



a Kendall Hunt Company

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



### Catechist Background and Preparation

To prepare for this session, read all the readings.

Deuteronomy 4:1-2, 6-8

Psalm 15:2-3, 3-4, 5-6

James 1:17-18, 21b-22, 27

Mark 7:1-8, 14-15, 21-23

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

To understand today's passage from Deuteronomy, it is helpful to remember the very positive view of God's Law adopted by the chosen people. Far from feeling constricted or inhibited by the Law, they felt that it illumined their path in life. Because it was considered a divine gift, rather than a human creation, they held it in high esteem. Through keeping the Law, the people expressed their adherence to the covenant, and therefore could draw close to God in an unprecedented way.

Although not written down until some seven centuries after the death of Moses, the Book of Deuteronomy presents itself as Moses' direct teaching, and today's passage begins with the solemn injunction to Israel to "listen" (shema). The statutes spoken of are broad and the decrees are specific, but all are to be heeded and obeyed. The benefits of doing so include the blessing of life in the Promised Land and renown among the nations.

In addition to the Law contained in the Pentateuch, a collection of additional, highly detailed, specific laws had developed in Judaism over the centuries up to the time of Christ. It is to this body of minute and exacting legislation that Jesus is reacting when he rails against those who criticize his disciples for failing to observe the religious law. The custom of washing, not to be confused with modern hygienic practices, was a religious one relating to ritual purity. In a harsh confrontation with his critics, Jesus condemns them as hypocrites for attending to details of outward observance while neglecting the more important inner dispositions of the person. He invokes the prophet Isaiah's words to support his own fiery, prophetic condemnation. Then, as did Moses in our first reading, Jesus solemnly enjoins his hearers to "listen" as he describes the inner origin of moral evils that make a person "impure," that is,

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unfit to worship God. Jesus strips away the superficial details of pious practice to reveal the fundamental issues of the heart.

### **Catholic Doctrine**

#### ***Principles of Morality***

Pursuing a moral life in accord with God's grace does not depend simply on one's own feelings but on a conscience informed by the preaching of Christ and the Church, sound religious education, an understanding of scripture, spiritual direction, and the witness and example of other believers. Catholics understand, therefore, that there are external resources that may guide a person to strive for an upright, holy life.

All of these external resources combine over a lifetime to help form Christian character, whose goal is to imitate the Lord. This imitation places us on the path of life, a path imbued with God's Law. This law is described as "natural" because it is woven into the very fabric of creation and therefore is perceptible and knowable.

It is important to note that an informed conscience aims at orienting the entire person toward Christ and an authentically human life. Relying on a whole set of experiences, values, and symbols that shape a conscience, there arises a Christian moral character. Nurtured in the household of the faithful, a Catholic seeks this specifically Christian character. The community opens a doorway to the paths of right conduct and a holy way of life precisely through the witness it hands on regarding Jesus Christ.

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