

# Catechumenate Session

APPRENTICES IN FAITH: A Resource for the RCIA  
Third Sunday in Ordinary Time • Year B • January 25, 2015

*Almighty God,  
you call all sinners  
to repent and return to you.  
Help us to seek your Son,  
who heals us and  
restores us to life and joy.  
Infuse your grace deep  
in our hearts, and make us  
living signs of your healing  
love for all to see. Amen.*



## Sunday Word

Jonah 3:1–5, 10  
Psalm 25:4–5, 6–7, 8–9  
1 Corinthians 7:29–31  
Mark 1:14–20

### *Turn Away from Evil*

Jonah preached the word of the Lord, and the people of Nineveh repented of their evil. Those in Nineveh who reformed their ways were not punished by the Lord.

### *The Passing World*

Saint Paul explains to the Christian community that the world in which we live is passing away. Its present form will be, in God's good time, changed.

### *Repent and Believe*

Jesus preached a message of repenting and believing. He called all people to turn away from sin and embrace the Good News. His message has a sense of urgency because the Kingdom of God is imminent.

## Church Teaching: Sin and Repentance

### *Turning Away from God*

All of God's creation has been wounded and scarred by sin. The tragic consequences of Original Sin include the loss of harmony among creation, the tension within human relationships, and the decay and death of this earthly world. So humanity is impaired by sin, and we tend to turn away from God in our thoughts and actions. Too frequently we are drawn to what is immoral.

Sin offends against reason, truth, and right conscience. Sin fails to love God and neighbor. Sin weakens human solidarity. Sin can be a word, action, or desire that is contrary to God's Law. Sin can be either something one commits or omits that represents a turning away from God.

The gravity or seriousness of sin is evaluated as either mortal or venial. Mortal sin is deadly to us because it destroys charity in the very center of our being. On the other hand, venial sin does not destroy, but wounds charity within us. By weakening charity,

venial sin hinders our progress in the exercise of virtues and of moral goodness.

### ***Turning Back to God***

Repentance represents our turning away from sin and turning back to God in Christ. Repentance is a work of grace. Repentance sets the stage for healing our friendship with God. Repentance signals that we wish to, once again, take up the way of Christ. Repentance prompts the angels and Saints to rejoice. Repentance begins to restore us back to a life of holiness.

Conscience is the mechanism within us that enables repentance. Our conscience, placed within us by God, helps us to recognize sin for what it is and to turn from it. Our conscience prods us to seek God's forgiveness in the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation.

Like the Prodigal Son, when we are sunk in sin we may nevertheless "come to our senses" through a fresh initiative on God's part (see Luke 15:11–32). God is generous and merciful to us. He gives us every opportunity to repent, return and celebrate.

In fact, in the Church we are given an entire household of faith, a community of charity, to direct and focus our lives on the good, the true, and the beautiful. Christ's ministry of healing continues in the Church, which is his instrument enabling ongoing conversion, the exercise of virtues, and the pursuit of holiness.

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

The outcome of repentance always exceeds our expectations. Blinded and calloused by sin, we only dimly perceive what God knows fully, the love and goodness we are capable of, and the joy that awaits us. As related in Matthew 19:17, Jesus is the one who brings the question about morally good action back to its religious foundation, to the acknowledgement of God, who alone is goodness, fullness of life, the final end of human endeavor, and total happiness.

## **Key Terms**

### **CONSCIENCE**

That inner voice placed within us by God to guide us in the moral quality of an intentional action (see *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 1777).

### **ORIGINAL SIN**

Sin committed by our "first parents," which caused sin to be universally present throughout the world (see *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 401).

### **THE GOOD, THE TRUE, AND THE BEAUTIFUL**

Ancient philosophical description of "the ideal;" used later by theologians as titles or attributes for God (see *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 214).

## **Voices of Faith**

The expectation of health mitigates the nauseousness of medicine. One who desires the kernel breaks the nut. So one who desires the joy of a holy conscience swallows down the bitterness of penance.

—Saint Jerome

Here is the Son of God, who in his Resurrection experienced in a radical way mercy shown to himself, that is to say the love of the Father, which is *more powerful than death*. And it is also the same Christ, the Son of God, who at the end of his messianic mission . . . reveals himself as the inexhaustible source of mercy, of the same love . . . is to be everlastingly confirmed as *more powerful than sin*.

—Saint John Paul II

## **Further Reading**

***Catechism of the Catholic Church***: 541 (proclamation of the kingdom), 1427 (conversion), 1431 (reorientation and return), 1434 (forms of penance), 1849 (sin)

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

Chapter 6, especially the section entitled "Meditation," pages 74–75

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

107 (invitation to enter the kingdom), 392 (sin), 394 (gravity of sins)