



a Kendall Hunt Company

## Second Sunday of Lent, Year C, Catechist - RCLB Lectionary



### Catechist Background and Preparation

To prepare for the session, read all the readings.

Genesis 15:5-12, 17-18

Psalms 27:1, 7-8, 8-9, 13-14

Philippians 3:17-4:1 [or 3:20-4:1]

Luke 9:28-36

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

The reading from Genesis describes in cultic terms a time of mystical prayer in which God forges a covenant with Abraham, promising him both land and progeny. These promises seemed impossible in human terms, yet Abraham puts his faith in the Lord nonetheless. In a graphic description of an ancient ritual used to seal a sacred covenant, Abraham falls into a kind of trance and sees the Lord's presence symbolized by the blazing torch passing between the split carcasses. The vision represents a departure from the usual custom of the time, in which both parties to a covenant stood between the sacrificial offerings to swear their oaths. Here, God alone does so, indicating the unconditional nature of the Lord's decision to enter into relationship with (and fulfill the promises to) Abraham and his descendants.

Luke's version of the transfiguration differs from the other synoptic accounts in minor ways that reflect his particular understanding of Jesus and his mission. The setting is a special time of prayer, always a sign in Luke that something important is about to take place. In the larger context of the Gospel, this scene occurs just after Peter's confession of faith and between the two predictions of the Passion. Jesus is portrayed speaking with Moses (representing the Law) and Elijah (the Prophets) about his "passage" (the Greek word is "exodus"), by which Luke understands the suffering, death and resurrection Jesus was about to undergo in Jerusalem. The message of the voice from heaven is clearly directed to the early Christian community, affirming that Jesus is God's Son, the Chosen One, and insisting that they "listen to him," in similar times of prayer. Coming to know Jesus in this way involves recognition of his

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messianic, divine identity, as well as a willingness to follow him along the path of suffering to glory.

# **Catholic Doctrine**

## **Contemplative Prayer**

Every Ash Wednesday the Church proclaims the same gospel pericope (Matthew 6, 1-6, 16-18) detailing Jesus' teaching on prayer, fasting and almsgiving. These three religious activities help set the tone for the observance of the Lenten season as a preparation for or remembrance of baptism. The first reading and the gospel for this Sunday of the season portray two symbolic occurrences of prayer, the trance or vision of Abraham and the mountaintop transfiguration of Jesus as he is praying.

There are three basic types of prayer: spoken, meditative and contemplative. Spoken prayer uses words that are recited or sung. Examples are the Lord's Prayer, the Hail Mary, litanies, liturgical texts and so on. Meditative prayer may begin with spoken prayer but then employs an imaginative reflective process that focuses the wandering mind in order to draw the one praying into a more affective mode. An example is guided meditation. Contemplative prayer may begin with meditation, but then it moves further away from the self and into a more complete union with God. There is, eventually, a deep wordlessness, an inner silence, a "letting go." (*Encyclopedia of Catholicism*, "Prayer," pp. 1037-1041.)

While this type of prayer can be worked toward, it is ultimately a gift. It is less a method and more something into which one is drawn. It is not so much an activity as a stillness and a way of being. Contemplative prayer arises from a longing for God as the object of one's love and is almost always therefore described as a union with God.