

Second Sunday of Easter, Year C, Catechist

Submitted by lectionaryadmin on Mon, 03/04/2013 - 19:00

Catechist Background and Preparation

To prepare for the session, read all the readings.

Acts 5:12-16

Psalm 118:2-4, 13-15, 22-24

Revelation 1:9-11a, 12-13, 17-19

John 20:19-31

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

Following an ancient tradition, the Church regards the eight days from the Paschal feast to the Second Sunday of Easter as a single unit of celebration (an octave). All the prayers of the liturgy and the tone of the celebration are unmistakably full of joy as the Church comes to the close of the octave of its greatest feast. The readings are to be understood in this spirit.

Throughout the Easter season, the first reading of the liturgy is taken from the Acts of the Apostles in order to illuminate the mystery of the Church as it developed from its beginnings at Pentecost. Today's passage is a summary of the early Christian community's growth and success in the exercise of its gifts, particularly gifts of healing, and the faith with which the apostles are met as they go about their mission.

The gospel for today is constant in all three years of the Lectionary. It is a story of mission, forgiveness, and faith. The risen Lord appears to his followers on the evening of the resurrection, when they are gathered behind locked doors, afraid. He speaks a greeting of "peace" and at once commissions them to continue his own saving work: "As the Father has sent me, so I send you." As God breathed on the waters at creation, so Jesus now breathes on the disciples in this scene and gives them the Spirit, with an immediate creative effect. In the giving of the Spirit, Jesus imparts a particular power for reconciliation: "If you forgive sins they are forgiven; if you hold them bound they are held bound." Just as the earthly Jesus exercised a power to forgive sins, now his followers are given that power in the Spirit.

The liturgy places a somewhat greater accent however on the latter part of the gospel narrative. At this point in the chronology of the story, the disciples are eight days away from resurrection — exactly where the Church is today on the Second Sunday of Easter. The story unfolds of the apostle Thomas, who, obdurately insisting that he will never believe that the Lord is risen unless he sees and touches his wounds, is confronted by the resurrected Jesus and comes to a profound

articulation of faith: He calls Jesus, “My Lord and my God.” At the end of the passage, the words of Jesus seem to speak directly to us. We have not seen as Thomas did, but are called upon to believe.

Catholic Doctrine

“Blessed are those who have not seen, but have believed.”

It is through the community that the individual first receives the gift of faith from God. Faith comes through “hearing” and depends on witnesses who hand it on, who “speak it.” By the action of the Holy Spirit tongues are loosened to tell the good news and ears are opened to hear what is told.

A heritage of faith is entrusted to the whole Church. The Catholic genius understands this sacred deposit, this inheritance, as contained in both Scripture and Tradition. Indeed, the development of the New Testament shows the process of the living Tradition at work. The function of authoritative church teaching is to explain and guard this “deposit of faith.”

Our relationship to God in faith can be shaken. We experience evil, suffering and injustice in this world, and we question God, we doubt, and we struggle in our belief. In times of doubt and struggle, individuals can turn to the community of faith for support.

Through Baptism we are born within, nourished by and are members of a living tradition handed down from the time of the apostles to the present day, in a pilgrim church walking by the light of faith.

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