



a Kendall Hunt Company

First Sunday of Lent, Year A, Catechist - RCLB Lectionary



Catechist Background and Preparation

To prepare for this session read all the readings.

Genesis 2:7-9, 3:1-7

Psalms 51:3-4, 5-6, 12-13, 14, 17

Romans 5:12-19 or 5:12, 17-19

Matthew 4:1-11

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.

Word in Liturgy



The season of Lent begins with readings that unfold the drama of primordial sin, grace, and divine election. Today's first reading from the second chapter of Genesis, detailing the temptation by the serpent of the first man and woman in the Garden of Eden, is the story which is known classically as "the Fall." The first human being created is brought to life by God's breath, showing the absolute dependence of the creature on the Creator. Without God's breath, the first human is no more than inert matter. The setting of the garden, coming from the hand of God, is one of beauty and nourishment for the human creature. Yet, through the cunning of the serpent, the woman and man are led to disobey God's command and eat the forbidden fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The result of their transgression is an immediate realization of shame. Its long-range consequence is alienation from God.

Against this backdrop, then, the Gospel story illuminates how God has entered our history of sin and changed it. Matthew's account of the temptations of Jesus in the desert displays his characteristic interest in Jesus as the Son of God. Jesus epitomizes God's revelation through the chosen people of the Old Testament and completes it in his own person. Each of the temptations which Jesus undergoes in the desert is parallel to a temptation suffered by the chosen people during the wandering in the wilderness after the Exodus. Although they are several—hunger, testing God, idolatry—all may be seen as manifestations of the sin



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described in the first reading, for they all describe ways that the Messiah might be tempted—to exalt himself rather than to walk the path of obedience to God.

Catholic Doctrine

Divine Election

Our dignity as human beings rests in the truth that we are called to communion with God. The desire within us that draws us out of ourselves into communion with God is “built in,” as it were, by the Creator. We cannot live an authentic human life without freely acknowledging the love God has for us and then entrusting ourselves to that love. The Second Vatican Council described this loving relationship as an “intimate and vital bond of [humanity] to God,” initiated and sustained by the divine. However, this relationship is indeed forgotten or rejected by people, through an attitude of sin that moves one to hide from God out of shame and fear and thus flee from the divine call.

God, however, refuses to give up on us. In spite of human sinfulness, God continued to reveal divine love by freely choosing a people, Israel, to be a sign of the relationship that God seeks with all. This revelation was not accompanied by overwhelming displays of power, but by paradox: a weak, small, and insignificant nation bears within its life the revelation of the Most High. This mystery is termed “divine election.” The Church, called “a chosen people,” participates in the mystery of divine election in a new way because of Christ. In Christ, those who “were no people . . . now . . . are ‘God’s people’” (1 Peter 2:10).

Thus, Christians believe that the old covenant is fulfilled in Christ and that what had been prefigured in the people of Israel is now made new and perfect by God’s Chosen One. The temptations in the desert, symbolic of the challenges faced by Israel during the formative period of wandering in the wilderness after the Exodus, are faced victoriously by Jesus. His victory is a victory of humility over pride, trust over presumption, and fidelity over faithlessness. Jesus, the poor, humble, and suffering servant of God, walks along the path of obedience to the divine will and plan for salvation. Chosen to redeem humanity from sin, Christ surrenders himself to the paradox of the cross. In that obedience and surrender, the Lord shows us the right response to divine election (CCC 606, 615).

We, the Church, caught up in the mystery of divine election, affirm the experience of a persistent God who continues to love the world in spite of sin and who chooses us in Christ. God’s election sends us forth into the world, as Christ was sent, to be a living sign of hope and love.