**Easter 4 B**  **Lectionary Catechesis**

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

 **Guardian Angels Parish in Mead, CO**

|  |
| --- |
| Good Shepherd Sunday prompts reflections on Church leadership, not only of the hierarchy, but as the responsibility of every member in precisely what work we do as Church. The laity are leaders, too. The readings offer insights to this mission. At least two talking points, *nulla salus* and the responsibility of the Jews could be sorted out in the discussion and sharing but not in the homily. Resisting a personal critique of the contemporary state of Church leadership is also not appropriate homiletic material. Keep it local, keep it grateful.  |

**FIRST READING: Acts 4, 8-12**

When Peter was first arrested by the Sanhedrin, this is his answer to his first interrogation. The question was about the source of Peter’s power, largely because it threatened their own and the religious status quo. This leads one to ask about the power of the Church today, of course, and it what ways the Church still threatens the status quo. At the center of Peter’s brief kerygma stand two central facts: the death and resurrection of Christ. These are the source of Peter’s power. Through these, the forgiveness of sins is effected. After his release, Peter leads the community in healing, prayer, and solidarity.

**Vs. 10: CCC 597** Too many Catholics today remain anti-semitic and think that the Jews were responsible for Jesus’ crucifixion. The Catechism teaches that the manipulation of the crowd, the individual judgment of God, and Jesus’ forgiveness on the cross all lead to the teaching of *Nostra Aetate 4* from Vatican II are factors that preclude Jewish responsibility. But more than that, if the Jews were responsible, it would suggest that we were not. Indeed Jesus died because of our sins, and therefore, incontrovertibly we are all responsible for Jesus’ death.

**Vs. 11: CCC 756** The English word “church” has to fill in for both the physical building of the church where are parish gathers to worship and the “Church” as the body of Christ and the “Church” as the teaching, sanctifying, and governing authority of the juridical institution. Greek is far more clear: κυριἀκον is a building, ἐκκλησία is the body of Christ, and ἰερἀρχος is the juridical institution. Sometimes we get confused in English. The rejected stone is a living stone; believers are members.

**Vs. 12: CCC 432, 452, 846, 847, 848, 1507** In the Hebrew pronunciation of the name of Jesus, the very name of God is included and obvious to such a native speaker. It is the name above all others. Healing stands at the core of the mission of Jesus, especially as reconciliation. The “stumbling block” for the rabbinic leadership was Jesus claims about the redemption of sins. This last verse of the reading stimulates much discussion. “Outside the Church there is no salvation.” Or “*Extra ecclesiam nulla salus*.” The CCC begins with a question, a sign of the state of controversy. More precisely all salvation comes from Christ through the Church. The CCC uses the language of “necessary” for salvation. Jesus affirmed that faith and baptism were necessary, which are the shared treasure of the Church to dispense, hence the necessity of the Church. “This affirmation is not aimed at those who through no fault of their own, do not know Christ and his Church.” CCC847 explains this clearly and could be read aloud. God can lead anyone to salvation in some way, nonetheless the Church (εκκλησία) must evangelize and be missionary. Each sacrament invokes the name of Jesus.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **KNOW YOUR****FAITH** | What does the Church and scripture teach about salvation here?Who is responsible for the death of Jesus on the cross? |
| **LIVE YOUR****FAITH** | Locate yourself in the descriptions and vocabularies of the “church” above.Then, why should a person have to be a Christian and a Catholic, if salvation from God can come through other means?  |
| **SHARE YOUR FAITH** | What is your personal missionary responsibility?What are the stumbling blocks to Jesus today? |
| **WORSHIP** | Locate the name of Jesus in each of the sacraments.List the rituals and gestures that honor the name of Jesus? |

  **First Reading**

**RESPONSORIAL: Psalm 118, 1. 8-9. 21-23. 26. 28. 29**

We’ve had this psalm much lately**.** When situated and read in the light of the gospel today about the Good Shepherd, the psalm may be read as the cry of the sheep for God’s help, healing, protection, and mercy. The psalmist expresses vividly why all the bleating. The world is a threatening and perilous place. The gates of righteousness are opened, the rejected stone is placed first and foremost. Reading the whole psalm, one grasps its Easter connections.

**Vs. 22: CCC 587, 756** Cf. above.

**Vs. 26: CCC 559** How will Jerusalem (us today) welcome our messiah? Liturgically with a quote from this psalm.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **KNOW YOUR****FAITH** | How is “Jerusalem” a metaphor for the human city and for the Church?Who is it that comes in the name of the Lord? |
| **LIVE YOUR****FAITH** | How does your life bear witness to God’s mercy?Why should we not take refuge in “princes”, who stand here for all earthly powers? |
| **SHARE YOUR FAITH** | Share a story in which you showed kindness and mercy when it was challenging.Why is it that mercy bears more witness to the gospel than catechizing or preaching?  |
| **WORSHIP** | The psalm gives thanks. What does the word “Eucharist” mean?Name the “rejected stones” in our culture today. In what way would you imagine these individuals or groups of people to be made into cornerstones?  |

 **Responsorial Psalm**

**SECOND READING: I John 3, 1-2**

Love is bestowed on us from God. There is a suggestion in this that human love is less than the divine love and ultimately less than satisfying. The question remains: how to know Jesus? What does this mean? The second verse is purely eschatological; the final revelation shows us to be who we really are now. The Eastern Churches have a much more developed notion of “theosis” than the West.

