



a Kendall Hunt Company

Second Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year C, Catechists - RCLB Lectionary



Catechist Background and Preparation

To prepare for the session, read all the readings.

Isaiah 62:1-5

Psalm 96:1-2, 2-3, 7-8, 9-10

1 Corinthians 12:4-11

John 2:1-11

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 engaged 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

The Second Sunday in Ordinary Time functions in the liturgical cycle as a kind of bridge, linking what has gone before with what is to come. Last Sunday's celebration of the Baptism of the Lord marked the close of the Christmas season, and began the first week of Ordinary Time. On this Sunday, in each year of the lectionary cycle, the Gospel is taken from John rather than the respective synoptic Gospel read throughout the remainder of Ordinary Time. Today's reading from John also completes a triad of "epiphany" texts (the "revelation" of Jesus to the Magi, at his baptism, and now at Cana) read in recent weeks. The Cana miracle is described by John as the "first" of Jesus' signs, and so it is a fitting beginning to Ordinary Time (although, as we will see next week, the gospel text read on the Third Sunday always has one of the synoptics' versions of the beginning of Jesus' ministry).

Today's reading comes from the third section of the Book of Isaiah, written in the turbulent years after Israel's return from exile in Babylon. The prophet writes to reassure the Jewish people at a time of national disillusionment and, for many, growing skepticism that Jerusalem would ever regain its previous splendor. Using images evocative of Yahweh's long history of rescuing Israel from dire straits, the prophet renews God's promise to restore Jerusalem to a place of honor and prestige among the nations. The familiar description of Israel as Yahweh's spouse is used to reassure the people that God's love is faithful and unbroken. The passage's rich marital imagery is certainly the reason why this text was chosen to be read together with today's Gospel.

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In today's reading from John, we hear the miracle at Cana described as the "first" of Jesus'—signs which "revealed his glory" and as a result of which "his disciples believed in him" (v 11). In this brief allusion, we are given a clue to the highly symbolic nature of John's Gospel in general and of Jesus' miracles in particular. In John, no aspect of the narrative is casual; each detail points to a larger meaning, always connected to the Gospel's ultimate purpose: "so that you [the hearer of the Gospel] may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name." (20:31) The miracle of Cana, then, is about Jesus being revealed as the Messiah, the Holy One, in the midst of our ordinary human experience (e.g., at a marriage), transforming our "secular" reality into the fine wine of God's grace. Scholars debate how much John's Gospel intends any explicit sacramental reference here and elsewhere. But it is easy to see why this passage has been used by the Church over the centuries to deepen our understanding of how, in marriage, the action of Christ transforms the love of Christian spouses into a graced reality (i.e., a sacrament).

Catholic Doctrine

The Sacrament of Marriage

Love is our origin. Love is our constant calling. Love is our fulfillment in heaven. Everything the Catholic Church teaches about marriage begins with this proclamation. As a church, we know that in varying forms throughout history and in widely varying cultures, men and women have married one another in love.

Marriage is not simply a human institution, but is part of God's plan in creation. The Old Testament scriptures speak eloquently about marriage and the love of a husband and wife for one another. With the coming of Christ, however, God in Jesus raised the marital covenant between baptized persons to the dignity of a sacrament. This Sunday's gospel account reports how Jesus works his first sign, changing water into wine, at a wedding feast. By his presence at the wedding at Cana, the Church understands that Jesus confirmed the innate goodness of love in marriage. Thus, marriage becomes an effective sign of Christ's presence.

In the eyes of the Church, what is this sacrament? Marriage between two baptized persons (a man and a woman who freely enter into a permanent, loving and faithful covenant with one another) shares in the fruitful love and unity that exists between Christ and the Church. Husband and wife assist each other in attaining holiness of life and in the rearing of children. Therefore, they have their own special place, their own gift and vocation, among the people of God (Rite of Marriage, Congregation of Rites, 19 March 1969, n. 1).



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This Sacrament is not a contract, but a covenant. Freely entered into, the marriage covenant cannot be dissolved until death because it is a total self-giving, one person to the other. Jesus himself taught this truth as determined by God (Matthew 19:6). The covenant between husband and wife in marriage is integrated into God's loving, covenant relationship with his people. Jesus gives those who are married the ability to live up to the demands and expectations of marriage precisely through the gift of the Sacrament.

