

Catechumenate Session

APPRENTICES IN FAITH: A Resource for the RCIA
Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time • Year B • July 14, 2024



*Almighty God,
you have called us
to follow your Son,
Jesus Christ
into his truth.
You have chosen us
as his disciples
to prepare the world
for the fullness
of your kingdom.*

Sunday Word

Amos 7:12-15
Psalm 85:9-14
Ephesians 1:3-14 (or 1: 3-10)
Mark 6:7-13

Go and Prophesy!

Amos makes it clear that he was but a shepherd and dresser of sycamores. Then the Lord God commanded him to become a different sort of shepherd. Amos was called to prophesy to God's people, leading them into a closer relationship with the Almighty.

Go and Be Holy!

Saint Paul extols the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, saying that believers have been blessed in Christ, chosen and adopted. Believers are called by the Lord to be holy and without the blemish of sinfulness.

Go and Heal!

Jesus calls the Twelve to extend his mission. He sends them forth to preach and to heal.

Church Teaching: Election and Mission

God Chooses

The Christian understanding of election is intimately connected to its teaching on mission. Probing the meaning of our election in God leads us to a sense of our mission in the world.

Election has nothing to do with the democratic process. It is not a matter of winning a majority of votes. The prime decision maker in divine election is God. The subject of election, theologically, is the Almighty, and the object of the election is God's choice. What is meant by God's chosen is also expressed as God's anointed and God's people. The theme of election runs throughout the Bible and grounds it, in both the Old and New Testament.

Old Testament Understanding

The core of the Israelite faith is found in the notion of election. God chooses Israel and names this people as his own, beginning with the call of Abraham and extending to Abraham's and Sarah's descendants. The Lord acts in total, absolute freedom in the way this promise is fulfilled. In the time of the patriarchs, the natural heir is not always the one designated (Isaac is chosen over Ishmael, Jacob

over Esau, Judah over Reuben). Thus, the way God chooses is not according to an automatic pattern. It rests entirely with the divine initiative, and manifests the sheer gracious love that the Almighty exhibits in saving and pardoning the people.

The purpose of this election is to make Israel God's special possession, set apart, who by holiness will become an image of the Lord, a kingdom of priests known as servants. Thus, election is not for its own sake or because Israel is better than other peoples. Rather, the idea of election carries with it a responsibility to live up to its significance.

New Testament Understanding

This theme is continued in the Christian Scriptures with Jesus Christ portrayed as the ultimate fulfillment of God's plan of Salvation. As such, Jesus is *the* elect One, the Anointed, the Christ—the Messiah foretold by the prophets and for whom Israel has been preparing.

Early Christians envisioned themselves as the continuation of God's holy and elect people. They believed themselves constituted by the love of God shown to them in Christ (see 1 Peter 2:9). Christians are therefore described as the new elect made up of people of every nation. The New Testament literature also makes the point that election requires a response of faithful obedience. It entails obligations of Jesus' followers to live a holy and fruitful life.

So What?

This means that we who have heard and responded to God's living Word must now act accordingly. Believers bear witness to the world that God loves and saves us all.

In other words, we cannot be elected by God and then do nothing! Those who experience God's love and grace are impelled to participate all the more in preparing for and building up the Kingdom of God. Believers are a leaven. We follow the example of Christ and serve the Lord in others. By the way we conduct ourselves in this world, we live up to our calling and our mission as the elect of God.

Distinctiveness of Church Teaching

An individual believer does not have to feel as if he or she has to witness without support. The Church as a whole shares in the missionary endeavor to spread Good News. Indeed, the Church is described as the soul of human society in its renewal and transformation by Christ as the family of God.

Key Terms

CHRISTIAN

Anointed with Sacred Chrism at Baptism, this is the name of those who are baptized into Christ, called to follow him (see *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 1289).

CHURCH

Name given to (a) Eucharistic liturgical gathering, (b) local ecclesial community, and (c) worldwide assembly of the People of God (see *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 752).

ISRAEL

The Jewish people, chosen by God to be his own, named after Jacob from whom descends the twelve tribes (see *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 62).

Voices of Faith

Now by *church* you must understand not only those who began to be saints after the Lord's advent and nativity but all who have ever been saints belong to the same church. You can't say that our father Abraham does not belong to us just because he lived before Christ. . . . After all, the apostle says that we are the children of Abraham by imitating Abraham's faith. If then we are admitted to the church by imitating him, are we going to exclude the man himself from the church?

—Saint Augustine

The more ardent the love for the Eucharist in the hearts of the Christian people, the more clearly will they recognize the goal of all mission: *to bring Christ to others*. Not just a theory or a way of life inspired by Christ, but the gift of his very person.

—Pope Benedict XVI

Further Reading

Catechism of the Catholic Church: 759 (God chooses to raise us up into divine life), 761 (first gathering of the People of God), 762 (People of God and election), 765 (Church and twelve tribes)

United States Catholic Catechism for Adults

Chapter 11 (The Four Marks of the Church), especially the section entitled "The Church Is Holy," page 129

Compendium—Catechism of the Catholic Church

8 (God calls Abraham), 153 (Church as "people of God"), 154 (characteristics of people of God), 173 (missionary Church), 177 (Christian faithful)

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