



a Kendall Hunt Company

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



Catechist Background and Preparation

To prepare for this session read all the readings.

Isaiah 49:3, 5-6

Psalm 40:2, 4, 7-8, 8-9, 10

1 Corinthians 1:1-3

John 1:29-34

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.

Word in Liturgy



The focus of today's readings is intensely christological. From the very beginning of Ordinary Time, our attention is directed to Jesus whom we hope to come to know ever more deeply as the Christ. During Israel's period of exile in Babylon, the author of this section of Isaiah included among his prophetic oracles a series of poems about an unnamed Servant who, by his sufferings, would bring deliverance to Israel and to all the nations. Contemporary scholars are not in agreement whether the author had in mind a single individual, or if the Servant may be a collective figure representing Yahweh's chosen people. Regardless of its specific original referent, the text remains a powerful statement of hope in the face of adversity and a confident announcement of the pivotal role to be played by the One who will be a "light to the nations." The text's christological significance is heightened by critical evidence in the gospels that the historical Jesus did indeed identify himself and his mission with the Servant mentioned in this series of poems.

John's gospel today heaps one clue upon another as to the deep truth of Jesus' identity. The evangelist presents Jesus to us as: "The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world . . . he was before me . . . [the Spirit] came to rest on him . . . God's Chosen One." Each of these descriptive phrases resonates with the rich imagery of the Jewish scriptures and invites further reflection from our Christian perspective. The symbol of the lamb, for example, surely evoked the paschal lamb whose blood saved the Israelites from the destroying angel, as well as the lamb (who bears the sins of others) that is mentioned in the fourth Servant Song of



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Isaiah. Members of the Qumran community, known to the Baptist and his followers, spoke of a warrior lamb who protected the flock by dispersing its enemies. The book of Revelation uses the title "Lamb of God" twenty-nine times. From the abundance of images in today's lessons, we can readily construct a Christology of great breadth and depth.

Catholic Doctrine

Names of Jesus

In confessing Jesus as the Savior, the New Testament writers not only used contemporary cultural images to describe his unique significance, they also reached back into the rich heritage of Hebrew scripture and used Old Testament titles and designations to illuminate the identity of Jesus. The Christian community, for whom the New Testament authors wrote, continued to explore the profound mystery of Jesus in the immediate post-biblical times. Christology is the term used by the Church to delineate attempts to plumb the mystery of Jesus' identity, a task that continues today, although modern teachings regarding the nature of Christ still rest upon early councils.

In today's gospel text, John the Baptist, pointing out Jesus, refers to him as "Lamb of God" and "God's Chosen One." These scriptural titles, and other adopted titles of Jesus from the Old Testament (such as those in today's first reading—"servant," and "light to the nations") express belief in Jesus' unique identity. The fourth gospel also employs other descriptions for Jesus: "eternal Word" (logos), "light of the world," "the way, truth, and life," "bread of life," "living water," "good shepherd," "sheep gate," and "vine." But among all the titles bestowed on Jesus in the New Testament, four stand out: "Lord," "Christ," "Son of God," and "Son of Man."

The term "lord" or *kyrios* is employed as an honorific title (in the sense of "sir") by a variety of persons. The Samaritan woman at the well addresses Jesus as such (John 4:11). However, in the context of the epistles and in Revelation, the term "Lord" takes on a deeper meaning, connoting the second coming of the one who is now exalted by God and will usher in the end times (1 Corinthians 16:22, 1 Thessalonians 4:17, and Revelation 22:20).

The term "Christ" or Messiah, which literally means "anointed," referred to a consecrated person, usually in Old Testament times a king called by God to rule. But it could also refer to a priest called to serve God in a special way, or, in rarer instances, a prophet divinely called for a special mission. In the New Testament episodes found at Mark 8:29 and Luke 9:20, the use of this title by Peter is a confession of faith in Jesus as the one who saves. The title, as



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applied to Jesus, describes his status as the promised one of God, the Savior, whose messianic mission is uniquely that of priest, prophet, and king (CCC 436).

In the New Testament accounts of the baptism and transfiguration, Jesus is described as “my beloved Son” by a divine voice (Matthew 3:17 and 17:5). Additionally, the title “Son of God” is spoken by the soldier at the foot of the cross immediately upon the death of Jesus (Matthew 27:54 and Mark 15:39). The Catholic Church thus teaches that this title indicates the unique relationship of Jesus who is God’s only Son and who shares in the divine nature (CCC 444).

