



a Kendall Hunt Company

## Twelfth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B, Catechist - RCLB Lectionary



### Catechist Background and Preparation

To prepare for this session, read all the readings.

Job 38:1, 8-11

Psalms 107:23-24, 25-26, 28-29, 30-31

2 Corinthians 5:14-17

Mark 4:35-41

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. 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

In the first eight chapters of his gospel, Mark portrays Jesus as the powerful Son of God, able to overcome disease, sin, demons, and even death. In chapters 9-15, it is the suffering and crucified Son of God who is revealed. With growing irony, Mark is showing how, despite his works of power, Jesus' disciples repeatedly fail to grasp his true identity. His ultimate identity and power is only revealed at the end of the gospel at the crucifixion, in the person of the centurion ("Truly this man was the Son of God." [15:39]) and in those who are witnesses to the resurrection, but run away, not telling anyone because "they were afraid" (16:8). For a Church undergoing persecution (as were those to whom Mark addressed his gospel) and still afraid, these stories of God's power at work in Jesus were crucial words of hope.

The story of the calming of the storm is an exorcism story, using a familiar format to describe Jesus' encounter with demonic forces: He "rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, 'Quiet! Be still!'" For the Jews, the sea was filled with forces hostile to God (see Psalms 74:13-14; 89:9-13; 104:5-9), yet God's victory over those forces was always certain (see Psalms 65:7; 89:9; John 1:15-16). The symbolism of the disciples in the boat on a storm-tossed sea would have been clear to Mark's audience. This is a story about the Church, tossed about by persecution, afraid because they were forgetful of the power of God at work in the Lord who was still with them and only appeared at times to be asleep. They wake him and address him as "Teacher" (v. 38), the same term used to describe his ministry in 1:21-28, where teaching and exorcizing are clearly linked. Mark locates Jesus' power in his words, an important point for a persecuted Church keenly aware that his word was still alive and powerful in their midst.

Today's readings from Job and Psalm 107 provide important Old Testament background that helps us understand the gospel as a story of God's power at work in Jesus. Chapter 38 begins

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Yahweh's reply (chapters 38-41) to Job with a significant detail, namely, that the Lord speaks to Job "out of the storm," an apt symbol for the overwhelming nature of the divinity when God finally chooses to respond to Job's complaints and questions. Instead of answers, however, God poses questions to Job. Our reading contains the section concerning God's creative activity over the primeval waters. What is most significant for us is that it is God's word (see Genesis 1) that sets the boundaries of the chaotic, primordial waters ("Thus far shall you come but no farther, and here shall your proud waves be stilled"). For one familiar with the larger context of God's rebuke of Job's audacity in questioning the divinity, this passage would trigger clear associations as Mark describes the question put to Jesus by his disciples ("...do you not care...?") When Jesus in turn chastises the disciples, "Do you not yet have faith?" their response reads literally, "they feared with a great fear" (v. 41).

Psalm 107 is a thanksgiving psalm reflecting the prayer of various groups who have been preserved from disaster [trouble in travel (vv. 4-9), imprisonment (vv. 10-16), illness (vv. 17-22), and danger at sea (vv. 23-32)] by God's saving power. The verses selected for use today (23-31) are a perfect complement to the gospel reading, and one can readily imagine the disciples reciting this prayer after Jesus had calmed the storm. One can envision the connections they might have made while singing "he hushed the storm" (v. 29), looking upon Jesus, yet realizing that the original subject of that song was Yahweh! As the liturgy puts these words on our lips in the context of today's celebration, what a powerful appeal is made to our faith in Jesus as the Son of God, in whom divine power and fullness reside!

The opening verse of today's reading from 2 Corinthians is part of Paul's defense against personal criticisms that have been leveled against him. If he is "beside himself," it is because he has been overtaken by the love of Christ which "impels" him. This "love of Christ" (for Paul) leads him to reflect on how that love was played out in the death that Jesus died for all. The remainder of the passage is an extremely dense reflection on the relationship between Christ's death and the way in which a Christian has died to self by being joined to Christ in a "new creation." In that new creation, we live "for him" whom we now know, not according to the flesh, but in an entirely new way ("behold, new things have come").

## **Catholic Doctrine**

### **The Power of God**

In the beginning, God's power created this world out of nothing. The two sources of revelation, sacred Scripture and Tradition, attest that the purpose of this creation is to show forth the glory of God. Saint Bonaventure (d. 1274) clarifies that God created all things "not to increase his glory, but to show it forth and to communicate it" (BonLibIIISent) because God has no other reason for fashioning this world than because of God's love and goodness (CCC 293).

Yet this good and loving God reigns justly throughout salvation history. Thus, the power of



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this just God also caused a flood to destroy evil and sin while sustaining a faithful remnant. The power of God sent plagues upon Egypt to deliver Israel out of bondage and also guided that chosen people as they wandered in the desert for forty years. The power of God finally established them in the promised land. When the people wandered from God, the Almighty intervened once again, for we believe this same divine power is fully manifested in Jesus Christ who came to save all people. Jesus is the light of the world, the Risen Lord, a light no darkness or death can extinguish.

But if God is the ultimate potency that creates and redeems us, why was not a perfect world brought forth by the Almighty? Why is there not such a perfect created world that no evil could exist in it?

Catholics maintain that there is no quick answer to this troubling and perplexing question. In fact, only the entirety of Christian faith can provide a response to this question (CCC 309). Our belief is summed up in an amazing litany consisting of many parts. We believe in the goodness of creation, the drama of sin, the patient love of God who is revealed to us by his covenants, the redemptive incarnation of the Son, the gift of the Holy Spirit, the gathering of the Church in God's name, the life-giving capacity of the sacraments, and God's call to beatitude to which we are invited, but from which, by a terrible mystery, we can also freely turn away. No one part of this Christian message contains the whole answer to the question of evil.

With infinite power God could have created a world so perfect that no evil exists. But our Catholic belief relies on the infinite wisdom and goodness of a divine plan that freely willed to create the world in a state of journeying toward ultimate perfection. In other words, the foundation of the created world is a process of becoming that involves the appearance and disappearance of certain beings, the existence of the more perfect alongside the less perfect, and both constructive and destructive forces of nature.

Believers acclaim the goodness and the power of God and at the same time decry the storms that toss us, threatening destruction, precisely because we hold that all creation is "on the journey." Thus, along with physical good there is physical evil—as long as creation has not yet reached perfection (CCC 310). With this in mind, Saint Augustine (d. 430) proclaimed, "For almighty God...because he is supremely good, would never allow any evil whatsoever to exist in his works if he were not so all-powerful and good as to cause good to emerge from evil itself" (AugEnch).