



a Kendall Hunt Company

Eleventh Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B, Catechist - RCLB Lectionary



Catechist Background and Preparation

To prepare for this session, read all the readings.

Ezekiel 17:22-24

Psalms 92:2-3, 13-14, 15-16

2 Corinthians 5:6-10

Mark 4:26-34

Spend a few minutes reflecting on what these readings mean to 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

The previous chapter and the 17th chapter of Ezekiel (from which today's First Reading is taken) both conclude with a word of promise and hope from the prophet. The prophet paints a word picture using the images of planting: the high tree, the lowly tree, the green tree, and the withered tree. The images illustrate how, by the hand of God, his people will flourish and prosper. The future of the people is entirely in God's hands.

Today's Responsorial Psalm uses the images of the palm tree and the cedar of Lebanon to speak of the just one. Psalm 92:15 promises that the just "shall bear fruit even in old age, always vigorous and sturdy."

Just prior to today's passage from 2 Corinthians 5, Saint Paul talks about suffering. The many difficulties he endured are a sort of credential of his apostleship. In today's Second Reading he goes on to speak of being courageous, awaiting the life on high that is promised to us in God through the Spirit. Saint Paul emphasizes that believers navigate this world by faith. Faith informs our vision. As God's faithful people, we work to please God by building up his kingdom on Earth as we await "appearing before the judgment seat of Christ" (2 Corinthians 5:10).

The mustard seed is the smallest of seeds. While the early Christian community was small, this parable assures Mark's readers that their efforts will be very fruitful in growing toward the Kingdom of God. Jesus preaches about that kingdom in today's Gospel reading. He again uses everyday images—those of seed, sowing, growth, and harvest—to make his point that God's kingdom is "naturally" growing. Its fruitful harvest will seem just as miraculous as

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when a farmer plants seeds and those seeds later sprout up into a large plant.

Catholic Doctrine

The Church and the Kingdom of God

The first words Jesus spoke when he began his public ministry were in reference to the Kingdom of God (see Mark 1:15). Jesus, the Son of God, came among us to proclaim the Good News of Salvation and the new life he offers to all.

With Christ's advent, the Kingdom of God has been inaugurated. We believe that although the kingdom is present here and now, it is not yet fully realized. When Christ returns a second time to this world in glory, he will bring the fullness of God's kingdom. What happens in the meantime?

The reality that sustains us, prepares us for, and moves us closer toward that Second Coming and the fullness of the kingdom is the Church. For this reason the Church is described as "the seed" of the Kingdom of God by the Second Vatican Council.

When believers gather at Sunday Mass, they speak the words of the Nicene Creed and profess their belief in one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church. It is important to note that just as we specify placing our belief in God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, we also mention by name the Church as an object of faith. Why? Because the Church is the Body of Christ, who is its head, in whom all the individual members are united with each other, and which is joined to Christ as bride to bridegroom.

Members of the Church have thus been called out of a former way of life, called away from sin to be joined together into the temple of the Spirit by Christ himself. The goal of this assembly is precisely life in Christ, that is, Salvation (see *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 169).

The Church exists because people need saving. That is why the Second Vatican Council restated the ancient understanding that outside the Church Salvation is not possible (see *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 846). This statement may seem at first to be shocking, until one reflects on the word "outside." In other words, the Church is meant for everyone in the world because her head, the Lord Jesus, is the sole mediator between God and all people. He alone is the way to Salvation, and he is present to us in his Body, which is the Church.

Jesus explicitly asserts the necessity of faith and Baptism (see Mark 16:16 and John 3:5), and thereby affirms the necessity of the Church which all enter through Baptism. The teaching on the Church as the sole vehicle by which all men and women have access to the Kingdom of God is meant to be less a judgment of the non-baptized than it is an explanation of the Church's all-encompassing role in helping the world toward the Kingdom of God (see



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Catechism of the Catholic Church 543). Indeed, the Church affirms that all those who seek—— God with a sincere heart, and prompted by grace, strive in their actions to do God’s will through the dictates of their conscience, may attain Salvation. A bond exists between all peoples, deriving from a common origin and destiny in God. Thus, whatever is good and true in other religions comes from God and reflects, however incompletely, the awesome truth of his kingdom.

In the Lord’s Prayer Christians pray, “thy kingdom come.” We proclaim that we are forward looking. We are disciples fixing our gaze on the fullness of the kingdom that will be brought to us by Christ the Lord. Envisioning that glorious future, we are energized to work toward it now. We humbly contribute to the building up of God’s kingdom in both small and large ways. Because our hearts and minds are permeated by the vision of Gospel justice, peace, and love, everything we do is potentially transforming during this in-between time in which we live.

