



a Kendall Hunt Company

Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A, Catechist - RCLB Lectionary



Catechist Background and Preparation

To prepare for this session, read all the readings.

Isaiah 55:10-11

Psalms 65:10, 11, 12-13, 14

Romans 8:18-23

Matthew 13:1-23 [or (short form) 13:1-9]

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 following **Word in Liturgy** and **Catholic Doctrine** sections. 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

The author of Deutero-Isaiah (chapters 40-55) prophesied during the time of the Babylonian Exile, reassuring the people that God had not abandoned them and would be true to his Covenant promise to protect and care for them. In this final chapter of the prophet's work, written in poetic or hymnal style, the promise of consolation is couched in messianic and eschatological images of a banquet and of Yahweh's ultimate triumph over the nations. In verse 6, the prophet tells his audience to "seek the Lord," and then in verses 8, 9, 10, and 12, he offers a series of reasons ("for ... for ... for ...") why this should be done. Today's reading is the third reason in the series and recalls the efficacious nature of God's Word. Just as God spoke an efficacious word in the beginning (Genesis 1) to accomplish the work of creation, so should Israel trust in the continuing power of God's Word to deliver them from exile. The outcome of the prophet's promise of consolation is as inexorable as the growth that occurs after a rainfall. In the context of the Lectionary's use of Jesus' parables over the next three weeks, this assurance of the power of the Lord's words takes on special significance.

For three weeks, beginning today, we read from chapter 13 of Matthew, eventually ending at verse 52, which is the conclusion to the third "book" in the plan of his gospel. This entire unit is sometimes called the "Discourse in Parables" and offers a wonderful opportunity to deepen our appreciation for how God's Word has been spoken in the human words of both Jesus and of the Church (in the person of the early Christian community and Matthew its faithful scribe).



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The original point of today's parable on the lips of Jesus had to do with his proclamation of the reign of God and the miraculous "yield" that would be part of its in-breaking. Undoubtedly, Jesus also intended by his mention of the rocky ground and the thorns to challenge his hearers to commit themselves to God's reign so that they might be part of its messianic abundance.

Catholic Doctrine ***Sacred Scripture***

We Catholics believe that God is the author of sacred scripture. The texts of both the Old and New Testaments, while composed and set down by humans, were written under the inspiration of God. Therefore, that truth which God endeavors to communicate to us, we hold, is faithfully transmitted in the books of scripture (CCC 106-07). However, we believe we are espoused to the active Word of God, which is not a written word, but incarnated and alive. The Old and New Testaments will contain only dry, insignificant, and dead letters unless the living Word, Jesus Christ, illuminates our minds and hearts to understand what truth is contained therein (CCC 108).

The Church teaches that to faithfully interpret scripture one must read it holistically and from within the tradition. What does this mean? First, in the interpretation of scripture one must be very attentive to its whole content and unity of purpose. The individual books of the Bible are different, yet there is a unity and wholeness to all of them together-given that they revolve around the center and heart of God's plan for us who is Jesus Christ (CCC 112). Second, scripture was written in the Church's heart rather than in documentary texts, and therefore it must be read and understood within the living tradition of the community of the faithful.

In this vein, it was the living teaching office of the Church which discerned the canon of the Old and New Testaments. The canon refers to the official listing of which writings or books belong to the Bible, the inspired Word of God (CCC 120). The two Testaments, Old and New, are united in presenting the plan of God, although as Christians we read the Old Testament in the light of Jesus-seeing in these scriptures a typology which prefigures what God has effected in Christ (CCC 128).

Catholics hold that sacred scripture is food for our souls, a font from which we might draw strength for nourishing our faith. Therefore, the Second Vatican Council urged that all members of the Church should have as wide an access as possible to sacred scripture (DV 22). Through homilies, pastoral preaching, catechetics, and every other form of instruction, the ministry of the Word is carried out in the Catholic Church (CCC 132).