



a Kendall Hunt Company

## Second Sunday of Easter, Year B, Catechist - RCLB Lectionary



### Catechist Background and Preparation

To prepare for this session, read all the readings.

Acts 4:32-35

Psalm 118:2-4, 13-15, 22-24

1 John 5:1-6

John 20:19-31

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

Following an ancient tradition, the Church regards the eight days from the paschal feast to the second Sunday of Easter as a single unit of joyful celebration (an octave). All the prayers of the liturgy and the tone of the celebration are unmistakably full of paschal, baptismal joy. The readings are to be understood in this spirit.

Throughout the Easter season, the first reading of the liturgy is taken from the Acts of the Apostles in order to illuminate the mystery of the Church as it developed from its beginnings at Pentecost. On the second Sunday of Easter each year, the Lectionary uses one of three very similar summary statements (A: Acts 2:42-47; B: 4:32-35; C: 5:12-16) through which Luke gives his readers an idealized portrayal of life of the early Christian community.

The gospel for today is constant in all three years of the lectionary cycle. It is a story of mission, forgiveness, and faith. The Risen Lord appears to his followers the evening of the resurrection, when they are gathered behind locked doors, afraid. He speaks a greeting of "peace" and at once commissions them to continue his own saving work. "As the Father has sent me, so I send you." As God breathed on the waters of creation, so Jesus now in this scene breathes on the disciples and gives them the Spirit, with an immediate creative effect. In giving the Spirit, Jesus imparts a particular power for reconciliation: "If you forgive sins they are forgiven; if you hold them bound, they are held bound." Just as the earthly Jesus exercised a power to forgive sins, now his followers are given that power in the Spirit.

The greeting of the Risen One (Shalom, "peace") is highly significant. God's peace comes as



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both gift and task. It is poured out with the gift of the Spirit, yet remains a commandment—given to his disciples for their mission in the world. The focus of today's lesson on the challenge of peace in our contemporary world is rooted in this foundational scene in which the Christ imparts to his followers a share in his own mission to bring forgiveness, reconciliation, and ultimate peace to the world.

### **Catholic Doctrine**

#### ***The Challenge of Peace***

Our teaching on the challenge of peace rests on Scripture. There are many viewpoints in Scripture on peace. One thread, however, is clear in the Old Testament. Peace is not merely negative, that is, the absence of conflict. Rather, it is the perfection of the covenant relationship between God and God's people that brings about the well-being of individuals and the whole community of faith that is peace. The Hebrew word shalom refers to a total harmony with nature, God, and self that issues forth in justice and is experienced in a fruitful land and in people whose needs are provided for and who dwell secure, free from fear and harm. The New Testament picks up this thread. Jesus ushers in the messianic kingdom and is the very presence of God among us. He brings to fulfillment what we cannot achieve on our own—the peace of a people covenanted to their Creator. This peace is the gift of the Risen Christ to his Church.

Our understanding of peace is founded on respect for all human life. Respect for the intrinsic worth of each human being is a notable feature of the encyclicals by John Paul II. He has taken up the themes sounded by both Paul VI and Vatican II on peace, rooting them firmly in respect for life. For without peace prevailing among peoples, the development of human life in all its aspects cannot take place.