



a Kendall Hunt Company

Second Sunday of Easter, Year A, Catechist - RCLB Lectionary



Catechist Background and Preparation

To prepare for this session read all the readings.

Acts 2:42-47

Psalm 118:2-4, 13-15, 22-24

1 Peter 1:3-9

John 20:19-31

Spend a few minutes reflecting on what these readings mean for you today. Is there a particular reading that appeals to you? Is there a word or image that engages 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.

The Word in Liturgy



Following an ancient tradition, the Church regards the eight days from the Paschal feast to the second Sunday of Easter as a single unit of joyful celebration (an octave). Today the Church sings again Psalm 118, the psalm for Easter day, which proclaims: "This is the day the Lord has made. . . ." The preface for Easter day is prayed again today as well: "We praise you with greater joy than ever on this Easter day . . ." even though that day is already a week behind us. All the prayers of the liturgy and the tone of the celebration are unmistakably full of paschal, baptismal joy. The readings are to be understood in this spirit.

Throughout the Easter season, the first reading of the liturgy is taken from the Acts of the Apostles in order to illuminate the mystery of the church as it developed from its beginnings at Pentecost. Today's passage is the classic description of the Spirit-filled life of the disciples, centering on four features of the early church: the apostles' instruction, the common life, the breaking of bread, and the prayers. The community of goods practiced by these early Christians continues the Lucan emphasis on the use of possessions to indicate the reign of God, and is accompanied by a warm account of sharing table fellowship and prayer in each other's homes. And, finally, the evangelical dimension of the life of the early Christians (leading to the presence of increasing numbers of new members) is presented as a divinely generated abundance, not as the result of activism or a particular program for spreading the faith.



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The gospel for today is constant in all three years of the Lectionary cycle. It is a story of mission, forgiveness, and faith. The Risen Lord appears to his followers on the evening of the resurrection, when they are gathered behind locked doors, afraid. He speaks a greeting of "peace" and at once commissions them to continue his own saving work: "As the Father has sent me, so I send you." As God breathed on the waters at creation, so Jesus now breathes on the disciples in this scene and gives them the Spirit, with an immediate creative effect. In the giving of the Spirit, Jesus imparts a particular power for reconciliation: "If you forgive sins they are forgiven; if you hold them bound they are held bound." Just as the earthly Jesus exercised a power to forgive sins, now his followers are given that power in the Spirit. The story concludes with the apostle Thomas, who, confronted by the resurrected Jesus, comes to a profound articulation of faith. He calls Jesus "My Lord and my God." At the end of the passage, the words of Jesus seem to speak directly to its hearers. We have not seen as Thomas did, but are called upon to believe.

Catholic Doctrine

Faith

Faith invites us into a relationship of love, for "God is love" (1 John 4:8 referred to in CCC 221). The hidden, triune God is fully revealed in Jesus Christ, who embodies divine love and who communicates that love to us by his life and mission and by his suffering, death, and resurrection. That divine love is freely given, and our free response is how Catholic teaching describes "faith" (CCC 142 and 166). The gift of faith is therefore a relationship wherein we trust the truth of that which has been revealed in Jesus Christ, handed down by those first witnesses, and afterwards, from generation to generation in the church.

Old Testament scriptures speak of faith in terms of one's personal obedience to the Word of God. There are several Hebrew words for faith, all of which refer to something "solid" or "trustworthy," to which we pledge our loyalty. Our word "amen" comes from a Hebrew word for faith (aman). From this perspective, faith is understood as "I believe you," a relationship of trust.

New Testament scriptures continue this understanding of faith and add to it. The Greek verb *pisteuein* means not only "to trust" or "to show confidence in" but also "to accept as true."

It is through the community that the individual first receives the gift of faith from God. Faith comes through "hearing" and depends on witnesses who hand it on, who "speak it."

By the action of the Holy Spirit tongues are loosened to tell the Good News and ears are
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opened to hear what is told (CCC 153).

A heritage of faith is entrusted to the whole church (CCC 84). The Catholic genius understands this inheritance to be contained in both Scripture and Tradition. Indeed, the development of the New Testament shows the process of the living Tradition at work (CCC 83). The function of authoritative church teaching is to explain and guard this “deposit of faith” (1 Tim. 6:20).

Our relationship to God in faith can be shaken. We experience evil, suffering, and injustice in this world, and we question God, we doubt, and we struggle in our belief (CCC 164). In times of doubt and struggle, individuals can turn to the community of faith for support.

