



a Kendall Hunt Company

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



Catechist Background and Preparation

To prepare for the session, read all the readings.

Isaiah 50:5-9a

Psalm 116:1-2, 3-4, 5-6, 8-9

James 2:14-18

Mark 8:27-35

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

The passage in this day's gospel is the turning point in Mark, as it marks the beginning of Jesus' journey toward Jerusalem, the place of his death, resurrection, and ascension. Peter's confession is the pivot between the hope of ages (v. 27-30) and its actualization in Jesus' paschal mystery (v. 31-33). How fitting, therefore, that it should take place near Caesarea Philippi, a place that overlooks a territory larger than the Jewish homeland and marks the rise of the great river forever associated with the gift of baptism. Today's doctrinal focus on profession of faith likewise unfolds in relation to baptismal waters, and opens onto the broad landscape of evangelization.

Although Peter, and by implication the Twelve, have grasped something of his true identity, Jesus must press them to a deeper understanding, lest they create false images of the kind of Messiah that Jesus is called to be. The term "messiah" that Peter uses (Hebrew, *mashiah*; Greek, *christos*, which mean anointed) carried a wide range of associations, including political overtones that Jesus wished to avoid. The term Jesus uses, "Son of Man," on the other hand, was clearly eschatological and lacked a nationalistic element. His rebuke of Peter is almost certainly historically accurate, since it would be unimaginable to drum up, without cause, such a sharp insult of the prince of the apostles and leader of the early Church. Its import is that suffering must be accepted, and even to affirm the necessity of suffering in the life of the disciple. Those who follow Jesus must sacrifice transitory values for the sake of lasting ones (v. 35).

In connection with the gospel motif of suffering, the Isaiah reading supplies the powerful example of the "suffering servant," which Christians have identified with Jesus. The servant is



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a prophetic individual, perhaps representative of the faithful remnant of Israel, who suffers on behalf of others. The servant is a source of hope and encouragement in the midst of Israel's national disgrace, the Exile. His life itself is a witness to faith, and the hardships he endures increase that witness. Today's passage is taken from the third of the four songs, and describes how the servant is abused in the course of his mission. Beginning in verse 8, the language changes to a legal style, as he expresses faith in God's ability and will to vindicate him.

Catholic Doctrine

What Is a Profession of Faith?

The term "creed" derives from the Latin *credo*, which means "to put one's heart into something" or "to give oneself to someone or something." It implies commitment.

A creed concisely states the most central beliefs held by an individual or community. The two creeds most widely accepted by Christians and upheld by the Catholic Church begin with the words "I believe" and "We believe." The formulation of this belief has come down to us from early Christian times in the texts of the Apostles' Creed and the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed, which express in concise, accepted, and approved formulations the central tenets of the faith. This faith is only possible because of God's self-revelation to humanity. We, in turn, respond with an articulation of praise and thanksgiving as our search for ultimate meaning finds its end-point in God.

Catholics understand faith to be a personal act of commitment, but we also hold that no one can believe alone. Just as we do not give ourselves life, we do not give ourselves faith. We cannot believe without carrying each other in faith. Thus, the "I believe" of the Apostles' Creed is the faith of the Church confessed personally by each individual believer at baptism. And the "We believe" of the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed is the faith of the Church confessed by the bishops in council, or, as on Sundays, by the liturgical assembly.

Faith is, by its very nature, meant to be active. Our response to God's revelation issues forth in Christian activity that seeks to pursue the holiness of God and prepare this world for the fullness of the kingdom. As a member of the one body formed in faith, the believing Christian goes forth into the world and acts as a witness of the Good News of salvation in Jesus Christ.