**Easter 2 B**  **Lectionary Catechesis**

 **Fr. Alan Hartway, CPPS and Joan Blossom**

 **Guardian Angels Parish in Mead, CO**

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| Reconciliation is a predominant theme of the readings, as a teaching and practice of Jesus, as a practice in the early Church, and a challenge to Church and individuals today. It is difficult and requires of us a deep faith that is hard to grasp. We know that our reality does not match the ideal apostolic community. What we do know is that faith is at work in us through the witness of the scripture, the Holy Spirit, the water of baptism, and the blood of the new covenant. These are actually hard readings.  |

**FIRST READING: Acts 4, 32-35**

This is a seminal text in Acts. It is also controversial. On the surface the text initially appears to idealize or romanticize the reality of the earliest apostolic community, leaving us hard pressed to believe it is literally true. It is a little snapshot of the community that was very attractive to people. But there is considerable sociological evidence that it matches up with the reality, and hence the driving dynamics of the apostolic community in their missionary work, which consisted of feeding the poor and caring for the needy. The community of the resurrection would have necessarily thought to have lived in this manner. The text’s explicit “communism” scares and offends contemporary Catholics, and so it often gets explained away.

**Vs. 32: CCC 952, 2790** “A Christian is steward of the Lord’s goods” From the prophets and from this passage stem all Christian social justice economics. The Christian helps the needy. The gathering of the community into one enables the community to pray to the Father. Our prayer shapes us into the new unity.

**Vs. 33: 995** Witness of the resurrection means we eat and drink with Christ in the Eucharist and we bear witness to this hope and promise that is ours in our lives.

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| **KNOW YOUR****FAITH** | What does the “common good” mean for the practice of our faith? Write a similar paragraph about your parish today. Be authentic.  |
| **LIVE YOUR****FAITH** | Perhaps a personal question, but what do you participate in to promote the corporal works of mercy? In other words share your preferred service organizations.What are the parish programs or structures that assist the poor? In other words, how is your parish “stewards of God’s goods”? |
| **SHARE YOUR FAITH** | What words describe the communion of your faith community in which you share?How does your life bear witness to the resurrection? |
| **WORSHIP** | Does your Sunday worship experience correlate to this description in what way?Interestingly enough this image of the Church has only been painted a the final eschatological community of the angels and saints gathered around Christ in heaven. How does your church’s architecture show this final destiny of ours? |

  **First Reading**

**RESPONSORIAL: Psalm 118, 2-4. 13-15. 22-24**

This psalm is arranged as a hymn of praise for the commandments of God, that the following psalm 119 extols in greater detail. God’s mercy is connected to God’s law, which opened a way for John in the second reading to connect the love of God with the obedience to God. God’s help arrives for us in the law of love that orders our human lives and society. So the psalm today is a fine bridge between the two readings.

**Vs. 14: CCC 1808** Fortitude (strength and courage) is the third cardinal virtue. Receiving this gift of the Holy Spirit helps the disciple to endure trials, hardships, and tests of faith with consistency and stability.

**Vs. 22: CCC 587, 756** The rejected stone is neither the Law nor the Temple, but rather God’s plan for the forgiveness of sins in the body of Jesus. The stone literally refers to the edifice of the Temple/Church as a building called by many names, while here Jesus will be referring to his own person who is the foundation of the Church giving it unity, strength, and purpose. The Church as a building reflects the heavenly city of Jerusalem, adorned like a bride.

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| **KNOW YOUR****FAITH** | Name the cardinal virtues. Share.Where does the image of the “rock” come from originally in the Biblical narrative? |
| **LIVE YOUR****FAITH** | In what sense is the Lord your strength? What is the most wonderful thing you have experienced from the hand of God? |
| **SHARE YOUR FAITH** | Can anyone outside your church edifice hear you singing shouts of joy?When you share your faith with others, are you sharing rules and regulations or the grace of God’s mercy? Why is this difference important? |
| **WORSHIP** | Where is the cornerstone of your parish church and what does it say? Yes, this is a trick question. Why is the heavenly wedding banquet of heaven and earth important for the people to see when they are in the church edifice? |

 **Responsorial Psalm**

**SECOND READING: I John 5, 1-4**

The three NT letters ascribed to John are the love letters of the NT. In John’s letters the core is believing, loving, and doing good. Here they all appear together as the qualification of the disciple. One of the key ideas here is expressed in the phrase, “by this we know.” It is also read as perhaps “if” we know, or “when” we know, or even “what” we know. The ambiguity is interesting for interpretations of discipleship. One is a condition on that discipleship; the second is a temporary matter as in a coming to maturation or development over time. Finally that “what”, hard to translate into flowing English is a matter of faith material to which we assent. In some way all three are implicit together at once in the original. One cannot divorce one from the other. In any event all three result in love of the children of God and of God. In light of the gospel this Sunday and its central message of reconciliation, we can see how important this was in the early church just as it is very important today. In other words, our faith cannot be so handily separated into a compartment of our lives.

**Vs. 1: CCC 2780, 2790** Jesus reveals God as Father, and so we call God in prayer. We receive a participation in the divine relationship through the Holy Spirit’s work among us. For CCC 2790, see above.

