



a Kendall Hunt Company

Third Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B, Catechist - RCLB Lectionary



Catechist Background and Preparation

To prepare for this session, read all the readings.

Jonah 3:1-5, 10

Psalm 25:4-5, 6-7, 8-9

1 Corinthians 7:29-31

Mark 1:14-20

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?

RCL Benziger
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Read the following **Word in Liturgy** and **Catholic Doctrine** sections. 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

Jonah, the reluctant prophet of today's first reading, was probably not a historical figure, but a fictional character developed to tell a story concerning small-minded attitudes. Most likely the Book of Jonah was written after the exile, about 400-200 B.C., when the work of reconstruction led to a kind of nationalism among the Jewish people who no longer mirrored the generosity of God. Today's passage highlights the power of God. To this alone can the overwhelming response of the people of Nineveh to Jonah's simple message be credited. To his surprise, Jonah's preaching in the great and wicked Gentile city of Nineveh actually results

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in true repentance. The Ninevites' response of faith (they "believed God") is described with the same words the patriarch Abraham used in Genesis 15:6 ("he believed God"), pointing out the similarity of all who hear God's call with open hearts. God reacts generously to Jonah's preaching, sparing everyone in Nineveh.

Simon, Andrew, James, and John do literally drop everything in response to Jesus' summons by the seashore of Galilee, as told in today's gospel. Their call is reminiscent of the call of the prophet Elisha (1 Kings 19:19-21). The nets of these fishermen is their means of livelihood. A new mission is given to them in this encounter with Jesus, however. It requires that they leave aside the life they have known to work for a human harvest that will surpass their greatest expectations. Jesus' appearance is presented in the language of an epiphany, or manifestation, of God. It is indeed a decisive moment for those who meet him.

Mark states succinctly the powerful message Jesus preaches. On first reading it may appear that Jesus simply picks up John the Baptist's call to repentance. Yet a closer look reveals that Jesus carries John's message further, adding the imperative to believe. This positive component of faith, added to the necessity of completely turning away from sin, together result in a radically new way of life for the one who hears and responds to Jesus and his message. The announcement of a time of favor from God, immediately present, gives this passage its full eschatological flavor. The Christian understanding of the mystery of sin and repentance, today's doctrinal focus, is deeply influenced by the message of today's gospel. The time of God's grace and favor is indeed at hand. In response to the Good News and the gracious kindness of God, individuals and even whole communities can repent and return to God.

Catholic Doctrine

Sin and Repentance

We believe that the world we live in and all creation is the beginning and foundation of God's works (CCC 198). The world God created, however, is wounded and scarred by sin. What was originally created by God as good, the human person, is impaired by sin, and this flawed character continues to influence our thoughts and actions. All too frequently we are drawn to what is immoral, and by sinning we choose to turn away from God who is good.



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Sin may be defined as that which offends against reason, truth, and right conscience, and fails to love God and neighbor. It wounds us and impedes human solidarity. It is a word, action, or desire contrary to God's law.

Catholics understand repentance, our turning away from sin and back to God in Christ, as a work of grace. Conscience, placed in us by God, helps us to recognize sin for what it is and to turn from it. Like the prodigal son, when we are sunk in sin, we may nevertheless "come to our senses" through a fresh initiative on God's part. God is generous and merciful to us and gives us every opportunity to repent and return. Indeed, we are given an entire household of faith, a community of charity, the Church, to support our ongoing conversion and our pursuit of holiness and virtue.

