**LENT 4 C Lectionary Catechesis**

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| The practical spirituality and ministry implied in the I Corinthians 5 reading is too much to pass up; the gospel story of the prodigal son provides a concrete example of what Paul is talking about for the Church. Reconciliation shows itself in the qualities of justice, joy, thanksgiving, humility, and wisdom. The joy in this Laetare Sunday is the joy of coming home, as in the first reading, the joy of finally being heard and answered, the joy of reunion with God, and the joy of family at peace.  |

**FIRST READING: Joshua 5, 9a. 10-12**

The Hebrews have come to the end of their forty years in the desert, crossed the Jordan River into Canaan, and have come to Gilgal. For the first time they eat the fruits of the land God led them to and gave them to fulfill his promise. Moses has already died; Joshua is the leader. Their meal of unleavened cakes at this first Passover in the holy land foretells the Eucharist. The connection between the Passover of the Jews from Egypt and the Passover of the Jesus is completed. The very next thing that happens is the siege and fall of Jericho. The conquest then begins. Up to this point they were utterly dependent on God’s providential care.

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| **KNOW YOUR****FAITH** | Explain how this story narrates a “type” of the Eucharist.Why did God choose the Hebrew people to be God’s chosen? |
| **LIVE YOUR****FAITH** | Reflect on the importance or significance of land ownership in our own culture.The land is a gift from God. Reflect on our environmental stewardship of the land. |
| **SHARE YOUR FAITH** | Joshua 4, 12 tells of other tribal peoples with the Hebrews supporting them and joining them. Why is it hard to have hospitality for the stranger and foreigner and share your “bread” with them?How do we incorporate new people into the body of Christ today? |
| **WORSHIP** | Why is the Eucharist only made from unleavened bread?Reflect on the RCIA rites? |

  **First Reading**

**RESPONSORIAL: Psalm 34, 2-3. 4-5. 6-7**

**Vs. 3: CCC 716** The poor most await the promised fulfillment of God’s justice in the coming of the Messiah. Humility and meekness are their characteristic from the Spirit.

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| **KNOW YOUR****FAITH** | Why does this psalm and so many other places in the Bible single out the poor as the most immediate recipients of God’s salvation?Name the characteristics that most dispose ourselves toward God. |
| **LIVE YOUR****FAITH** | What does it mean for you to bless the Lord at all times?What is your greatest fear that God delivers you from? |
| **SHARE YOUR FAITH** | How do you answer the challenge that God doesn’t appear to be hearing the cry of the poor in the modern world?’’What are some best practices for the Church to reach out to the poor? |
| **WORSHIP** | Reflect on considering your own poverty before the throne of God at Mass.Connect this psalm with the gospel and share your reflections. |

 **Responsorial Psalm**

**SECOND READING: I Corinthians 5, 17-21**

Of the 15 times that the word reconciliation appears in the New Testament, here are five of those instances in these verses. This introduces the passing away of the narratives of reconciliation practice and the unfolding of the new story of whom we are yet to be. God is making all things new; God’s way is the way of reconciliation, even for the sinner, the perpetrator of violence, the one who shatters and breaks, who has been turned in on themselves. There is a specific ministry of reconciliation mentioned here that is not connected with a presbyteral or sacerdotal ministry in the Church. The “we” is broad and universal for the whole Church. The message of reconciliation, actually in Greek the “logos” meaning the account or narrative of reconciliation, is the foundational kerygma of the Church, because it is the story of the human person returning to God through Christ. Here more than anywhere else in the Scripture are these two brought together for those in the Missionaries of the Precious Blood as our charism, inclusive of all the forms of membership. The author urges us into this state of being reconciled. It is somewhat surprising that there is no CCC reference for this passage, as it would seem rather central to the whole of discipleship and mission of the Church.

