



a Kendall Hunt Company

Third Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year C, Catechist - RCLB Lectionary



To prepare for the session, read all the readings.

Nehemiah 8:2-4a, 5-6, 8-10

Psalm 19:7-9, 14

1 Corinthians 12:12-30 [or 12:12-14, 27]

Luke 1:1-4; 4:14-21

Spend a few minutes reflecting on what these readings mean for you today. Was there a particular reading which appealed to you? Was there a word or image that engaged you?

Read the Word in Liturgy and Catholic Doctrine sections. These give you background on what you will be doing this session. Read over the session outline and make it your own. Check to see what materials you will need for the session.

The Word In Liturgy

Following the return of the Jewish people to Jerusalem after their exile in Babylon, the task of rebuilding the nation was an imposing one: Not only were the temple and the holy city in ruins, but the religious fabric of society and the people's fidelity to the Mosaic Covenant were also in considerable disarray. Today's first reading comes from that era of rebuilding and reflects what was undoubtedly a pivotal event in the process of reconstituting the people's religious identity. In this text from Nehemiah we see what an important role the proclamation of the sacred scriptures played in renewing Israel's Covenant with Yahweh. The description is clearly meant to evoke a cultic setting (scholars point out that the description reflects later liturgical practice, both in the temple and the synagogue). As the Book of the Law is solemnly read, the people stand for the proclamation, hear an explanation of the reading, give their assent ("Amen, Amen") and then offer worship, recommitting themselves to the Covenant. The structural similarities of this description with our own order of worship in the Christian dispensation are remarkable.

There are two quite distinct parts to the Gospel reading: first, the literary introduction to Luke's two-volume history (Luke-Acts); and, second, the scene in chapter four that depicts the programmatic beginning of Jesus' ministry. Luke makes it clear that he is writing for a previously evangelized audience, as they seek to understand more deeply and to be reassured of the reliability of the events already proclaimed to them. In the second part of the reading we are offered a glimpse of how first-century Jews proclaimed the scriptures in the synagogue and of how Jesus himself interpreted the sacred text's meaning for his own

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ministry. Jesus' statement that the ancient prophecies of Isaiah were being fulfilled in his ministry is consistent with our own understanding of the word of scripture as living and active.

Catholic Doctrine

Sacred Scripture

God communicates to us by using words. Just as the hidden, eternal Word of God is made visible to us through the incarnation of Jesus, so too, the message of God is made intelligible to us through our human language (CCC 101).

Although there are many words, which together constitute scripture, Catholic reverence for Scripture begins in the belief that there is only one single Word communicated by God to us. This one Word is Jesus Christ (Hebrews 1:1-3). We humans need many syllables and words to express ourselves, but God's message to us is singular and personal, expressed in the person of Jesus.

Two important Catholic notions follow from this understanding of the personal revelation of God. First, since there is only one Word "spoken," then both Scripture and Tradition come from the same source. In other words, the divine self-revelation of the eternal Word is the source for both the Tradition of the Church and Scripture. Indeed, all things of this world were made through the Word (John 1:1-3 cited in CCC 291). Second, since the contents of the Bible are not merely human words, we do not treat the Bible as just any book, but as that which reveals to us the Word of God. We Catholics not only hold it in honor but we venerate Scripture as we venerate the Lord's Body.

We venerate Scripture because these sacred pages were composed through the agency of the Holy Spirit. Its authors were divinely inspired. The inspired books of the Bible teach the truth as God intends it to be revealed: firmly, faithfully and without error.

Catholics esteem every ministry of the Word, from the homily, to other forms of pastoral preaching, catechetics and instruction. All these ministerial activities seek to understand and apply the truth of God's revelation to our lives. They derive from the wellspring of the Word found in Scripture. Indeed, in examining the life of the laity, the Council asserted that even through individual meditation on the Word of God one can discern the will of the divine and act accordingly.