



a Kendall Hunt Company

Thirty-second Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B, Catechist - RCLB Lectionary



Catechist Background and Preparation

To prepare for the session, read all the readings.

1 Kings 17:10-16

Psalms 146:7, 8-9, 9-10

Hebrews 9:24-28

Mark 12:38-44 [or (short form) 12:41-44]

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.

The Word in Liturgy

The miracle story in today's first reading is part of a cycle of stories about Elijah that the deuteronomistic author(s) of 1 Kings have collected to highlight the power of the Word of God through the prophets. The widow is foreigner, a detail that perhaps is meant to make the reader marvel all the more at her trust in the prophet's word. In pairing this text with today's gospel, the Lectionary throws into even greater relief the interior dispositions of the widow. That she is poor is unremarkable, given the common lot of widows in that patriarchal society. What does stand out is her generosity and the stark power of the prophetic word.

The condemnation of the scribes (vv. 38-40) is a familiar aspect of Mark's gospel. Here, by pointing out the hypocrisy and greed of the scribes, the opposite qualities of the poor widow are highlighted. The story in verses 41-44 is meant to teach Jesus' disciples important lessons they (apparently) have not yet learned. Their concern with worldly success and possessions (see Mark 10:35-45, Twenty-ninth Sunday) blinded them to the true meaning of discipleship; the action of the widow, noticed by Jesus, serves to illustrate the qualities of one who is truly "great" in the Reign of God. Her generosity is a proactive gesture, arising from who-knows-what source of gratitude. Her abandonment to God's care is complete ("contributed all she had"); her attitude of quiet humility, exemplary. The affirmation of Jesus that the size of one's donation does not matter is not condemnatory of the rich who give generously. Rather, it serves to underscore that generosity is quite relative, and what matters is the spirit with which we make our gift.

Catholic Doctrine

Stewardship

Christian stewardship originates in our response to the call of Jesus Christ, our willingness to follow as his disciples. Stewardship is intimately linked to discipleship. The image of the

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steward, taken from the parables of Jesus, derives from the culture of those times, when an oikonomos (Greek for “steward” or “household manager”) was given responsibility for caring for the goods and property of an owner, who was frequently an absentee landlord. The steward was expected to manage all the household affairs so that those resources yielded as much as possible. The gospel image of the steward proclaims the clear message that a wise use of God’s gifts leads to blessings and rewards, and an unwise use results in judgment and condemnation.

This biblical understanding, therefore, sets the tone for our Catholic understanding of what it means to be a disciple of Jesus who exercises good stewardship of the resources God has given. We have each been given a unique collection of gifts from above, and it is our duty and our joy to employ those gifts in a wise and loving manner to build up the kingdom of God, the whole household entrusted to us. Why do we act in this manner, giving of our own personal resources? Ultimately, the reward of the good steward will be experienced in the world beyond this one. Nevertheless, we believe our reward also begins here and now, for the gospel also teaches us that when we give, we receive. In other words, those who live as good Christian stewards find the proper meaning and orientation to their lives, their actions, and their decisions of how to apportion the resources given to them by God.