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| **KNOW YOUR****FAITH** | Beyond the Sacrament of Confession, what does reconciliation mean?How is God at work in us bringing about a new creation?  |
| **LIVE YOUR****FAITH** | Share your stories of reconciliation in your life.Why is it so hard for us to enter the process and mystery or reconciliation? |
| **SHARE YOUR FAITH** | Clarify the connections between evangelization and reconciliation.At what point does the evangelist introduce the notion of reconciliation with God in the process of conversion? |
| **WORSHIP** | What parts of the Liturgy enable and invite us to return to God to be reconciled?How are the Sunday lectionary readings part of the “message of reconciliation”? |

 **Second Reading**

**GOSPEL: Luke 15, 1-3. 11-32 The Prodigal Son**

**CS Lewis** somewhere once wrote that this is the greatest short story ever told. It is the ancient human pattern of sin and reconciliation in a scant 21 verses, and yet the story has no end really to it. The story just rolls into the future, to our lives, and we are left to imagine what happens next and wonder what that might be if we were anyone of the main characters in the story. The biggest questions are perhaps these: when will I go into the banquet? When will I come to the Eucharist? Who am I in the story?

**Chapter 15: CCC 1443, 1846** Jesus forgave sins and brought people back into community life. Just as Jesus receives sinners at table, so too he will welcome them to the Messianic feast of heaven. The Gospels are a revelation of Jesus’ forgiveness at the core of his healing work.

**Vss. 1-2: CCC 589** Jesus scandalized when he showed mercy to sinners. The table of sinners points to the heavenly banquet. Jesus’ behavior at the table reveals his true identity, the Messiah who forgives.

**Vss. 11-32: CCC 545, 2839** Jesus calls sinners to the heavenly banquet table, Mark 2, 17. There is joy in heaven when one sinner repents. The proof of the depth and scope of the love of Jesus is that he died for us sinners. In the Our Father prayer in the petition of forgiveness we are asking the Father to make us holy. We acknowledge in the petition our trespass and our need for forgiveness ourselves. It is a confession of our need for God. We find God’s forgiveness in the sacraments of the Church.

**Vss. 11-31: CCC 1700** At the opening sections on life in Christ, the Church begins with the acknowledgment and insistence on the dignity of every human person by the very fact of creation. With grace they chose and mature into full children of God. The process of the prodigal son story reveals the process of perfection toward ultimate charity.

**Vss. 11-24: CCC 1439** The story of the prodigal son reveals in every step taken the pattern of the forgiveness of sins, from the moment sin starts in us through to the Father’s merciful forgiveness. Likewise each steps reveals the groundwork of the journey of conversion as a process of return. Robe, ring and festive banquet point to the wedding feast of heaven and earth.

**Vs. 18: CCC 1423, 2795** Jesus calls us to conversion and so this is another name for the Sacrament of Reconciliation. The sacrament “consecrates . . . the steps of conversion, penance, and satisfaction.” Our Father is in heaven and to God we yearn to return from our state of sin. Christ descends so that we might ascend.

**Vs. 21: CCC 2795** cf. above.

**Vss. 23-32: CCC 589** cf. above.

**Vs. 32: CCC 1468** The sacrament of reconciliation restores us to the Father’s love. Reconciliation is followed by a return to the Father’s table.

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| **KNOW YOUR****FAITH** | How are we restored to God’s love for us? What does the CCC mean by calling this a process of perfection toward ultimate charity? |
| **LIVE YOUR****FAITH** | Share, if you are able, a story of reconciliation such as this in your own life or family.Who are you being in this story right now in your life? |
| **SHARE YOUR FAITH** | Why do some religious people feel as if they’re better than everyone else?What can you do to facilitate and promote God’s mercy for a bad person? |
| **WORSHIP** | When you pray the Our Father, do you experience the Father’s love for you and others?What are the criterion for welcome at the Eucharistic banquet of eternal life? |

 **Gospel**

**Next Sunday: OT 5 C: Isaiah 43, 16-21; Psalm 126, 1-2. 2-3. 4-5. 6; Philippians 8-14; John 8, 1-11**