



a Kendall Hunt Company

## Sixteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A, Catechist - RCLB Lectionary



### Catechist Background and Preparation

To prepare for this session, read all the readings.

Wisdom 12:13, 16-19

Psalm 86:5-6, 9-10, 15-16

Romans 8:26-27

Matthew 13:24-43 [or (short form) 13:24-30]

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?

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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 Book of Wisdom ascribes authorship to Solomon, but in actuality it was written (probably in Greek) in the first century before the birth of Jesus, most likely in Alexandria, Egypt. The book's audience, then, was the Jewish community of the diaspora, educated in Hellenistic thought, and always in danger of being won over by the erudition of pagan philosophers. The author writes to strengthen the faith of his fellow Jews, taking up many of the perennial questions of the philosophers (such as the problem of evil) from the perspective of Jewish faith as well as human reason.

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The section from which today's reading is taken (11:2–19:4) is part of a longer commentary—on the events of the Exodus. Here, the author digresses to consider God's treatment of sinners. Why are sinners allowed to prosper, while God's faithful ones seem to suffer? The answer that the author gives comes from a deep meditation on the Jewish scriptures which reveal a God of mercy and compassion, "slow to anger, abounding in kindness" (Psalm 86:15). God permits the sinner to survive with an eye to the possibility of repentance. Despite the divine power ("you are master of might") that could simply crush all evil, Yahweh has been shown to be a God of "much lenience" (Psalm 86:18).

Today's gospel reading continues where last week's left off and is still part of the larger unit in Matthew 13 known as the "Discourse in Parables" in which the evangelist has collected a series of seven parables focused on the kingdom. The three parables that are part of today's reading all address the perplexing reality that Jesus (and the kingdom he announced) seemed to tolerate the presence of moral evil. This attitude seemed scandalous to some, both in Jesus' day and in the early community of Matthew. The answer given to this "problem of evil" both by Jesus and Matthew is that God wishes to allow time for repentance and further growth. The excruciatingly gradual progress and seemingly insignificant size of the kingdom is not remarkable and in fact mirrors the natural phenomena of wheat, mustard seeds, and leaven. But all three parables promise an eschatological resolution to the dilemma, both in the fantastic growth that lies ahead and in the judgment reserved for the Lord alone in the final days.

## **Catholic Doctrine**

### ***The Problem of Moral Evil***

What does it mean to categorize evil as moral? The Church is seeking by this terminology to distinguish between the evil we do and the physical evil that is not our personal responsibility, such as an earthquake that tragically kills innocent individuals. The particular set of scriptures the Church assigns to this Sunday emphasizes that there is a type of evil we choose to engage in, either by action or inaction, and at the end times all be judged accordingly. The idea of moral evil rests upon the foundation of free choice. The Church believes that human beings are accountable and therefore move toward their final destiny by their choice, through the exercise of their free will (CCC 311). Any recounting of history provides ample proof that men and women have sinned against God and neighbor.



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While acknowledging the existence of moral evil from a very early point in Christian history, our greatest theologians have asserted that God is neither directly nor indirectly responsible for the cause of moral evil in the world. The responsibility for choosing other than the good does not belong to God, but to human beings.

God is neither directly nor indirectly the author or cause of evil; God is always “on our side,” championing the good in us, and working for our well-being. The provident goodness of God works for good in everything, including those events and actions when we choose to do wrong. The worst wrong that humanity ever could possibly engage in, that is, the rejection, torture, and execution of God’s only Son, innocent and without sin, brought about the most amazing of all goods: the glory of the anointed, the Christ, and humanity’s redemption (CCC 312). God came among us in order to free us from that bondage into which we had sunk.

In any discussion of evil, whether physical or moral evil, the question must be asked: why does evil exist at all? Why would not a good God simply create a world without the possibility of evil? The Church points out that, in the end, the resolution of this question is achieved only by the totality of faith. There is no quick or simple answer.

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