



a Kendall Hunt Company

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



Catechist Background and Preparation

To prepare for this session, read all the readings.

1 Kings 19:4-8

Psalm 34:2-3, 4-5, 6-7, 8-9

Ephesians 4:3-5:2

John 6:41-51

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

Today's first reading highlights our understanding of the Eucharist as a sacramental meal. The story of Elijah's journey into the desert where he is nourished on hearth cakes provided by an angel of God is part of a larger cycle of stories that chronicle the prophet's conflicts with King Ahab and the wicked queen Jezebel. The story finds Elijah at the point of despair, judging his mission a failure and asking for death as his only relief. However, the food provided by God's messenger nourishes not only his body (enough to sustain him on a forty-day trek to Horeb) but his spirit as well. His hopes are renewed, and his encounter with God at Horeb provides the impetus for a whole new chapter in his prophetic ministry.

Our continuous reading from chapter 6 of John's gospel once again allows our catechetical focus to be on the mystery of the Eucharist, today considered as both sacrifice and sacrament. Today's selection begins with the crowd's response (disbelief) to Jesus' first discourse in which he identified himself as the bread of life come down from heaven. The bulk of today's reading contains Jesus' second discourse, which begins with his reassertion of God's initiative in drawing people to Self and the promise of resurrection on the last day. Verse 46 stresses the unique relationship between Jesus and the Father. Then, in the final section of the discourse, Jesus returns to his interpretation of Psalm 78 (see last week's commentary) by focusing on what it means to "eat" this heavenly bread. His concluding statement links this bread to "my flesh [given] for the life of the world." This reference, while not yet explicitly Eucharistic, would still be, for a Christian reader, an unmistakable allusion to the mystery of the Eucharist. This first mention of Jesus' "flesh for the life of the world" recalls the language of John 1:14 ("the Word became flesh") and 3:16 ("God so loved the world that he gave his only Son").

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Catholic Doctrine

Eucharist as Sacrifice and Sacrament

Catholics believe that our redemption is accomplished through the paschal sacrifice of the cross of Christ. By freely giving himself up to death for the sake of sinful humanity, Jesus the Son of God paid the price of our freedom, and through his blood ransomed sinners for all time. The cross is "the source of eternal salvation" (Hebrews 5:9). The sacrifice on Calvary, therefore, is central to our faith.

When Jesus instituted the Eucharist at the Last Supper, he knew full well that suffering and death awaited him, and his words and actions anticipated the sacrifice of the cross by which his body and blood would truly be "given up" for us, sealing a new covenant. When we celebrate the Eucharist, we recall in obedience to his command, "Do this in remembrance of me"-what Jesus said and did on this occasion. Nevertheless, the Eucharist is not a reenactment of the Last Supper. Rather, it puts us immediately in touch with the very heart of the self-giving Jesus spoke of when he shared that meal with his followers. The Eucharist makes present to us the sacrifice of the cross. "In this meal, the sacrifice of the cross is continually made present in the Church..." (GIRM 48).

Since the Eucharist is the sacrifice of Christ, it is also the sacrifice of the Church. The members of the body of Christ who assemble to celebrate the Eucharist offer their own faithful lives, praise, sufferings, prayer, and good works united with those of Christ and his own total offering of self. Thus, the lives of believers take on new meaning and value as they are joined to Christ's life and offering. Indeed, those members of the Church who have gone before us and are in heaven also are joined with us in Christ through the Eucharist.

The word "sacrament" is used in two ways in relation to Eucharist. The Eucharist is one of the seven sacraments. Like the others, the Eucharist is celebrated through words and actions that we perceive through our senses, and is instituted by Christ to give grace. The sacraments are actions of the Holy Spirit at work in the Church, bringing about our share in the salvation and eternal life we have been promised. Thus, the Eucharist is a sacrament. We also use the word "sacrament" to refer to the consecrated bread and wine of the Eucharist. The "sacrament" in this use of the term arises from and can never be separated in our minds from the sacramental sacrifice that is the Mass. Next week we will reflect further on the continuing presence of Jesus in the Eucharist.