



a Kendall Hunt Company

## Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year C, Catechist - RCLB Lectionary



### Catechist Background and Preparation

To prepare for the session, read all the readings.

Jeremiah 1:4-5, 17-19

Psalms 71:1-4, 5-6, 15, 17

1 Corinthians 12:31-13:13 [or 13:4-13]

Luke 4:21-30

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



In this early period of the season called “Ordinary Time,” our first reading and Gospel deal with the beginning of the prophetic ministry of Jeremiah and of Jesus. The passage from the opening of the Book of Jeremiah is a classic example of how the Jewish scriptures describe God’s call of an individual to be a prophet. The divine initiative is highlighted (“Before I formed you . . . before you were born,” [v 5]); and the nature of the prophet’s ministry is anticipated, both its universal aspect (“ . . . a prophet to the nations,” [v 5]), as well as the resistance he will encounter (“ . . . they will fight against you,” [v 19]). The prophet is reassured that God will protect him from his enemies and enable him to carry out his mandate. Today’s reading does not include the prophet’s response, and this tends to focus our attention even more on God’s role in the encounter. Two important themes from the Jeremiah reading will reappear in today’s Gospel: the mission of the prophet to the nations, and the inevitability of resistance to his ministry.

Last week we read the first half of the story of Jesus in the synagogue at Nazareth. Today, in the second half of that story, the focus is on the angry reaction of Jesus’ audience to his claim that in his ministry he is fulfilling the messianic prophecy of Isaiah. In the face of their resistance and rejection, Jesus points to the stories of Elijah and Elisha who also brought God’s saving message to the Gentiles. Commentators point out that in this passage Luke is



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anticipating a fundamental theme of his Gospel and a basic truth about the prophetic ministry (both for Jesus and for the early Church). In reaching out to those most desperately in need of salvation (the Gentiles), Jesus would encounter resistance from his fellow Jews, but he would persevere and would continue steadfastly "on his way" (v 30). Luke intends for this example of Jesus to be followed by Jesus' disciples as well. Preaching to the outcast and steadfast perseverance in the face of opposition is fundamental to the Christian's baptismal call as a prophet.

## **Catholic Doctrine**

### **Our Identity as Prophets**

A prophet is one who speaks the word of God. Prophets played a remarkable role in Israel's history. In times when Israel's faith was compromised or undermined, it erupted with new force through the word of the prophets. The prophet saw life from the perspective of God and preached accordingly. In that sense the prophet could be said to "speak for" or on the behalf of God. Old Testament prophets frequently "enacted" their prophecies and warned the people of the consequences of their activities. They also formed the people in the hope of God's salvation and the promise of redemption. Some examples of Old Testament prophets are: Moses, Elijah, Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, and Jeremiah.

Although it does not describe his entire identity, Jesus functions as a prophet. In Old Testament times, those who were called and set apart for a special lifelong task by God (priests, kings, and some prophets) were anointed. The term *Christ*, from the Greek translation of the Hebrew word "messiah," which means "anointed," indicates the prophetic mission of Jesus in that some prophets were anointed for their task. Because Jesus fulfills God's message of love and concern for the world he was anointed for his mission as priest, prophet and king.

Catholics believe that our baptismal identity in Christ as prophets empowers us to spread the good news, as Jesus commanded (Matthew 28:18-20). Indeed, the Council is emphatic, proclaiming that the Church is "*driven* by the Holy Spirit to do her part for the full realization of the plan of God, who has constituted Christ as the source of salvation for the whole world."

Thus those who are baptized are not prophets in the sense of Old Testament prophets. That age ended with John the Baptist. A new age is inaugurated in Christ who commands us to be prophets of the gospel, going to the ends of the earth with this g