



a Kendall Hunt Company

Thirty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year C, Catechist - RCLB Lectionary



Catechist Background and Preparation

To prepare for this session read all the readings.

Malachi 3:19-20a

Psalm 98:5-6, 7-8, 9

2 Thessalonians 3:7-12

Luke 21:5-19

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



As we near the end of the liturgical year, the readings call to mind the end times in various ways. Malachi, an anonymous prophet (mal'akki simply means "one who is sent") writing in the fifth century before Christ, encountered a great deal of moral laxity among the people during the tumultuous period after the return from the exile. In this passage he speaks of a coming "day of the Lord," which will bring judgment upon them, punishing the guilty and rewarding the just. The idea of the "day of the Lord" was, at the time this book was written, already a very old one. It had been used by the prophet Amos and others in the eighth century to arouse the moral consciences of those who enjoyed privilege at the expense of the poor. Here the symbol of the sun suggests that evildoers will be burnt and the righteous healed on the day when the Lord comes.

Today's Gospel passage is taken from a longer apocalyptic passage (Luke 21:5-30) that began with admiration for the physical splendor of the temple. Jesus' terrifying prediction of the destruction of the temple is accompanied by more involved predictions of the end times, including those in today's reading. Events of cosmic or national significance are followed by descriptions of the persecutions that the Christian community will face, and the disasters that will befall individuals because of their faith. Believers will be upheld and triumph over their persecutors not by their own power, but through the words and wisdom of Jesus. Though death is predicted for some, even death will not be the end of life for them ("not a hair of



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your head will be harmed"). The passage ends with a counsel of patient endurance. In spite of the horrors predicted, the picture of the Christians that emerges is not that of helpless individuals swept away on the tide of events. Rather, believers have reason to trust and stand firm in their faith. In the face of overwhelming circumstances, Jesus will be present to them.

The focus of today's catechesis may therefore be on justice—justice which comes from God, is to be mirrored in human lives and communities and the whole created world, and will bring final vindication to those who trust in God.

Catholic Doctrine

Justice

We owe God and we owe one another. How we dispose of that which we owe God is sometimes described as the virtue of religion (CCC 1807). How we dispose of what is owed to our neighbor causes us to respect the rights of all and to work toward harmonious relations promoting equity and the common good.

The word "justice" is derived from a Latin root *ius*, which means "right." Pursuing justice means pursuing other's rights and the duties flowing from those rights. For example, the duty which obligates one to respect another's body flows from the other's right to the fullness of life. Pope John XXIII outlined basic human rights in *Pacem in Terris* (11 April 1963, n. 11-45) as the right to life and a worthwhile manner of living, the right which respects one's person regardless of sex, ethnic background, religion or nationality, the right to freely pursue and express the truth, the right to a basic education, the right to worship, the right to gainful work, decent working conditions and proper compensation, the right to meet and associate, and the right to emigrate (Richard P. McBrien, *Catholicism*, New Edition, Harper San Francisco, p. 944).

Justice, as envisioned here, is not meted out by our courtrooms and in civil proceedings. It is a quality of faithful persons who love God and therefore love their neighbor. It is not the retribution of the Old Testament scripture, taking an eye for an eye, but the "words and the wisdom" promised by Jesus to those who stand firmly and equitably in the midst of trying times (this Sunday's Gospel passage).

Justice would not be needed if we were in heaven, or if the kingdom were totally established on earth and we experienced the God who is "all in all." In some sense, justice is necessary



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because it is the force or power regulating relations between those who are separate from one another, stranger to each other. In other words, if perfect love characterized our relationships and the workings of this world, there would be no need of justice.

This is the virtue that helps to enhance and refine the full development of the individual who lives in society, that is, among others. In the oft-quoted words of Pope Paul VI: "If you want peace, work for justice."

