

Resources

Scripture texts

The text in the Lectionary used at Mass is the Jerusalem Bible, the psalm text is from the Grail Psalter. The texts can be found in the Lectionary or a Sunday Missal. To find the correct Sunday consult a diocesan ordo or yearbook or Liturgy Office website (www.liturgyoffice.org.uk/Calendar).

Up to 500 words from the *Jerusalem Bible* may be reproduced without application with the following acknowledgement: From *The Jerusalem Bible* © 1966 by Darton Longman & Todd Ltd and Doubleday and Company Ltd. Texts from the Grail Psalter may be reproduced by parishes with a Calamus license.

Guides to Lectionary based Catechesis

Echoing the Word of God: Formation for Catechists and Homilists in a Catechumenal Church by James Dunning. ISBN 0-929650-63-8 (Liturgy Training Publications, Chicago). *Celebrating the Lectionary*, Resource Publications Inc. A comprehensive parish resource. [www.rpinet.com/ctl/] Resource Publications also publish a magazine *Liturgical Catechesis. Living Liturgy, Spirituality, Celebration and Catechesis for Sundays and Solemnities*, Liturgical Press, annually. [www.litpress.org] *Catechumenate, A Journal of Christian Initiation*, Liturgy Training Publications [www.ltp.org] available through Liturgy Office magazine subscription service [www.liturgyoffice.org/Subscriptions]

Guides to Scripture

New Jerome Biblical Commentary ed. Joseph Fitzmyer et al. ISBN 0-1385983-63 (Prentice Hall). *The Collegeville Pastoral Dictionary of Biblical Theology* ed. Carroll Stuhlmueller CP. ISBN 0-8146-1996-7 (Liturgical Press, Collegeville)

The adoption by many other denominations of the Revised Common Lectionary (an ecumenical revision of the Roman Lectionary where many passages of scripture are shared across the Churches each Sunday) means that there are now a vast number of commentaries and other material on each Sunday's readings. An example of a web resource would be *The Text This Week* [www.textweek.com].

The word is near you, on your lips and in your heart (that is, the word of faith that we proclaim); because if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For one believes with the heart and so is justified, and one confesses with the mouth and so is saved.

Romans 10:8-10

One of a series of resources prepared by the Liturgy Office of the Bishops' Conference to accompany the publication of *The Gift of Scripture* a teaching document of the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, and of Scotland. The document can be downloaded from www.catholic-ew.org.uk and is published by the Catholic Truth Society [www.cts-online.org.uk]. The Liturgy Office is grateful to Vicky Cosstick for permission to use her material. Further resources are available from www.liturgyoffice.org.uk/Resources/ Scripture. Leaflet ©2005 Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales.

**Liturgy
Office**
ENGLAND
& WALES

Sharing the Word

Lectionary based Catechesis

*Open our heart, O Lord,
to accept the words of your Son.*

cf. Acts 16:14

A Resource for
THE GIFT OF SCRIPTURE



‘Scripture provides the starting point, foundation and norm of catechetical teaching.’ (*Interpretation of the Bible* IV.C.3) One of the aims of all catechesis is to initiate a person in the understanding of the word of God. Catechesis should present the persons and events involved in God’s plan of revelation and point out their salvific relevance.

Gift of Scripture 73

The source and the ‘sources’ of the message of catechesis

The word of God, contained in Sacred Tradition and in Sacred Scripture:

- is mediated upon and understood more deeply by means of the sense of faith of all the people of God, guided by the Magisterium which teaches with authority;
- is celebrated in the Sacred Liturgy, where it is constantly proclaimed, heard, interiorised and explained;
- shines forth in the life of the Church, in her two-thousand-year history, especially in Christian witness and particularly in that of the saints;
- is deepened by theological research which helps believers to advance in their vital understanding of the mysteries of faith;
- is made manifest in genuine religious and moral values which, as ‘seeds of the word’, are sown in human society and diverse cultures.

