



LESSON ELEVEN

The Old Law and the New: Learning Freedom

Opening Prayer

*Lord, we come before you with open hearts.
Teach us what it means to live in freedom,
to choose what is good,
and to grow in love and truth.*

*We long to walk in your ways, O Lord.
By your grace, make us holy.*

Amen.



Lesson Objectives:

- ❖ Understand why God gave the Law to Israel and how the Ten Commandments ordered the people he had freed from slavery toward genuine freedom and flourishing.
- ❖ Recognize that the Ten Commandments and Beatitudes together are the “road map” in the Christian life.
- ❖ Reflect on how Jesus himself embodies the life described by the Beatitudes, giving us a living example of the blessed life we are called to imitate.
- ❖ Understand the unity of the Old Law and the New and how the New Law—Jesus’ “single commandment of love” (CCC 2055)—perfects the Old Law by transforming our hearts from within.

BURNING QUESTIONS

❖ How can following rules lead to a happy life? Don't they just limit my choices?

What if rules are not limits but guardrails on a path toward something greater?

❖ Why do so many people seem to think religion is more about rules than about a relationship with God?

Where do you think that perception comes from, and how does it affect the way you approach your faith?

St. Josephine Bakhita

Feast Day: February 8

Lived: c. 1869 – February 8, 1947 · Darfur, Sudan · Patron of Victims of human trafficking and slavery, Sudan

Kidnapped and enslaved as a child in Sudan, Josephine Bakhita endured sale, beating, and branding at the hands of several owners. When brought to Italy she came into the care of Canossian Sisters in Venice, where for the first time she was treated as a person. She encountered Jesus Christ, who had also suffered unjustly, and found in him a love that could never be taken away. At her baptism, she declared with joy that she had become a daughter of God. She spent the rest of her life as a Canossian sister, radiating warmth and mercy to everyone she met.



“Here, I become a daughter of God!”

St. Josephine Bakhita

True Freedom and the Old Law

Freedom Is Not Doing Whatever We Want

Freedom is the power to choose what is genuinely good—to act in accordance with our deepest nature. When we choose what is wrong, we do not become freer; we become enslaved to sin (see John 8:34). The *Catechism* defines freedom as “the power ... to act or not to act, to do this or that, and so to perform deliberate actions on one’s own responsibility” (CCC 1731).

God Teaches a Freed People to Live Free

When God delivered Israel from Egypt, he gave them the Law so they would know how to live as a free people. The commandments were not arbitrary restrictions but a revelation of God’s own character and of our vocation to holiness—a guide to true freedom. “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart” (Matthew 22:37).

“Every one who commits sin is a slave to sin.”

John 8:34

The Ten Commandments

A Gift, Not a Burden

When God gave the Ten Commandments at Sinai, he was not imposing an arbitrary set of rules on an unwilling people. He was giving them a blueprint for covenant life—a framework for living in right relationship with him and with one another. The first three commandments concern our relationship with God; the last seven concern our relationships with each other. They are two sides of the same love.

The Summary of the Law

When a Pharisee asked Jesus which commandment is the greatest, he gave a twofold answer: love God with everything you have, and love your neighbor as yourself (see Matthew 22:37–39). “On these two commandments depend all the law and the prophets” (Matthew 22:40). He didn’t add new rules; he summarized them all and revealed their true meaning.

“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.”

Matthew 22:37

Christ Fulfills the Law

The Problem the Old Law Revealed

The Old Law was holy and good, but it could not give the power to keep it. St. Paul speaks for all humanity: “I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate” (Romans 7:15). Something deeper than rules was needed—a transformation of the heart.

The New Law in Christ

Jesus fulfills it from within, rewriting it on human hearts (Jeremiah 31:33). His New Law is a “single commandment of love” (CCC 2055): “This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you” (John 15:12). Grace, not willpower alone, makes this possible.

“I will put my law within them, and I will write it upon their hearts.”

