



a Kendall Hunt Company

## Sixth Sunday of Easter, Year A, Catechist - RCLB Lectionary



### Catechist Background and Preparation

To prepare for this session read all the readings.

Acts 8:5-8, 14-17

Psalm 66:1-3, 4-5, 6-7, 16, 20

1 Peter 3:15-18

John 14:15-21

Spend a few minutes reflecting on what these readings mean for you today. Is there a particular reading that appeals to you? Is there a word or image that engages 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.

## The Word in Liturgy

This Sunday's Gospel continues the farewell discourse of Jesus. Whereas last Sunday's passage centered on believing in Jesus, this week's Gospel centers on loving him. Those who love Jesus keep his commandments. In other words, covenant fidelity is an outpouring of love. To those who love him, Jesus also promises his abiding presence by means of "another paraclete" whom he will send. The term "paraclete," unique in the New Testament to the writings of the evangelist John, has both the juridical meaning of "advocate," and a more general meaning of teacher or guide. Christian tradition has identified this paraclete as the Holy Spirit. Jesus himself has been the first paraclete to his followers during his time on earth; the paraclete whom Jesus will send ("another paraclete") will continue to be an advocate and guiding presence just as Jesus himself has been. The paraclete, moreover, will dwell in the believer. In typical Johannine fashion, the passage warns of a contrast to be expected between "the world" of hard-hearted unbelief, which will not see and recognize the paraclete, and the minds and hearts of faithful followers, who will know and accept this one whom Jesus sends.

The passage from the Acts of the Apostles is edited to omit the story of Simon the Magician, who is converted by Philip's preaching but then tries to buy with silver Philip's wonder-working power! The narrative that remains, once this colorful story has been excised, is a simple, straightforward account of the spread of the gospel into Samaria. Presented in Acts as the result of the expulsion from the synagogues in Jerusalem, the expansion of the mission

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into new territory shows God working in unexpected ways to make known the Good News to an ever-widening circle of believers.

# **Catholic Doctrine**

## ***The Sacrament of Confirmation***

The Catholic Church teaches that the Spirit promised in today's gospel as advocate, helper, and guide is associated with the followers of Jesus in a variety of ways. First, the Church as a whole is a messianic people and community of the Spirit. The Second Vatican Council asserted that Christ "has shared with us his Spirit who, being one and the same in head and members, gives life to, unifies, and moves the whole body" (LG 7). Second, in the celebration of liturgy and the sacraments, the Spirit is also at work, animating and giving life to divine worship. The Council also asserted that: "It is not only through the sacraments and the ministrations of the Church that the Holy Spirit makes holy the People, leads them and enriches them with his virtues. Allotting his gifts according as he wills . . . he also distributes special graces among the faithful of every rank" (LG 12). Last of all, the individual believer is gifted with the Spirit through the Sacrament of Confirmation.

Confirmation is one of the three Sacraments of Initiation. The sign of confirmation is the laying on of hands and the anointing with chrism. The anointing of confirmation is consecratory. Similar to the anointing received by priests, prophets, and kings, the anointing of confirmation signifies a noble status. When the newly baptized are confirmed, this consecration with sacred chrism imparts a unique, indelible spiritual mark, sealing and strengthening their baptism. What is the purpose of this consecration? It seals the newly baptized for their mission to be a witness to Christ in the world. The term "Christ" means "anointed one," and therefore believers sealed with chrism at confirmation are rightly called "Christians," those who are anointed to profess their faith in Jesus, the Christ, and witness to the Lord in their daily lives (CCC 1294).

The perfumed oil used in the sacrament of confirmation is itself consecrated by the bishop on Holy Thursday at the cathedral for use throughout the year. The richness of the sacred chrism, the perfumed oil, expresses symbolically the richness of the gifts of the Spirit poured out upon the believer in confirmation. The prayer which accompanies the laying on of hands during the celebration of the sacrament expressly mentions seven gifts of the Spirit: wisdom, understanding, right judgment, courage, knowledge, reverence, and wonder and awe (RC 25).