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| **KNOW YOUR****FAITH** | Whom does the passage mean by “the children of God”?Why does John emphasize that there are three witnesses, the Spirit, water, and blood, to the divine truth in faith about Jesus? Locate these in the gospels.  |
| **LIVE YOUR****FAITH** | Why does the world need to be “conquered” by the person who is born again? What does this mean practically speaking in your life?What is the connection between discipleship and overcoming the world? |
| **SHARE YOUR FAITH** | What is the good news you have to share with someone after reading this passage?Why is the disciple compelled to proclaim the true identity of Jesus? Isn’t faith a private matter? |
| **WORSHIP** | Name the times at the Liturgy when we proclaim Jesus as the Son of God.What is going within you that you notice when you say that Jesus is Lord and the Son of God?  |

 **Second Reading**

**GOSPEL: John 20, 19-31 Resurrection Appearance and Doubting Thomas**

The CCC derives numerous doctrinal statements from the gospel today. The appearance of Jesus leads to the gift of the Holy Spirit of forgiveness. The story of Thomas’ doubt is perhaps merely an example of the forgiveness of Jesus at work; Jesus forgives Thomas and leads him into the communion of faith. In other words Jesus lives what he says. So, the main point may very well be reconciliation. After all the last verses tell us that the written gospel was for the sake of our faith, and not merely to recount biographical details about Jesus. Reconciliation is the core message of this gospel, as it is the most challenging thing to believe exists.

**Vs. 19: CCC 575, 643, 645, 659** 638-655 teaches about the resurrection. First, the CCC states that the number of testimonies is hard to deny as something physically happened. The shock of the crucifixion suggests that a resurrection would have been difficult to believe by the apostolic community, so confused were they to have suddenly seen a new reality. The gospel itself describes them as sad and disbelieving. In the face of this new revelation, their disbelief would have only increased. This is an argument that the resurrection is indeed true. In other words why would they have spread a fact that they themselves were challenged by. The resurrection is confirmed by the senses of touch, hearing, and sharing a meal. The forty days of his company invites the disciples more deeply into the kingdom of God. The final ascension appearance finally unites Jesus with the Father.

**Vs. 20: CCC 645** Cf. above.

**Vss. 21-22: CCC 1087, 1120, 1441** In the sacramental economy, the power and grace of the Spirit sanctifies. This power flows through the apostolic succession of the Church and certifies the Church’s authenticity. “The ordained ministry or ordained priesthood is at the service of the baptismal priesthood.” There is a continuous and unbroken bond or chain between what the priest does, what the apostles did, and what Jesus does. CCC1441 has “Only God forgives sins.” “By virtue of his divine authority, (Jesus) gives this power to men to exercise in his name.”

**Vs. 21: CCC 730, 858** In dying, Jesus returns his breath to the Father who in turns gives it back in the resurrection. Then Jesus breathes his spirit into the Church. The apostles, by their very name, are emissaries, ambassadors, and missionaries. The Church is sent.

**Vs. 22-23: CCC 976, 1485** Faith specifically includes the forgiveness of sins. This power of the Holy Spirit, breathed upon the Church necessarily accompanies faith in the resurrection.

**Vs. 22: CCC 730, 788, 1287** The Church is sent as Jesus was sent – to forgive sins, heal, and raise up. Jesus continues to communicate his divine presence in the Church through the presence of the Holy Spirit. This same Spirit is not just for Jesus, but meant for the whole community of believers. Reception of the Holy Spirit comes promptly after baptism. Jesus consistently promised this Spirit in his teachings.

**Vs. 23: CCC 1462, 2839** Bishops preeminently hold the power to forgive which they then commission their presbyters to do. The bishops moderate “penitential discipline.” Forgiveness of sins is embedded centrally in the petitions of the Lord’s Prayer as a compelling force in the communion of the Church.

**Vss. 24-27: CCC 644** The gospels explicitly share the apostles’ doubts, as shown in Thomas. That they doubted provides evidence and logic that they did not make it up. Grace brought them to faith.

**Vs. 26: CCC 645, 659** See above.

**Vs. 27: CCC 645** See above.

**Vs. 28: CCC 448** Thomas knows Jesus now as Lord, which connotes love, awe, faith, affection, and mystery.

**Vs. 30: CCC 514** Many of the details of the life of Jesus are not written down, especially those things that seem to interest the modern person; what was written was for the sake of faith, and not some mere biography.

**Vs. 31: CCC 442, 514** At the center of our Christian faith stands the proclamation that Jesus is Son of God.

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| **KNOW YOUR****FAITH** | What do we mean by the resurrection?What is the apostolic succession and why is this important? |
| **LIVE YOUR****FAITH** | Share a story of your doubt turned into faith. How do you experience the risen Lord in this story? |
| **SHARE YOUR FAITH** | In the style of apologetics, explain why priests have power to forgive sins.To evangelize is to proclaim Jesus is the Son of God. How should we do this? |
| **WORSHIP** | Faith leads to worship as in the case of Thomas. What are your obstacles to worship?What is the difference between worshipping out of fear or doing so in peace? |

 **Gospel**

**Next Sunday: Easter 3 B: Acts 3, 13-15. 17-19; Psalm 4, 2. 4. 7-8. 9; I John 2, 1-5a; Luke 24, 35-48**