



a Kendall Hunt Company

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



Catechist Background and Preparation

To prepare for this session read all the readings.

Ezekiel 37:12-14

Psalms 130:1-2, 3-4, 5-6, 7-8

Romans 8:8-11

John 11:1-45 [or (short form) 11:3-7, 17, 20-27, 33-45]

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

Ezekiel writes during the time of the Babylonian captivity, when his countrymen were on the brink of despair. They had lost the Promised Land, seen the destruction of the temple, and found themselves an enslaved people in a foreign land. In the face of such grim prospects, Ezekiel's famous prophecy of dry bones coming to life is meant to restore hope to the dispirited Israelites. In this section of the prophecy, the imagery shifts to dead bodies rising from the grave, and Yahweh speaks words of promise ("I will put my spirit in you that you may live") designed to reassure and comfort the people that God has not abandoned them. Ezekiel is a master of evocative images, and it is clear that the poetry of this passage is meant to be interpreted symbolically in terms of the nation's ultimate fate. Not surprisingly, Christian tradition has expanded the application of this imagery to embrace the paschal mystery of Jesus, the promise of personal resurrection to every Christian, and even the moral renewal of one who has sinned.

The miracle of Jesus in today's gospel may be regarded as a kind of enactment of the theological vision of Paul contained in the second reading. In the raising of Lazarus from death to life, Jesus proves the truth of what he says in verses 25-26: "I am the resurrection and the life: whoever believes in me, though he should die, will come to life; and whoever is alive and believes in me will never die." This miracle is the seventh and greatest of the "signs" that Jesus works in John's gospel. Scripture scholars have long noted the deep sacramentalism underlying the Johannine theology of Jesus' "signs." The narrative we read



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today is most appropriately interpreted in the context of the Church's celebration of the sacraments as events that insert us into the dynamism of Christ's dying and rising, his paschal mystery.

Catholic Doctrine

The Paschal Mystery in the Sacraments

The Paschal Mystery is a term that encompasses the saving event of Jesus' suffering, death, entombment, resurrection, ascension, and sending of the Spirit. Jesus' paschal mystery is the primordial saving event experienced by Christians which opens for us the redemption of God in Christ.

The life of Jesus which led to the saving events of the paschal mystery, his mission and ministry, anticipated the power unleashed by and experienced in the redemption accomplished in his suffering, death, resurrection, ascension and sending of the Spirit. Thus, the entire life of the Lord can be understood as the foundation of what would later be experienced in the sacraments, which communicate his saving grace to believers today. What was made flesh in the life and saving event of Jesus is passed over to the Church in the celebration of the mysteries, the sacraments (CCC 1115).

The passage of time itself is able to raise our minds, our thoughts, and ourselves to the holy. The Second Vatican Council teaches that the Lord's Day, Sunday, is to be observed as a holy memorial, a moment in the midst of the passage of days that commemorates the resurrection of the Christ (the apex of the paschal mystery). In the course of the year, Easter is the prime moment when the paschal mystery is celebrated. But it is not only on Sunday and Easter that the Paschal Mystery is made real in the life of believers who celebrate the liturgy—it is also in the very unfolding of the seasons as one progresses through the entire liturgical year that the saving event of Jesus is realized.