



a Kendall Hunt Company

Fifth Sunday of Easter, Year B, Catechist - RCLB Lectionary



Catechist Background and Preparation

To prepare for this session, read all the readings.

Acts 9:26-31

Psalm 22:26-27, 28, 30, 31-32

1 John 3:18-24

John 15:1-8

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 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

The selection we read today from Acts shows Luke's balanced presentation of the growth of the young Church as the work both of the Holy Spirit ("with the consolation of the Holy Spirit it grew in numbers") and of human agency ("the brothers...sent him [Paul] on his way..."). Paul is introduced to the wary leaders of the community in Jerusalem by Barnabas. For Luke, the mother Church in Jerusalem, with its apostolic origins assuring the authenticity of its mission, was important both theologically and strategically. That Paul should receive acceptance by the apostles in Jerusalem legitimated his ministry (see Paul's own description of these events in Galatians 1:18-21). Although his theological categories are often subtle and implicit, Luke's ecclesiology clearly sees the Body of Christ as a structured community of apostolic origin and governance, with an animating force that is unmistakably divine.

In today's gospel, the imagery of vine and branches is multilayered. The figure of shared life as members of a single, vital entity (i.e., the vine) would have been particularly evocative for a population that regularly witnessed firsthand the cycle of life-death-rebirth of the vineyards planted all around them. For Jesus to say "I am the vine, you are the branches" captures an ecclesiology of immense richness and realism, both for the persecuted Christians of the first century as well as for us today. As the Body of Christ, we should expect to undergo with him the pattern of death-rebirth that we call the paschal mystery.

Catholic Doctrine

The Church as Body of Christ

CHURCH—The term "church" is the English translation of the Greek word ekklesia. Ekklesia literally means "gathering" or "assembly" in Greek. For the first Christians and for us today



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the Church is that convocation or gathering of people who, formerly scattered and divided by the chaos of sin, are now brought together by Christ's saving action. The Church is the gathering place where all men and women are called by God to rediscover their unity and salvation in Christ.

BODY—This “place,” however, is not a building. The Church is a body in the true sense of that word: the entire material structure of an organism. The Body of Christ that is the Church follows the principle of the incarnation, meaning that it is both human and divine. In its humanity, it is constituted by those who confess faith in Christ, the head of the body. In its divinity, those who are called together in Christ are animated by and gifted with the Holy Spirit.

CHRIST—This ecclesial gathering, a body with visible and spiritual attributes, has been given a mission. The Church does not exist simply for its own sake. It is to accomplish what Christ has set out for it as its mission, which is, first of all, to be the sacrament of the inner union of men and women with God. In other words, the Church is the instrument of Christ and works for the salvation of all. It is the visible plan of God's love for all people, drawing men and women into the one Body, built up into the temple of the Holy Spirit.

Given this missionary mandate, the Church is provided with charisms (special gifts to individual members) and ministries by Christ himself so that it might be an effective agent of growth for the salvation of all. There is a great diversity within the Church, individual members and their gifts being different, yet all contributing to the whole Body through the Spirit, and as such, united in Christ.