**Ch. 3: CCC 2822** Our Father “desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.” I Tim 2, 3-4. The CCC puts this together with the universal mercy of God and the great love commandment as preeminently operative in the reign of God.

**Vs. 1: CCC 1692** This is the second paragraph at the beginning of the quarter of the CCC called “Life in Christ”, the morality quarter. Through the sacraments, we have become children of God, and so this section of the CCC describes the life of God’s children, “a life worthy of the gospel.” Grace effects this in us through sacraments and prayer. And so the morality portion of the CCC is rightly sandwiched between the two.

**Vs. 2: CCC 163, 1023, 1161, 1720, 2519, 2772** “Faith is already the beginning of eternal life.” #1023 contains a quote from Pope Benedict XII about those who go to heaven and when in very precise and elaborate language. The NT uses phrases to describe heaven: coming of the kingdom of God, beatific vision, entering the joy of the Lord, and entering into God’s rest. Explaining the Beatitude of the pure of heart as the precondition for the beatific vision. This purity enlightens the mind/soul to see rightly. The Lord’s Prayer’s seven petitions look forward to the fullness of the reign of God which includes merciful forgiveness and freedom from evil.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **KNOW YOUR****FAITH** | After death, when is the individual brought into the rest and peace of God?What is faith? |
| **LIVE YOUR****FAITH** | What does it mean for you to be God’s child now?What does it mean that John writes “we shall be like him”? |
| **SHARE YOUR FAITH** | What does it mean for you that your neighbor is God’s child, even though they may well be in our diverse culture of a different race, language, or religion?How will the world come to know the truth of this passage because of your life? |
| **WORSHIP** | You’ll need a roman missal for this one. Review the language each of the Eucharistic Prayers uses when speaking about all the departed. Share your thoughts.The children are invited to the table of the Father. The Eucharist is a foretaste of the heavenly banquet. How do you explain this? |

 **Second Reading**

**GOSPEL: John 10, 11-18** **The Good Shepherd**

The confrontation between Jesus and the Sanhedrin leadership intensifies after the incident with the man born blind. The Sanhedrin’s authority is challenged. John 10, 1-30 contrasts the leadership/shepherding style of Jesus with theirs. Again in the temple teaching and healing, they eventually pick up stones to throw at him, demonstrating the violence of their sort of power over others. See Psalm 82, 6. After this, Jesus returns to the trans Jordan and continues his ministry. Mesopotamian kings used the title “Shepherd” to define themselves, so this would not have been foreign to people of that day nor something negative to imagine. Nomadic shepherding life style would have been everywhere visible, and it was fairly clearly understood as one of the economic bases of society. Too much, until Pope Francis, has been negatively said about their smell.

**Vss. 11-15: CCC 754** The Church is the sheepfold, a sole and necessary “gateway” to Christ, the ultimate shepherd of the flock.

**Vs. 11: CCC 553, 754** The power of the keys represents a specific authority given to Peter and the Church. The power of the keys signifies the governance of the house, opening and closing the house, and protecting the house (blessings).

**Vs. 16: CCC 60** The Jewish people are the trustees of the promise of God; the Church is “grafted” unto these roots, according to several biblical texts. ( Rm 11, 17-18. 24.28; Jn 11, 52)

**Vss. 17-18: CCC 614, 649** The sacrifice of Jesus is the ultimate, definitive, and final sacrifice and a gift from God. The sacrifice is a restoration of the obedience which we had rebelled against. In other words, the fundamental order of the cosmos is of God; obedience aligns ourselves with this order of things. The next citation explains the resurrection.

**Vs. 17: CCC 606** The will of the Father is manifest most in Jesus’ self sacrifice.

**Vs. 18: 609** Jesus’ love for us brings the Father’s love to us. This love motivates and underlies his love.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **KNOW YOUR****FAITH** | What does the Church teach about the means to salvation?What are the keys to the kingdom? |
| **LIVE YOUR****FAITH** | What does a personal will mean for you in your life?Why does our culture tend to think of obedience as something negative? |
| **SHARE YOUR FAITH** | How can a lay person exercise the keys of the kingdom in one’s community?For whom might you lay down your life? |
| **WORSHIP** | Read and share Psalm 23, the Lord Is My Shepherd.Who are the other sheep who do not belong to this fold and in what sense do they worship with us?  |

 **Gospel**

**Next Sunday: Easter 5 B: Acts 9, 26-31; Psalm 22; I John 3, 18-24; John 15, 1-8**