Jeremiah 31:33

The Beatitudes: Happiness in the Kingdom

The Law of the Gospel

The Beatitudes (Matthew 5:3–12) are Jesus' teachings about true happiness in the Kingdom of God. Found in his Sermon on the Mount, they describe the qualities of those who share in the life of God, whose hearts have been transformed by the law of the Gospel.

Obedience is Our Loving Response

Christ lived his entire life in perfect obedience to the Father's will. Through his obedience, Jesus demonstrated perfect love for the Father and became the source of our salvation. Our obedience to God's law won't always be easy, but this is the path to true fulfillment and eternal beatitude in the Kingdom of heaven.

“If you love me, you will keep my commandments.”

John 14:15





Discussion Questions

- ❖ Can you think of a time when a boundary, rule, or discipline gave you more freedom rather than less? How does that experience connect to the Catholic teaching that God's commandments are meant to set us free?
- ❖ How do the Ten Commandments and the Beatitudes work together to form a complete picture of what authentic love looks like in daily life?
- ❖ Why does Sr. Josephine emphasize that "God has not set you up to fail" when discussing the difficulty of living according to his commandments?

Faith and Fun

What do the scriptural accounts of the Ten Commandments and the Beatitudes have in common?

a. Both were written on tablets of stone

b. Both are lists of ten

c. Both were delivered on a mountain

d. Both are optional

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God gave Moses the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai, and Jesus is thought to have preached the Beatitudes, part of the Sermon on the Mount, on a hill near the Sea of Galilee.

The *Confiteor*

What It Is

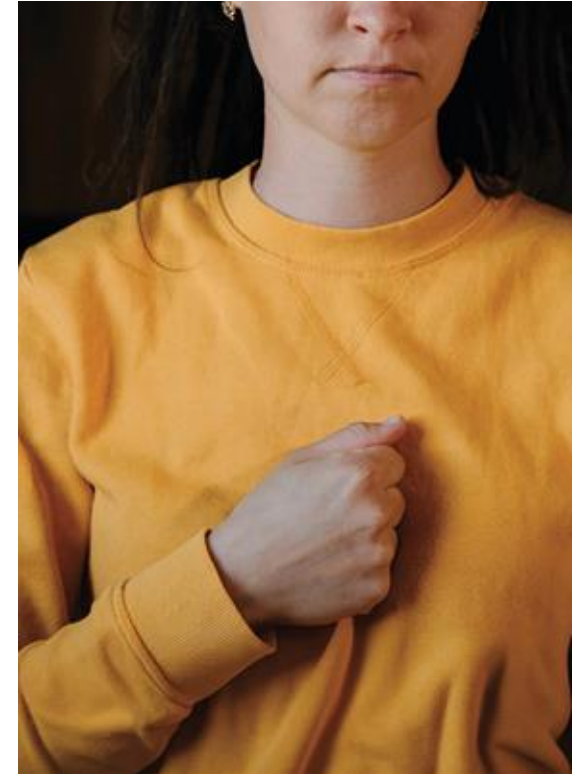
At the beginning of every Mass, before we approach God’s altar, the Liturgy invites us to pause and acknowledge our sins. The *Confiteor* (“I confess”) is one of the most ancient prayers of this kind. It is an act of honesty, humility, and trust in God’s mercy.

What It Teaches

The prayer confesses sin “in my thoughts and in my words, in what I have done and in what I have failed to do.” It names both acts of commission and omission. We also confess to our brothers and sisters—because sin is never purely private; it affects the whole Body of Christ. The prayer concludes with an invocation of the intercession of Mary, the angels, and the saints.

“If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just, and will forgive our sins.”

1 John 1:8–9



Living It Out:

After choosing a difficult commandment, think of a practical step you will take this week to break a bad habit and live by that commandment.

Closing Prayer

*Christ in the heart of every man who thinks of me,
Christ in the mouth of everyone who speaks of me,
Christ in every eye that sees me,
Christ in every ear that hears me.*

Amen.

Announcements / Reminders — add notes here