General Directory for Catechesis 95

The many riches contained in the one word of God are admirably brought out in the different kinds of liturgical celebrations and liturgical assemblies. This takes place as the unfolding mystery of Christ is recalled during the course of the liturgical year, as the Church’s sacraments and sacramentals are celebrated, or as the faithful respond individually to the Holy Spirit working within them. For then the liturgical celebration, based primarily on the word of God and sustained by it, becomes a new event and enriches the word itself with new meaning and power. Thus in the liturgy the Church faithfully adheres to the way Christ himself read and explained the Scriptures, beginning with the ‘today’ of his coming forward in the synagogue and urging all to search the Scriptures.

Lectionary for Mass: Introduction 3

- Because the group provides an opportunity for those taking part to learn from one another it is very important that we try to listen to each other. If anyone finds that they are not listening for at least twice as long as they are speaking they are certainly talking too much!
 - After the various times of reflection people will be invited to share their reflections in the group. However no-one should feel pressured to share anything that they would rather not share.
 - Proper confidentiality should be maintained. What is said in the group, is for the group, and not to be spoken of elsewhere.
4. Inviting the group to bring the session to a close with a time of shared prayer and intercessions.

The Session

Text in **bold** is included on the participant’s sheet.

1. **Opening Prayer**
2. **The first reading is read twice, by different people, with two minutes of silence between and after the readings. Group members are invited to put their papers down and listen, not read.**
3. The first question is always: **What word or phrase strikes you and why? Group members are asked to share briefly what they wish in response to this question. Other members listen, without responding.**
4. There may be another question related to the first reading.
5. **The second reading or Gospel is read twice, by different people, with two minutes of silence between and after the readings. Group members are asked to put their papers down and listen, not read.**
6. **What word or phrase strikes you and why? Group members are asked to share briefly what they wish in response to this question. Other members listen, without responding.**
7. One or two further questions related to the second reading or Gospel follow.
8. The meeting ends with spontaneous and intercessory prayer arising from the session

- Avoid questions that are too intrusive, invite a ‘bible study approach’, or a yes/no answer.
 - Learn how to write better questions from your experience with the groups, by asking yourself constantly ‘what might have been a better question to ask here?’ and by placing yourself in the shoes of the people hearing and responding to the questions.
5. Preparing the sheets for the sessions.
- The sheets given to participants include the chosen readings, group instructions (in bold below), questions and any helpful, brief notes of background, doctrine or other text, which may illuminate the theme for the session and/or scripture. This should not fill more than one or two A4 sheets.

Group Leader

The role of the group leader is to plan and lead the session as follows:

Before the Session

1. Sets up a focal point for the group with e.g. cross, candle, bible, image or icon, etc..
2. Places the chairs in a circle around the focal point.
3. Consider the need for welcome and hospitality on arrival.

During the Session

1. Holds the silence.
 - If this is the first time that people have tried this process, explain that there will be long silences between and after the readings and that someone in the group will make it clear when the silence is ending.
 - Once people get used (very quickly) to the silence, it is often the most valuable part of the process for them.
 - Do not shorten or omit it.
2. Ensure that participants listen to one another, that sharing does not turn into discussion, encouraging all to participate – have an eye out for members of minority groups, who may be slow to share.
 - An invitation to first write down thoughts and responses may give some people confidence.
3. It may be helpful to offer the following guidelines to help people feel confident in the group.

What is Lectionary based Catechesis?

Lectionary based Catechesis makes the fundamental connection between Liturgy and Catechesis: faith as believed, celebrated, lived and prayed. Through study and reflection together on the Sunday readings over time participants learn from each other the value of God’s word in their lives.

Who is it for?

Lectionary based Catechesis is ideal for use within the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA). It identifies the scriptures read at Sunday Mass as the foundation of catechesis and introduces catechumens to the unfolding mystery of Christ as recalled in the liturgical year. Through getting to know Christ through the scriptures, catechumens also come to know what it is to live as Christ in the world through reflection and sharing with others.

‘Scripture provides the starting point, foundation and norm of catechetical teaching.’

The focus on the scriptures at Sunday Mass means that Lectionary based catechesis is suitable for all catechesis not only the RCIA. The richness of the scriptures offers flexibility to explore those matters that are relevant to the group. Catechesis involves the formation of the person in ‘intimacy with’ Christ as well as the handing on of doctrine. Such catechesis has also worked successfully with parents of children preparing for the Sacraments, equipping them with skills to pass on the faith to their children.

