



a Kendall Hunt Company

Thirty-second Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year C, Catechist - RCLB Lectionary



Catechist Background and Preparation

To prepare for this session read all the readings.

2 Maccabees 7:1-2, 9-14

Psalm 17:1, 5-6, 8, 15

2 Thessalonians 2:16-3:5

Luke 20:27-38 [or 20:27, 34-38]

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 heroism of a family of seven brothers and their mother in the face of death is the subject of today's Old Testament reading. Under the Selucid dynasty, Palestinian Jews were being pressured to give up the mandates of their religion in favor of Hellenistic practices. This persecution ultimately led to the successful revolt of Judas Maccabeus in 167 B.C. that resulted in a treaty allowing Jews to follow their law. Resistance to the Hellenizing policies of the Selucids could cost pious Jews their lives, yet some did resist, as today's passage illustrates. These Jews were known as the Hasidim or "pious ones"—the Pharisees spoken of in the New Testament were possibly their successors. What is most significant for today's liturgy is the testimony of the last brother who professes faith in a resurrection from the dead. Belief in a personal resurrection or an afterlife did not appear in Judaism until about 200 B.C., and so, at this time, was a relatively novel idea. As it is presented here, the wicked will perish, and only the just will be raised.

Today's Gospel is one of a series of episodes in which spies of the enemies of Jesus are sent to trip him up—that is, to ask him questions seeking to discredit him with the people. In this passage, some Sadducees question Jesus about the resurrection. The Sadducees were a conservative group that accepted only the Torah, and no subsequent writings (such as the prophetic literature), and believed neither in angels nor in the resurrection of the dead. The question they pose to Jesus is a *reductio ad absurdum* of the question of marriage status in the next life. Mosaic law required a deceased man's brother to marry his widow in order to

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beget a child who would carry on his family line. The Sadducees who question Jesus posit a family of seven brothers, each marrying the same woman in sequence. Jesus' reply rebuts his antagonists on their own ground, arguing from the Torah in favor of belief in resurrection. It also skillfully turns the question from a legal riddle to a question of the identity and works of God himself. In this Sunday's liturgy, no less important is the substance of Jesus' affirmation of life after death, which may be the subject of today's catechesis.

Catholic Doctrine

Heaven and Hell

We believe that death is not an end, but a threshold, and it is over this threshold that we pass into a life beyond this earthly existence. Catholic teaching holds that there are three distinct modes of existence in the next life, and we identify the places where these modes are experienced as heaven, purgatory and hell. In this doctrine section for this Sunday heaven and hell are treated. Purgatory is treated in the doctrine section for the feast of All Souls.

Hell is the mode of existence for those who are eternally damned. We believe that we are united with God when we freely choose to love God and our neighbors. Jesus himself warns that if we do not meet the needs of the hungry and the thirsty, if we do not welcome the stranger, clothe the naked, care for the ill, and visit those imprisoned we will be excluded from his presence and be cast into the "eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels" (Mt 25:41). The Catholic Church teaches that if one dies in a state of mortal sin without repentance we are then separated from God by our own free choice. This state of final and eternal self-exclusion from union with God is termed "hell." (CCC 1033)

No one is predestined to hell. Indeed, God is a loving God and acts to save all. But some choose not to be saved and to reject God. Hell is the inheritance of all who willfully turn away from divine love in a persistent state of deadly or mortal sin unto death. Thus the Church implores the mercy of God, "Father, accept this offering from your whole family. Grant us your peace in this life, save us from final damnation, and count us among those you have chosen." (*Roman Missal*, Eucharistic Prayer I)

Heaven is the mode of existence for those who are eternally blessed. We believe that those who die in the Lord, who die in grace and friendship with God and who are perfectly purified live for ever in the blessedness of the beatific vision. They see God as he is, "face to face" (1 John 3:2).



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We proclaim that by his saving death and resurrection Christ has won for us new life and has opened the gates of heaven for us. The beatific vision, this total and complete union with God is accomplished by Christ who makes partners in his heavenly glory all those who believe in him and who have remained faithful. (CCC 1026)

This complete communion with God in heaven is a mystery that while we proclaim it defies exact description. And so, for example, Scripture uses images to convey this mystery: life, light, peace, wedding feast, wine of the kingdom, the Father's house, the heavenly Jerusalem and paradise. However much we grope to convey the reality of this mystery, it is beyond us, until that time when God opens up heaven to us and gives us the capacity to fully contemplate his glory. This beatific vision is the ultimate end and fulfillment of our deepest human longing and the supreme, definitive happiness. (CCC 1024 & 1028)

