



a Kendall Hunt Company

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



Catechist Background and Preparation

To prepare for the session, read all the readings.

Daniel 12:1-3

Psalm 16:5, 8, 9-10, 11

Hebrews 10:11-14, 18

Mark 13:24-32

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

Today's reading from the Book of Daniel introduces the literary genre of apocalyptic writing which Catholic tradition interprets in a nonfundamentalist way. The context is a life-and-death struggle of the Jewish people, against both military force and the influence of pagan culture that threatened their ancient faith. The message of the passage is one of consolation and hope, the firm reassurance that Yahweh will triumph and that God's people will ultimately experience deliverance. The text includes a promise of: (1) deliverance for the nation at the hand of Michael, Israel's protector; (2) resurrection of many, some to life and some to "horror"; and (3) the exaltation of "the wise" who will lead others to righteousness.

Today's passage from Mark is part of a larger section (chapter 13) sometimes referred to as the "little Apocalypse" because of its similarity to the Book of Revelation. Vivid imagery of the cosmic convulsion which will accompany the Lord's coming on the last day is typical of this literary genre, and here the author has combined several strands of such material into a single narrative. Written for a community that had witnessed the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple and was currently undergoing the effects of Roman persecution, Mark's gospel message was one of both consolation and hope. Despite the "tribulation" they had seen and were still experiencing, the Son of Man will come "with great power and glory" and will bring ultimate vindication to his faithful ones ("his elect"). The message urges hope in God's abiding presence and protection, but it is not intended as a kind of almanac with which one can read the time of the last days ("no one knows").

Catholic Doctrine

Final Judgment

Final judgment is distinguished from the personal judgment that everyone undergoes immediately after death. This personal, or particular, judgment clarifies the meaning of a



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person's life, whether or not the individual has lived morally in concert with God. Christ will judge whether that person has lived a life fundamentally opting to cooperate with God's grace or to reject God's grace. This judgment is not arbitrary, since it is based on one's words and deeds, one's conduct here and now. In a sense, the judgment rendered is not imposed but arises out of a person's own life, and this particular account is brought to the light of Christ, who reveals the truth.

The final judgment, in contrast to individual judgment, concerns all of human history. Final judgment implies that history will not merely stop or that the story of creation will end without resulting in God's action. What is happening even now and what will be further clarified at the end of time is the renewal of the world in Christ. The last judgment will be in the form of a glorious revelation of God's triumph over evil.

Both the teaching on particular judgment and on final judgment proclaim that we are creatures who are given life and the responsibility to act in accord with God's plan in Jesus Christ. We are not created to be aimless or to decide our lives on the basis of personal taste or through a merely individual calculus. We are responsible to live up to the covenant established with us by God in Christ.

Scriptural descriptions with apocalyptic imagery regarding the end times are not to be read literally. Catholics read those descriptions with eyes of faith, understanding that our destiny and our hope, our anchor through rough personal and historic times, can only be found in Christ who is "the beginning and the end, the Alpha and Omega" (RM, Service of Light, Easter Vigil).