



a Kendall Hunt Company

Twelfth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year C, Catechist - RCLB Lectionary



Catechist Background and Preparation

To prepare for the session read all the readings.

Zechariah 12:10-11; 13:1

Psalms 63: 2-6, 8-9

Galatians 3:26-29

Luke 9:18-24

Spend a few minutes reflecting on what these readings mean for you today. Was there a particular reading which appealed to you? Was there a word or image that stood out to you?

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 for the session.

The Word in Liturgy

Today's First Reading correlates with the first prediction of Jesus' Passion narrated in the Gospel. The background to this passage is uncertain. The Book of Zechariah seems to be a compilation of several sources. The overall theme of this section is one of reassurance to Israel that deliverance will come, but only at the price of suffering. An unnamed figure, reminiscent of the Suffering Servant of Deutero-Isaiah, is described as being "thrust through," undergoing a death which results in a "spirit of grace" being poured out on the inhabitants of Jerusalem. It is little wonder that this messianic, eschatological passage would have been used extensively (the latter part of Zechariah is cited or alluded to at least thirty-nine times) by various New Testament writers to help one understand the Christ event.

Paul, in his letter to the Galatians, continues to unfold the consequences of his teaching that we are saved by faith in Jesus Christ, not adherence to the Mosaic Law. Here, he points to the radical equality we enjoy as baptized members of Christ, an equality superseding all other distinctions ("Jew or Greek, slave or freeman, male or female") that tend to separate us from one another. It is by faith in Christ that we are made "descendants of Abraham," and so it is not necessary to undergo the ritual requirements of the Law (e.g., circumcision) in order to "inherit all that was promised."

Paul's allusion to the fact that the baptized have "clothed yourselves with [Christ]" might be a reference to an actual donning of a baptismal garment, much as the pagan cults often clothed initiates in the garment of the god. Or, it may simply follow the familiar Jewish usage of clothing as a metaphor for putting on a whole new moral/religious perspective.

The setting for the scene depicted in today's Gospel is while "Jesus was praying," always a

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signal in Luke that something important is about to happen. In fact, for Luke—as for other—Gospel writers—the disciples’ explicit acknowledgment of Jesus’ messianic identity is a decisive turning point in Jesus’ ministry. The prediction of his Passion is linked to this event as a clear indication that the disciples of the Messiah will surely share in his destiny of redemptive suffering. Luke has added “each day” to Mark’s version of Jesus’ admonition that his disciples must take up their cross in order to follow him. Scholars see this change as a shift from Mark’s earlier perception that suffering will come as part of the last days, to Luke’s later awareness that suffering is an integral part of the Christian life on an ongoing basis. Concerned as he is throughout his Gospel with the meaning and cost of discipleship, Luke is careful to note that a share in the redemptive Cross of Christ will always be a part of the life of a disciple.

Catholic Doctrine

The Cross in the Life of Jesus’ Followers

Every believer can, in suffering, become a sharer in the redemptive suffering of Christ. The Church understands that there is a virtue in consciously uniting one’s own suffering to the Passion of Jesus. The Paschal Mystery consists of Christ’s Passion, Death, and Resurrection. The first portion of that mystery centers in the image of Christ crucified, that is, it focuses on the image of the cross. Pope Saint John Paul II wrote, “[Jesus] dies nailed to a cross. But if at the same time in this *weakness* there is accomplished His *lifting up*, confirmed by the power of the resurrection, then this means that the weakness of all human sufferings are capable of being infused with the same power of God manifested in Christ’s cross” (*Salvifici Doloris*, 11 February 1984, n. 23).

The cross, therefore, becomes for us believers a dual symbol. In it we behold the horror of deliberately inflicted human suffering, that is, torture unto death. At the same time, given that the redemption of the world takes place through the Cross of Christ and that as members of his Body, the Church, we can unite our sufferings to his redemptive suffering, the cross becomes a sign of the ultimate victory of God. What was the executioner’s instrument has become the throne upon which Jesus is lifted up in glory (see John 12:27-32). Pope John Paul II wrote about Jesus who transforms our suffering and in that transformation points that hurting person to a place close to the Lord himself. Through the very heart of the experience of suffering, we know that we are led into the Kingdom of God, for suffering cannot be transformed and changed from the outside, but only from within the very depths of a person through the Spirit. Thus, we believe that the way in which followers of Jesus pick up their cross and follow the Master is a matter of the heart, the interior spirit, and love.