



a Kendall Hunt Company

## Twenty-ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year C, Catechist - RCLB Lectionary



### Catechist Background and Preparation

To prepare for this session read all the readings.

Exodus 17:8-13

Psalm 121:1-2, 3-4, 5-6, 7-8

2 Timothy 3:14-4:2

Luke 18:1-8

Spend a few minutes reflecting on what these readings mean for you today. Was there a particular reading that 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 most fundamental theological point in the story of Exodus 17:8-13 is that the Israelites win the battle not through their own military prowess, but by the powerful intervention of their God. In the context of its proclamation in today's liturgy, however, our attention is drawn even more strongly to the way in which Israel obtains divine help. Moses' persistence in prayer, aided by his assistants, is revealed to be absolutely essential to securing the victory.

The Amalekites were an enemy tribe in southern Palestine whose name suggests descent from the tribe of Esau. They fight several times against Israel—in this instance to resist their approach to the promised land. The staff that Moses raises has been associated with the protection of Yahweh and wonder-working in the Exodus. In this incident at Rephidim, Moses is established as the mediator between the people of Israel and God, a role designated by later Christian typology as an image of Christ—the definitive mediator who intercedes for the human race before God.

This week and next Sunday we hear a pair of parables unique to Luke, about prayer; the first is told to his disciples (affirming), the second to some of the religious leaders (condemning). Today's parable sets up a comparison between an unjust judge, and the just God in order to make emphatic the point of God's willingness to hear and respond to human petitions. Widows in the ancient world were severely disadvantaged because they lacked male

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protection and economic support in societies structured around men. The widow's persistence is her only resource.

The unjust judge finally gives in to her because she wears him down. The expression "she will end by doing me violence" is, literally in Greek, she will "give me a black eye," which suggests, as it does in English, both that she will cause him social embarrassment and that she may well sock him in the face! Rather than criticize the widow for such unseemly potential behavior, Jesus turns a challenge instead upon his listeners. Do they dare to be this insistent in calling upon God, who is a just judge? Do they have any faith? If they did they would persist in their petitions in prayer, and not lose heart. Indeed, the elect (*eklegoi*) "cry out to him night and day"—and God hears them.

# **Catholic Doctrine**

## ***Petition and Intercession in Prayer***

Prayer can be characterized as blessing and adoring God, thanking God, praising God, and asking God. The vocabulary of asking for something in the New Testament scriptures is rich in its diversity: we beseech, plead, invoke, entreat, cry out and even struggle in prayer before God. Our Catholic tradition understands this richness in two basic forms of asking God for something: petitionary prayer (asking for oneself) and intercessory prayer (asking for another). We are created beings and know ourselves as such; we are not our own beginning or our own last end. In asking God for something in prayer we know we are going to the Creator because we are sinful, limited and in need of the love and goodness that only God can provide (CCC 2629).

Christian petition is kingdom-centered, that is, ultimately focused by the teaching and the message of Jesus Christ. In petitioning God we ask first for the kingdom to come, as in the Lord's Prayer itself, and secondarily, we ask for all that we need in order to welcome, prepare for and cooperate with its coming. Those who pray in this fashion, therefore, participate in the mission of Christ. Collaborating together in the Spirit, the mission of Jesus is now the object of the prayer of the apostolic community (CCC 2632).

Sharing together in God's saving love, awaiting the fullness of the kingdom, Catholics understand that every need can become the object of petition. The very first need of every individual is to be freed from sin. Asking forgiveness for our sins is our first priority in petitioning God in prayer.



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Intercessory prayer is a special sort of petition which approaches God as did Jesus, that is, petitioning God on behalf of others. Thus, whenever one engages in intercessory prayer, one participates in Christ's prayer, for Jesus himself "intercedes for us. . .and intercedes for the saints according to the will of God" (Romans 8:26-27). Jesus Christ is the mediator who intercedes for us before the throne of God.

