



O God,
heavenly Father,
have pity on us.
Guide us
and help us do right
to make peace in the world.
Amen.

Sunday Word

Acts 15:1-2, 22-29

Psalm 67:2-3, 5, 6, 8

Revelation 21:10-14, 22-23

John 14:23-29

A Clear Decision

Paul and Barnabas consult with the Apostles and elders in Jerusalem. A decision is reached and communicated back to the Gentile converts. No greater burden beyond the absolute necessities will be placed on the Gentiles so that they may follow Christ.

A Beautiful Vision

God dwells with his people and provides protection, light, and life. There is no temple in the New Jerusalem, for God himself sustains his people.

A Fruitful Direction

Love enables the disciple to keep the Word—the teaching—of Jesus. Peace flows from this Word through the indwelling Holy Spirit. Peace is the gift Christ gives to those who put his teaching into practice.

Catholic Teaching: Peace

The Risen Lord Greet Us

Throughout his public ministry, Jesus taught the value of peace and the blessedness it brings (see Matthew 5:9). At the Last Supper, before his arrest and Crucifixion, Jesus poignantly bids his disciples the farewell gift of peace (see John 14:27), a peace that he promises will abide in the community of believers through the indwelling Holy Spirit. The Risen Lord also greets his disciples with the word *peace* (see John 20:19).

Jesus speaks peace in the context of a biblical understanding of *shalom*. The Hebrew *shalom*, found in the Old Testament, means much more than the absence of war or the maintenance of a balance of power. *Shalom* means the well-being of daily life, a total harmony with nature, God, others, and self. It issues forth from justice and is experienced in a fruitful land and people, who have plentiful food and dwell in security free from fear. *Shalom*, in other words, is the sum of all the benefits of God's presence with his people.

Jesus gives this gift of peace in the widest sense possible. Peace is the fruit of the Covenant between God and believers. Those who follow the light of Jesus as disciples walk the wonderful paths marked out by this covenant relationship. They will know, from putting into practice the Lord's teaching, the blessedness that comes from being peacemakers.

The Church Urges Us

Since its inception, the Church has been aware of the urgent need for peacemaking in a world that too often enshrines violence, terrorism, armed conflict, and the threat of violence as a *modus operandi*. Indeed, waging war inherently holds the potential for grave evil to be unleashed. Only under certain rigorously defined conditions does the Church allow for the possibility of a legitimate defense by a nation applying military force to other nations or peoples. These conditions are enumerated in its just war teaching.

Even in the waging of war, the Church insists that human beings are subject to the moral law and that crimes committed during wartime are always to be condemned. In other words, waging war does not mean that the moral law is suspended. Genocide and the indiscriminate destruction of whole cities or areas with their inhabitants are always condemned as an unacceptable evil.

For Christians, peacemaking is not an optional commitment or pursuit. Peacemaking does not derive out of the movement of the moment. It derives from Christ. Christian peacemaking is not set by some political agenda or ideological program but by the teaching of the Church. Thus, any engagement in warfare must always seek to limit violence and its escalation. Instead, safeguarding, expanding, and promoting peace must be the priority of those who follow Jesus and his farewell gift of *shalom*.

Distinctiveness of Catholic Teaching

Ultimately violence, whether it is sanctioned by the state or whether it is terrorism promoted by sectarian factions, leads only to a greater spiral of violence, destruction, and death. As ugly as it is, war and violence are almost too easy.

It is a much more difficult task to refrain from demonizing those who hate us, to respect and promote *all* human life, even that of the "enemy." Peace cannot be attained without the hard work and diligent safeguarding of persons, which includes free communication, upholding the dignity of others, and practicing fraternity.

Key Terms

ENCYCLICAL

A letter pastorally addressing some aspect(s) of Church teaching, which is written by the pope for the entire Church and even for the whole world. An encyclical letter expresses the ordinary teaching authority of the pope and does not normally contain definitive, infallible teaching (see *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 892).

JUST WAR

The Church's moral guidance on engaging in war, which lists a set of conditions to be met by a nation entering armed conflict: (1) damage inflicted by aggressor must be lasting, grave, and certain; (2) all means of putting an end to this damage must be shown to be ineffective; (3) there must be a serious prospect for success of the armed conflict; (4) use of arms must not produce evils and disorders greater than the evil to be eliminated (see *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 2309).

Voices of Faith

Jesus is all but saying here, "How are you harmed by the trouble of the world, provided that you are at peace with me? For this peace is not the same as the world's peace. The world's peace is external and often more hurtful than profitable, and it is of no real advantage to those who possess it. But I give you the kind of peace that calls for peace with one another. This makes you stronger."

—Saint John Chrysostom

Only a people that knows God and defends spiritual and moral values can truly go toward a profound peace and also become a strength of peace for the world and for others.

—Pope Benedict XVI

Further Reading

Catechism of the Catholic Church: 2304 (peace is the fruit of justice and the effect of charity), 736 (peace and the Holy Spirit), 2442 (laity as agents of peace and justice)

United States Catholic Catechism for Adults:

Chapter 29 (The Fifth Commandment: Promote the Culture of Life), especially the sections entitled "War" and "Terrorism," page 395–397

Compendium—Catechism of the Catholic Church:

480 (our responsibility as peacemakers), 481 (definition of peace), 482 (requirements for earthly peace)