



a Kendall Hunt Company

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



### Catechist's Background and Preparation

To prepare for the session read all the readings.

Genesis 18:20-32

Psalm 138:1-2, 2-3, 6-7, 7-8

Colossians 2:12-14

Luke 11:1-13

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

Today's reading from Genesis picks up where last week's left off. After the departure of the mysterious strangers from his tent, Abraham finds himself walking with the Lord, bargaining over the fate of Sodom and Gomorrah. The scene should strike a chord with the attentive reader: Adam had been destined to walk in the garden with God, but lost that privilege by his sin. Now Abraham, by virtue of God's promise, is accorded the great gift lost by Adam. The two walk together in intimate exchange, not as equals, but surely in respectful mutuality. Abraham seeks to know the Lord better, to understand his mind and will. The appearance may suggest the haggling at an oriental bazaar, but at a deeper level Abraham is coming to a better knowledge of the Lord with whom he is walking. He is not necessarily trying to change God's mind, just to understand whether God's justice would allow the just to perish together with the wicked. As an image of what our prayer should be like, the passage is a gold mine of insights. In Psalm 138 we find a song of praise and thanksgiving for God's deliverance (perhaps from the exile). Its choice is surely guided by the first reading's portrayal of a God willing to relent in punishment and spare the wicked if only a handful can be found who are faithful.

It was the custom in Jesus' day that a rabbi give to his followers a distinctive way of praying, by which their unique identity could be identified and fostered. Luke describes Jesus as being at prayer when his disciples ask for "their" special prayer. Scholars have long commented on

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the importance of the way that Jesus addresses God as “Abba,” a word equivalent to our “daddy.” In that intimate address to Yahweh, so unusual among Jesus’ contemporaries, we see the heart of the filial consciousness of Jesus. Luke has five petitions that follow, each one well documented elsewhere in the Gospel as characteristic of Jesus’ way of acting. Most likely, each of the petitions in its original form was highly eschatological; Luke has made them more relevant to the daily life of the Christian. Luke then adds three parables that illustrate Jesus’ teaching on the prayer of petition. Our reading, however, covers only the first two.

# **Catholic Doctrine**

## **The Lord’s Prayer: Summary of the Gospel**

The fundamental importance that the Catholic Church places on the prayer Jesus taught his disciples is reflected in *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*. A major portion of the section on Christian Prayer is dedicated to illuminating the text of the Lord’s Prayer. One-hundred and six paragraphs are given over to an explanation of this prayer (CCC 2759-2865).

Indeed, we believe that all of the scriptures, whether from the Law, the Prophets or the Psalms, are fulfilled in Christ. When one refers to the “good news” of God, the point of reference is the person of Jesus Christ. Christ is the eternal Word of God who in his person, his ministry and his teaching brings to the world the gospel of Life. The initial proclamation of the gospel is recorded for us by St. Matthew in the Sermon on the Mount, and the text of Jesus’ prayer to the Father is found in the center of this teaching. (Note: While this Sunday’s gospel passage comes from Luke’s gospel, which also has a version of the Lord’s Prayer, the Church, in its liturgical tradition makes use of the seven petitions preserved in Matthew’s text.)

In what way is this prayer text a summary of the good news? Why do we believe that it is unique and fundamental?

It comes from the mouth of Jesus himself, he who is the eternal Word of God among us. As the incarnate Word, he understands in his human heart the needs of our own hearts and gives us the means to express our innermost longings through this text. In one sense, we have many needs, many prayers that we address to God. But God has only One prayer (if you will) for us, Jesus Christ. He is the very model of Christian prayer. Our own life of prayer is based in his example.



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The text of the Our Father is not merely words strung together, such that when we pray them we recite them automatically. We have also been given, along with these words and the teachings of Jesus, the Holy Spirit. In that Spirit we are adopted as sons and daughter of the Most High and therefore we can correctly address God as “Abba,” or Father.

