



a Kendall Hunt Company

## Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year C, catechist - RCLB Lectionary



### Catechist Background and Preparation

To prepare for the session read all the readings.

Deuteronomy 30:10-14

Psalms 69:14, 17, 30-31, 33-34, 36, 37

Colossians 1:15-20

Luke 10:25-37

Spend a few minutes reflecting on what these readings mean for you today. Was there a particular reading that 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 rhetorical format of the Book of Deuteronomy is that of a farewell address uttered by Moses at the end of his life, prior to the Israelites entering into the Promised Land. Scholars recognize in the book the compilation of many ancient materials, as well as the original handiwork of the Deuteronomy author(s). This passage seems to fit a liturgical context, perhaps a ceremony of Covenant renewal. Most scholars would ascribe it to the time of the exile, meant to bolster the faith and commitment of the people as they look forward to a “return to the Lord”—not only by a renewed spiritual commitment to the Covenant, but also in the anticipated physical return to Jerusalem. The author’s words are meant to reassure the Jewish people that God has not abandoned them: The Lord’s word is not “too mysterious and remote;” rather, it is “very near to you.” Neither is observance of the demands of the Covenant an impossibly difficult task: Yahweh’s Law is “already in your mouths and in your hearts.” We Christians have sometimes been guilty of an indiscriminate portrayal of the Jews’ attitude to the Law as legalistic. Jesus certainly charged some of his contemporaries with that fault. But we see in this passage how the vision of the Deuteronomy school was that of a deeply internalized embrace of God’s Law out of a sense of love, not mere compliance from a sense of duty.

Jesus’ commandment to love God and neighbor appears in Luke’s Gospel as an answer given by a questioning lawyer who wished to know the way to eternal life. In Mark and Matthew it is Jesus himself who answers a question by giving the commandment. Scholars recognize the

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origin of the two commandments in texts from Deuteronomy and Leviticus, but still debate whether their linkage is original to Jesus. Regardless of that issue, it is clear that the two-fold command of love is at the core of Jesus' teaching. Luke's use of Jesus' journey to Jerusalem as the setting for this and other instructions on the meaning of discipleship serves to underline the importance of this teaching. In the parable of the Good Samaritan, Jesus invites his hearers to take love of neighbor to an entirely new level by a surprising suggestion as to how inclusive must be our sense of who qualifies as our "neighbor."

## **Catholic Doctrine**

### **Love of Neighbor**

Scripture records that Jesus preached to the crowds saying that he did not come to abolish the Law but to fulfill it. Catholic teaching on Jesus' relationship to the Jewish religious Law is that the Son of God came and fulfills it (Matthew 5:17). He shows the power of the Spirit at work in the letter of the Law.

While Jesus, as a teacher and interpreter of the Law, is not necessarily unique in summing up all the commandments into one great commandment, nevertheless, the "great commandment" which Jesus preaches is powerful in the way in which it combines two injunctions, that is, the command to love God with one's whole self and love one's neighbor as oneself. The Decalogue, the Ten Commandments, must be interpreted in the light of this single commandment. Jesus proclaimed that all of the Law and the prophets as well hang on this two-fold, yet single command.

*The Catechism of the Catholic Church* divides its treatment of the Ten Commandments into two chapters. The first chapter focuses on the first three commandments (love God with your whole self). The second chapter focuses on commandments four through ten (love your neighbor as yourself). In this division of the Decalogue, a sense of the genius of Jesus' preaching on the great commandment is vividly perceived.

Catholic tradition holds out to us the works of mercy, those charitable acts by which we help our neighbor in spiritual and bodily necessity. The spiritual works of mercy are: admonishing the sinner, instructing the ignorant, counseling the doubtful, comforting the sorrowful, bearing wrongs patiently, forgiving all injuries and praying for the living and dead. The corporal (or bodily) works of mercy are: feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, clothing the naked, visiting the imprisoned, sheltering the homeless, visiting the sick and burying the dead. Of all these works of mercy, giving alms to the poor is one of the chief witnesses to fraternal love and at the same time a work of justice pleasing to God.

Our Catholic understanding is that these spiritual and corporal works of mercy are prime



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actions that help us realize the love of neighbor which Jesus enjoined upon his followers. —  
These actions, when rendered to another believer, help build up the body of Christ, and when  
show to non-believers help to evangelize them.

