



a Kendall Hunt Company

Ascension of the Lord, Year B, Catechist - RCLB Lectionary



Catechist Background and Preparation

To prepare for this session, read all the readings.

Acts 1:1-11

Psalm 47:2-3, 6-7, 8-9

Ephesians 4:1-13 or shorter form Ephesians 4:1-7, 11-13

Mark 16:15-20

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

Although the earliest scriptural accounts did not distinguish between the resurrection of Jesus and his ascension, the later ones (Luke and John) describe these two events separated in chronological time. In the liturgical year, it was not until the fourth or fifth century that a separate feast of the Ascension became commonplace. In accord with Luke's chronology in Acts, this feast is celebrated forty days after the resurrection. (By special permission, some dioceses now celebrate it on the Sunday following the fortieth day.)

Luke's description of the ascension in Acts, read each year in the lectionary cycle, is the heart of today's Word in liturgy. Luke's description is a carefully constructed narrative, meant to be understood in light of the parallel beginning of his gospel (compare Luke 1:1-4 to Acts 1:1-2), as well as the many key themes woven throughout his two-volume work. The disciples coming baptism in the Holy Spirit will surpass the baptism of John (Luke 3). Jesus' forty days (always a symbolic number in Luke) in the desert are balanced here by a mention of the forty days during which the disciples are instructed by Jesus after his resurrection. And the conclusion of Luke's gospel, in which Jesus commands the disciples to be his witnesses to all nations, is matched here with a similar command in virtually identical language. Even the manner in which Jesus is taken up into heaven is modeled on the expectation of the manner of his final return. It is clear that the ascension, for Luke, is much more a proclamation of theological truth than mere historical remembrance.

The triumphal message of this proclamation is captured effectively in the psalm refrain ("God mounts his throne to shouts of joy; a blare of trumpets for the Lord"). Psalm 47 is one of the so-called enthronement psalms, presumably sung at an annual celebration marking Yahweh's

Ascension of the Lord, Year B, Catechist



a Kendall Hunt Company

Ascension of the Lord, Year B, Catechist - RCLB Lectionary

kingship, which was symbolized in the reign of Israel's ruler. Bearing in mind the profound — humiliation of Jesus' death by crucifixion, and his gospel message of love, service, and forgiveness, the triumph he enjoys is not to be confused with any other, but is indeed the culmination of his saving mission, and the beginning of a new era in which the Spirit will continue to be present and at work despite Jesus' physical absence. Well might the assembly cry out with joy as Jesus ascends his throne!

Any three possible passages from Ephesians may be used as the second reading. Each reflects the kind of evolved theological understanding of the ascension that underlies Luke's deceptively simple description. Ephesians 1:17-23 is a prayer, very likely derived from an early liturgical hymn. In it, the author invites the Ephesians to come to know and live the fullness of their election. The Pauline metaphor of the Church as the body of Christ is echoed here as Christ is called "head" of the Church, whose reign surpasses all spiritual powers. The Church is also called "the fullness of Christ." Although reigning at God's right hand, Christ is still present to and active in the Church. Ephesians 4:1-13, and its shortened form, 4:1-7, 11-13, discuss in more detail the many gifts the Spirit distributes throughout the Church. Explicit mention of the ascension is absent from the shortened version, leading us to regard the connection of this passage to the feast as primarily through its witness to Christ's guiding presence in the Church.

Catholic Doctrine

The Ascension, one of the glorious mysteries, is an image used in praying the Rosary

The Ascension of the Lord is professed in both the Apostles' Creed and the Constantinopolitan-Nicene Creeds.

The Church prays on this feast: "Father...today the Lord Jesus, the king of glory, the conqueror of sin and death, ascended to heaven while the angels sang his praises. Christ the mediator between God and [humanity], judge of the world and Lord of all, has passed beyond our sight, not to abandon us but to be our hope. Christ is the beginning, the head of the Church; where he has gone, we hope to follow" (LeoSer 73).

Regarding this feast day, the Church instructs us: "On the fortieth day after Easter or, where it is not a holy day of obligation, on the Seventh Sunday of Easter, the Ascension of the Lord is celebrated. This solemnity directs our attention to Christ, who ascended into heaven before the eyes of his disciples, who now is seated at the right hand of the Father, invested with royal power, who is there to prepare a place for us in the kingdom of heaven, and who is destined to come again at the end of time" (LeoSer 74).