



a Kendall Hunt Company

Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, ABC, Intermediate - RCLB Lectionary



Intermediate Session

Numbers 21:4-9

John 3:13-17

Opening Prayer

Let us Pray,
Eternal God,

You showed us your great love by giving your only and beloved Son for us. You sent Jesus to us, knowing he would die on the cross. Through his death on the cross and his rising again to be with you, we know that we will also rejoice triumphantly with you one day. Let Christ live within us until that time. May we show your love to others in all that we do. Through Jesus, your Son, Amen.

Opening Life Activity

Gather around the table or in a circle. Let one person hold a cross and share one thing from their own life in which they were triumphant. This might be a physical, artistic, academic or emotional accomplishment. Pass the cross to the next person and let that person share a triumphant experience. When everyone has held the cross and shared a story, see if you can find any similarities between the stories shared and the story of Jesus' triumph on the cross. Considering the following questions may help open the conversation:

- What do we celebrate when we look at the cross? What can we celebrate when we consider our own triumphs?
- What good came from times when you struggled with something difficult?

Listening to the Word of God

See how the Israelites forget how much God loves them. They complain about having no food or water on the desert. Through Moses, God patiently shows his love for the Israelites.

Read Numbers 21:4-9

Allow for silence

Scripture Discussion Starters

- What can we know about the faith of the Israelites by their complaints to Moses?
- God was not saying that healing came from the serpent, but what was the point God wanted to make by having Moses lift up the serpent?
- What are the similarities in lifting up the serpent and Jesus being lifted up into heaven?



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In this Gospel, John explains that God loved the whole world so much and everything and everyone in it that God gave his only Son to die for us. By dying on the cross and being raised up to rejoin God, Jesus insured our eternal life with God.

Read John 3:13-17

Allow for Silence

- Why does the Son of Man need to be lifted up?
- What does John tell us will happen to those who believe in God's only Son?
- For what purpose did God send Jesus into the world? What didn't God want to do?

Scripture Background

Provide 2-3 minutes of background information on the readings using the Catechist Background section.

The Israelites began complaining on the desert. There was no water and no food. They hated what little food God sent them to eat. Bitterly they accused Moses of bringing them to the dessert to die. For all the good they saw of their freedom, they might just have well stayed in Egypt. God, weary of their complaining, sent venomous snakes among them. After the fiery bites of the snakes and many people dying, the Israelites admitted to Moses that they had been wrong to complain and doubt God. They were truly sorry and wanted God to take the snakes away. God instructed Moses to create a bronze serpent as a symbol. It was not that the serpent healed the people, it was that they were to think of God when they saw it.

John recalls the story from Numbers in today's Gospel when he connects lifting up the serpent and Jesus being lifted up on the cross and then into heaven. God loves us and loves us so much that he gave his only Son for the salvation of the world. People have the free will to refuse God's love, but those who accept it will have eternal life. In order to gain this salvation, however, Jesus had to die on the cross and then return to God in heaven. The triumph of Jesus on the cross, or his following through with what God commanded, is the reason we can share in the eternal triumph of Jesus.

Questions for Deeper Reflection

- Do you know anyone else who loves you as deeply (or almost as deeply) as Jesus does?
- Who are some people you know or have heard of who gave their lives for someone else?
- What should we do with the great gift of God's love?

[If you are not going to continue with the doctrinal discussion, proceed to the Gospel in Life.]

Doctrinal Discussion Starters

Redemption

While initially the cross was a degrading, terrible instrument of torture saved only for the



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most despicable criminals, it has become a sign of triumph for Christians. One of the titles we give Jesus is "Redeemer." To redeem is to "buy back," and that's just what Jesus did for us. Through his earthly mission, his death on the cross, and his rising to rejoin God in heaven, Jesus bought us back from our sinfulness so that we could return to God triumphantly in glory. Jesus freed us from the slavery of our sins to the fullness of eternal life. Jesus accepted his mission, his suffering and dying out of love and obedience to God. We are called to love and obey as well. When we look on the cross, we are reminded of what Jesus did for us and assured of God's love.

- What new meaning did Jesus' death give to the cross?
- Before Jesus' triumph of the cross, where else have we seen God's saving acts?
- Why do you think the words "John 3:16" make popular bumper stickers?

Sacrament Connection

Reconciliation

Jesus bought us back from sinfulness into a right relationship with God. It is our responsibility to continue in that relationship and the Sacrament of Reconciliation helps us do that. As human beings, we don't always make the right decisions. Sometimes we forget to think about God's ways and focus only on our own ways. This gets us into trouble. Eventually we figure out we've taken a wrong turn. To get us back on the right road, we ask God to forgive us. In the Sacrament of Reconciliation we tell God we are sorry, and we promise to try not to make the same mistake again.

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The Gospel in Life

Look around your home, your parish, and your community. Where do you see crosses? What do they mean in the locations where you find them? Make the sign of the cross whenever you pass one and promise God that you will try to not only obey his commands, but in whatever way you can will carry on the mission Jesus began.