



a Kendall Hunt Company

Tenth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A, Catechist - RCLB Lectionary



Catechist Background and Preparation

To prepare for this session read all the readings.

Hosea 6:3-6

Psalm 50:1, 8, 12-13, 14-15

Romans 4:18-25

Matthew 9:9-13

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 that engages you?

Read the Word in Liturgy and Catholic Doctrine sections. These give you background on 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 prophet Hosea wrote during the eighth century, at a time of enormous turmoil in the Northern Kingdom. Today's reading is part of a longer section (5:8-6:6) in which the prophet castigates Israel for its infidelity to the covenant with Yahweh and calls for a sincere repentance and return to the Lord. Scholars situate this particular oracle in the year 734, when the Assyrians under Tiglath Pileser III were threatening Israelite territory. The people were offering prayers of entreaty for deliverance. In fact, the verses that open today's reading ("Let us know, let us strive to know the Lord") may be Hosea's parody of the empty rituals of his countrymen beseeching the Lord's intervention. Yahweh's reply ("Your piety is like a morning cloud, like the dew that early passes away") sums up the prophet's indictment of such worship that is offered without the corresponding dispositions of heart.

The focus chosen for today's catechesis springs from the gospel story of the unearned love shown by the Lord for Matthew the tax collector. Even before Matthew has repented of his sins, in fact, without any guarantee at all that he will change his ways, Matthew is loved by Jesus and called to discipleship. And, as if to underline the point that this is Jesus' ordinary way of doing business, the evangelist next describes Jesus sitting down at a table with Matthew and a host of other tax collectors and sinners. The Pharisees' shock and outrage at Jesus' welcome of the ritually impure and the outcast is put in deliberate contrast to the religious perspective of Jesus, who simply points out what he feels should be an obvious truth: "People who are in good health do not need a doctor; sick people do." Jesus even quotes Yahweh's words through Hosea, "It is mercy I desire and not sacrifice." Ritual impurity that bars one from participation in the official cult is not the issue for Jesus. Rather, his mission ("I have come to call not the self-righteous, but sinners") is to offer the gift of God—grace—to all those who are in need of it (i.e., to all of us) and to invite all people to



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accept that grace symbolized in his table fellowship with sinners.

Catholic Doctrine

Grace

Justification derives from the grace of God. Gratia (Latin) means “favor” or “goodwill.” In the broadest sense, this theological term indicates how the loving kindness of God has favored humanity. While still sinful, humanity has been offered help so that we might become adopted sons and daughters of the Most High, given a share in the divine nature and therefore receive eternal life (CCC 1996). The vocabulary of the New Testament reflects the depth of this mystery. For example, “favor,” “reward,” “gift,” “loving kindness,” “thanks,” and “for the sake of” are differing descriptions used by the scriptural authors to indicate the love shown to us by God in the Son who gave himself for our sake.

What, then, is the Catholic contemporary understanding of grace? The gift of God’s favor enables humans to participate or share in the intimate love of Trinitarian life. Baptism incorporates us into the mystery of Christ whereby we adopted children of the Most High are enabled to call God our “Father” and Jesus our “brother,” receiving new life from the Holy Spirit who immerses us in divine love (CCC 1997).

This sharing in divine love is further elaborated by several theological concepts: (1) sanctifying (or habitual) grace, (2) actual grace, and (3) sacramental grace. Each of these concepts builds one upon the other.

There are four main directions of the contemporary Catholic understanding of grace.

First, grace is understood as an experience of the present whose fullness will only be found in the future. That is, the way in which we are gifted in Jesus here and now is but a foretaste of that which will be fulfilled at the end of time. Thus, the early Christians prayed, “Let grace come and let this world pass away” (Didache 10:6, found in *The Heart of Catholicism*, Theodore E. James, ed., Our Sunday Visitor, Inc., Huntington, Indiana, 1997, p. 58).

Second, grace is universally offered to all, even those who are not yet explicit members of the Church. Thus, the Second Vatican Council affirmed, “. . . we must hold that the Holy Spirit offers to all the possibility of being made partners, in a way known to God, in the paschal mystery” (GS 22).

Third, grace transforms. Christ died for sinners, justifying us before God. Thus, because of God’s utterly gratuitous gift we are changed for the better.

Fourth, grace opens us to participation or communion with divine life. What sin severed and scattered, Jesus reunites through his sacrifice and the Holy Spirit. Jesus acted not because we merited it, but because God has favored us.

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