

THE AUGUSTINE INSTITUTE AND THE NATIONAL EUCHARISTIC CONGRESS PRESENT

The Heart of Prayer

A Study with
Bishop Andrew Cozzens

*Pentecost, Pietro Gagliardi /
Renata Sedmakova/Shutterstock*

RELATIONSHIP, IDENTITY, AND MISSION

SESSION 2

Opening Prayer

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in them the fire of your love. Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created, and you shall renew the face of the earth. O God, who have taught the hearts of the faithful by the light of the Holy Spirit, grant that in the same Spirit we may be truly wise and ever rejoice in his consolation. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Study Goals

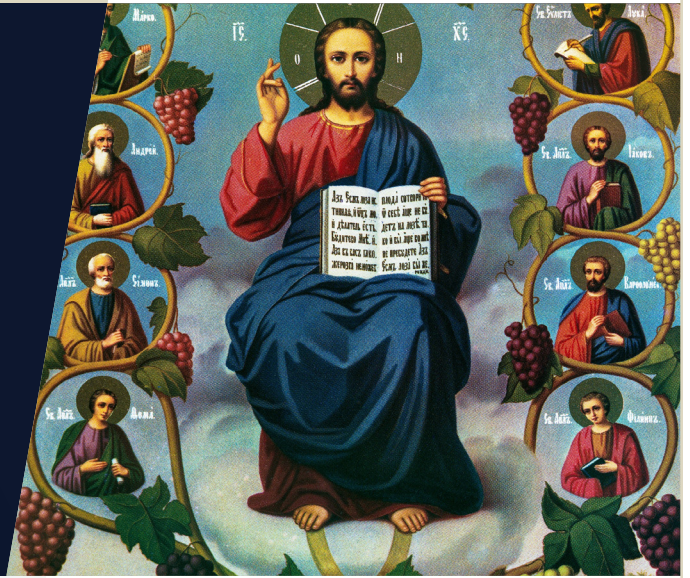
Jesus tells his disciples to “abide” in him. What does this mean for you? Abiding in God’s love is essential for knowing our identity. It is only through God that we can know who we are and our life’s mission. Unfortunately, we often allow other factors to form our identity: other people, our job, other responsibilities, the expectations of others. We “can only know ourselves truly in the light of God” and we abide in God’s love through prayer.¹ Understanding our identity involves two kinds of self-reflection. First, we recognize our wounds, selfishness, and the reality of our sin. Second, we recognize that each of us is a beloved creation of God. The pathway to understanding who we are and our call in the world is abiding in a relationship with Jesus, forming our identity within that relationship, and then becoming attentive to the missional call of God. Jesus’ life followed this same path and modeled it for us.

What is forming your identity right now? Is it what you do—your job, family responsibilities, involvement at your parish? Do you abide in Jesus or do you feel a separation? Jesus desires that we abide in him so he might reveal the truth of who we are as beloved sons and daughters so that we may fully and joyfully live our mission in this world.

1. Jacques Philippe, *Thirsting for Prayer*, trans. Helena Scott (New York: Scepter Publishers, 2014), 19.

Scripture

“I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. Every branch of mine that bears no fruit, he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. . . . Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.”



The Twelve Apostles, Ukraine, Odessa Region / hramikona/Shutterstock

Discuss

1. Our relationship with God should form our identity, and our identity should inform our mission in the world. Bishop Cozzens said that many people have this backward. How have you formed your identity or discerned your mission in the world? Does it flow from your relationship from God or from circumstance?
2. In our identity, we experience two truths at the same time: first, we are sinners in need of God and we must repent of our sin; second, we are infinitely loved. How do you experience these two truths and balance the tension they present? Do you find yourself leaning into one more than the other and if so, why?
3. What does abiding in Jesus mean for you in the weeks ahead? What do you need to change, or what commitments do you need to make in order to remain in Jesus?

Memory Verse

“And when Jesus was baptized, he went up immediately from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and alighting on him; and behold, a voice from heaven, saying, ‘This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.’”

—Matthew 3:16–17

Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father, just as you called your Son “beloved,” you also call me your own. Through the Holy Spirit, draw me closer to Jesus Christ, the true vine, so that I might abide in him and, in his holy light, see myself as you see me. We ask this through Jesus Christ. Amen.



The Baptism of Christ, Elisabetta Sirani / Shutterstock

Challenge

Choose one of the following passages to pray with during the week. If possible, schedule this prayer time before the Blessed Sacrament in your parish adoration chapel.

Option 1: Matthew 11:25–30

Imagine yourself in the scene with Jesus, listening as he prays to the Father. What is the tone of his voice? Does he pray slowly or rapidly? Do you watch him pray, or do you close your eyes to pray along? Then, complete these sentences:

- I thought . . .
- I felt . . .
- I desired . . .
- I sensed in my body . . .

Ask the Blessed Virgin Mary's help to receive the grace of God as she received it and then speak to Jesus about what you feel or desire.

Option 2: Matthew 3:13–17

Ask God who you are in the scene. Are you being baptized? Are you with Jesus? Imagine yourself going down into the water and rising to hear God the Father say, “This is my beloved son/daughter.” Complete these sentences:

- I thought . . .
- I felt . . .
- I desired . . .
- I sensed in my body . . .

Write down what struck you most. Then, speak to Jesus about what happened and what you desire.

