



a Kendall Hunt Company

Twenty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B, Catechists - RCLB Lectionary



Catechist Background and Preparation

To prepare for the session, read all the readings:

Isaiah 35:4-7a

Psalms 146:7, 8-9, 9-10

James 2:1-5

Mark 7:31-37

Spend a few minutes reflecting on what these readings mean for you today. Was there a particular reading which 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 delightful passage from Isaiah expresses confidence in God's efforts to bring the people back from exile. As in the exodus, God leads them, and all kinds of evil fall away. Not only is moral evil overcome, but physical suffering is alleviated, and burned, desolate land is regenerated by the presence of God. Following a chapter dedicated to the judgment of God, this Isaian passage shows the extreme of divine graciousness. It is appropriate for today's liturgy because it is the one place in the Old Testament where the speech defect named in today's gospel is mentioned. It denotes harsh or impeded speech, rather than muteness. Mark's use of this word connects the healing Jesus brings with the divine salvation promised in the Isaiah reading.

The episode related in today's gospel takes place in Gentile territory. The reasons for Jesus' route are not altogether clear, but may suggest the universal scope of his preaching. The healing story itself, unique to Mark, is told in a typical structure: (1) illness described, (2) action of Jesus, (3) complete cure. It is nonetheless replete with mysterious details. Jesus takes the man aside to perform this healing, and afterwards tells him to keep it secret. The action of Jesus is highly physical: he sticks his fingers into the man's ears, spits on his tongue, and emits a groan. Mark retains the Aramaic word *ephphetha* in a narrative that is otherwise written in Greek.

Despite its mysterious elements, the healing is not magic but a miracle pointing to the reign of God breaking upon humankind. The man could not have been born deaf, for he knows language and speaks immediately upon being healed. He was probably stricken with an illness that deprived him of hearing and impeded his speech. Some scholars regard Jesus' insistence upon secrecy as a practical way to avoid being taken simply as a traveling wonder-

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worker. Others see in Mark's "messianic secret" the suggestion that many of Jesus' works—— could only be understood after the resurrection. Indeed, when news of the miracle spreads—as it does inevitably—its announcement is like a kerygmatic proclamation, similar to post-resurrection preaching.

Catholic Doctrine

Catholic Social Teaching

There are six broad themes woven throughout Catholic social teaching. (1) God entrusts Earth to us. It does not belong to us, but to God, and we are called to be good stewards of the planet and all its resources. These resources are meant for the common good of the whole human race. (2) The right to private property does not abrogate God's original gift of Earth to the whole of humanity. By work or by inheritance private property is acquired; however, the universal distribution of goods remains primordial. (3) Political authority has a duty to regulate legitimate production of goods and services for the benefit of the common good. (4) Economically, respect for human dignity requires the practice of the virtues of temperance and justice and the practice of solidarity. Temperance moderates our attachments to this world's goods. Justice preserves our neighbor's rights and renders to them what is their due. The practice of solidarity regulates one's behavior in concert with others to benefit those less fortunate. (5) As good stewards, we must respect the integrity of God's creation. All animals, plants, and mineral resources must be used with respect for that which God has created. (6) As a Church, we are concerned with the temporal aspects of the common good precisely because these aspects are ordered to God, our ultimate end. Thus, the Church makes moral judgments regarding economic and social matters.

The active pursuit of just relations socially and economically is imperative for all members of the Catholic community. Furthermore, our pursuit of justice must be informed ultimately by a love that moves us to a preferential option for the poor. This preferential option, inspired by Jesus' teaching and his own example of poverty, is compatible with Catholic teaching that condemns the immoderate love of riches and their selfish use.