The method of Lectionary based catechesis can be used with:

- adult faith sharing groups;
- those who prepare the Sunday liturgy;
- teams for Liturgy of the Word with Children;
- a homily preparation group.

Those not able to join with such groups can be part of the process of reflection and learning if the readings (or references) together with questions are printed in the weekly newsletter or made available separately.

The Lectionary and the Liturgy of the Word

It may be helpful to provide a brief note about the Liturgy of the Word. The Word is proclaimed in three readings on Sundays and festivals. The first reading is from the Old Testament (or the Acts of the Apostles in the Easter Season). It is followed by a psalm; itself of course part of God’s word, the psalm also forms the assembly’s response to the first reading. The second reading is taken from an apostle, either a letter or from the Book of Revelation. The gospel is greeted in song with an acclamation

which often accompanies a procession with the Book of the Gospels. Christ, the Word of God, is present in the proclamation of the Word.

Throughout Ordinary Time a gospel is read over the course of a year. In Year A: the gospel of Matthew; B: Mark; C: Luke. The gospel of John is read during the seasons of Lent and Easter; it also features part way through the year of Mark. The passages are taken sequentially and are arranged in narrative sections over a series of Sundays.

Each Sunday, the first reading from the Old Testament is chosen to harmonise with the gospel passage. The second reading on the other hand follows one or other letter from the New Testament on its own cycle; it is independent of the gospel and you should not expect to find a link.

During the other seasons of the year (Advent–Christmas, Lent–Easter), there is usually greater harmony between all three readings.

Process

The following notes are drawn from work done by Vicky Cosstick, who developed a process for Lectionary based catechesis that emerged during several years of work in English Martyrs parish, Streatham, South London. The process is based on traditional contemplative approaches to scripture such as *lectio divina*. While apparently simple and prescriptive, it has been tested in a wide variety of types of groups and situations. You are recommended, therefore, to stick to the process as given for at least three or four sessions before adapting it further.

Group leaders need to be prepared by going through the process themselves and reflecting on it afterwards. It is always better to do it than to try and explain it. Group skills are as important as catechetical skills.

- Groups will number ideally seven, not less than six or more than eight.
- Sessions will last a minimum of one hour, and probably 1½ hours. All three readings are too many for a one-hour session.
- A trimmed down process (to begin other types of meeting) would include the two readings and two silences and ‘what word or phrase strikes you and why?’
- The scripture used is normally that for the following Sunday, but it can be a reflection on the Word proclaimed the previous Sunday or of a feast day, or perhaps the scripture of the day itself. The psalm may also be included in some way.
- Lectionary based programmes and resources may be used to help the research, but are not followed slavishly and are not

given to participants. The aim is to wean us off programmes and resources, and to increase our confidence and skills with scripture itself and a few foundational references.

Group Preparation

Where time allows there are many advantages in group preparation by catechists together clergy. This will follow the format of a session with 1–3 prepared by a member of the group in turn. After the reflection on the scripture passages there is the opportunity to consider possible questions. As noted above different groups will need different questions. The process can also helpfully feed into the homily preparation of the clergy.

Preparation

1. Preparing a brief Opening Prayer.
 - Perhaps based on the Opening Prayer for the day from the Missal, or something more creative, a possible resource would be *Opening Prayers* (Canterbury Press, 1999).
2. Deciding which of the readings to use.
 - Do not shy from using all three Sunday readings; at least two seems to be valuable.
3. Researching the readings in commentaries.
 - Such as *New Jerome*, and perhaps expanding on a theme from the Catechism, the General Directory for Catechesis, social teaching, another text of some kind, poetry, art etc.
4. Writing questions to accompany the passages of scripture.
 - This is probably the most difficult bit and catechists will develop confidence in their ability to ask questions based on their knowledge of the group and their own prayerful reflection on the scripture readings..
 - The questions need to be open-ended and help participants to enter the scripture at a feeling/experiential level, and to link the scripture with their daily lives and journey of faith.
 - Questions asked of a group of parents preparing for their child’s baptism might be different from those asked of a group of clergy.
 - Themes for the questions will link the scripture to the context of the group.
 - Questions that encourage story telling are good.