**Easter ABC Lectionary Catechesis**

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First of all, dear presider and preacher, make a promise you will not heap scorn and sarcasm on the reindeer and rabbit Catholics as I’ve just done in this sentence. It is your job to greet the people with the good news of the resurrection. Easter has nothing to do with your personal judgments about the quality of anyone’s faith. That said, proclaim the resurrection! If you need help with this, please listen to the Credo of a Mozart or Beethoven Mass, or for a real kick start, the “Resurrexit sicut dixit” of Berlioz’ Messe Solennelle, #9 on the John Elliot Gardiner 1994 cd if you need to remember the pace of things. This is not the Sunday for a lecture or a teaching. Let your proclamation be a passionate, prophetic poem to stir the weary hearts.

**Acts 10, 34a. 37-43 Peter’s Kerygma in the House of Cornelius**

Peter’s speech in the House of the Roman centurion Cornelius proclaims (kerygma) the core of the faith that enters into the earliest Creeds. “He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried and rose again on the third day according to the scriptures.” These five verbs infuse our faith with the actions of God. Evangelization only arises out of the kerygma. If we do not know the kerygma, then we cannot be evangelized or be evangelizing. In Cornelius’ house, the gospel is preached to the nations. Review the whole story which is a powerful example of reconciliation. If we meet Jesus, we must meet our own sufferings, our dying, our return to the earth, and our resurrection. As with Jesus’ life, so too with our own; we must keep to the same five verbs.

**Vs. 38: CCC 438, 453, 486, 1289** The first citation reveals Jesus’ messianic consecration, his anointing as the Christ; this anointing sends or commissions him to reveal the Holy One to the people. Jesus was conceived and anointed by the power of the Holy Spirit. While the laying on of hands came first historically, an anointing with oil, chrism, was quickly introduced. Hence, the name Christian is applied already In Acts 11, 48.

**Vs. 39: CCC 597** Commenting on the trial of Jesus, the Church does not attribute responsibility to the Jews for two reasons: Jesus died for and because of all of us and because he forgave them on the cross. Vatican II “Nostra Aetate” 4 “The Jews should not be spoken of as rejected or accursed (because of behavior during the Passion) as if this followed from holy Scripture.”

**Vs. 41: CCC 659, 995** At the Ascension Jesus manifests his final glory. To be a witness to Christ, one must be a witness to His resurrection. This is a challenge in a culture of death, such as ours.

**Vs. 42: CCC 679** Jesus acquires his right of judgment because of the cross, through which we are also saved because authentic and deepest love is complete here.

**Know your Faith:**

What is the kerygma? Why does it matter?

What does the Church teach about the Jews?

**Live your Faith:**

Each of us in some way has experiences of suffering, death, burial, and resurrection. Share one of these with your group?

Compare and contrast your experiences of being in a human court and what you imagine the heavenly court to be?

**Share your Faith:**

Read how Peter shares his faith. How can we share our faith within this culture?

How is the resurrection lived in your life now?

**Worship**:

What is the response of the household of Cornelius to the visit and proclamation of Peter?

How does the Easter Mass emphasize the kerygma in a special way? (Hint: renewal of baptismal promises)

**Ps 118, 1-2. 16-17. 22-23**

This is our responsorial psalm today and next Sunday. The emphasis is on the enduring mercy of God and on the rock which is Jesus Christ. Vs. 17 contains the great kerygma in one of its shortest forms and impels the Church to this proclamation. “I shall not die but live, and declare the works of the Lord.”

**Vs. 22: CCC 587, 756** The stumbling block to faith in Jesus is in the redemption of our sins. There is a powerful cultural dynamic at work that we are able to save ourselves and have no need for God. As Jesus is identified with the rejected rock, so too the Church is built on this rock, on Christ’s foundation of the apostles, so that we become a household of God. This psalm points us forward to the living city of Jerusalem, “prepared like a bride”.

**Know your Faith:**

How do you know you shall live forever and be raised up?

Why are cornerstones meaningful parts of church architecture?

**Live your Faith:**

In light of this psalm what are we here on earth to do?

How do you feel “the right hand of the Lord” in your life?

**Share your Faith:**

How can you declare God’s works?

Share the most wonderful thing you’ve ever laid your eyes on?

**Worship**:

For what do you have to give thanks this Easter this year?

How do you connect the good things God has done for you with a proclamation of God’s enduring mercy?

**Colossians 3, 1-4 or I Cor 5, 6b-8**

There are two options for the second reading. In the first, the very ancient dynamic of religion is at work beneath this passage –“as above, so below.” In other words, when we seek life in Christ, we already begin to live that future life in heaven. This thinking re-orients our lives. Paul’s “raised with Christ” refers to having come up out of the waters of baptism; we pass from death to life. The second option is built solely on the image of the Passover’s unleavened bread. The reference to blood is there, but oblique. The leaven of this world symbolizes all our conveniences, our ease, and comforts we make for ourselves, a way we control our lives and leave God out. Unleavened bread is the bread of flight and freedom from earthly things.

**Vs. 1: CCC 1002** In some profound sense our life in Christ, and therefore the resurrection, already begins now.

**Vs. 3: 665, 1003, 1420, 2796** In the Ascension is our entry into heaven. The Scripture speaks of this life as “hidden.” The Eucharist is our bread from heaven. One of the implications of this is that we are subject to suffering and sin, but our faith is assured by the resurrection and encouraged. We already pray, “Our Father, who are in heaven.”

**Vs. 4: CCC 1003, 2772** Our faith in the resurrection gives us hope.

**Or**

**Vss. 6-8: CCC 129** The Old and New Testaments are read in light of one another through the lens of Christ.

**Vs. 7: CCC 608, 610, 613** Christ as paschal lamb refers to the ancient redeeming act of God in the Passover, which led the New Testament writers to speak of Christ as the ransom for all because we are signed with his precious blood, like the houses of ancient Hebrews in Egypt. The Last Supper becomes the memorial of voluntary, free offering of self. The blood of this New Lamb is poured out for the forgiveness of sins.

**Know your Faith:**

Why is the Eucharistic bread unleavened and pure?

In what way is the Eucharist “bread from heaven” for you?

**Live your Faith:**

You know from experience the difference between unleavened and leavened bread. Share how this is an image for how you live your life.

How would people who know your life, think that you have found and already live in Christ?

**Share your Faith:**

Share in your group what is your list of the things of heaven.

When we discover the resurrection, there’s something then wanting in this world. What is that for you?

**Worship**:

Why do we have an extended Lamb of God hymn before communion?

What are you doing today to extend the celebration of Eucharist and resurrection into your family?

**Jn 20, 1-9 Mary Magdala, Peter, and John experience the Empty Tomb**

The events of the gospel occur “while it was still dark”, the outer darkness reflecting the interior darkness and lack of understanding or belief. The Peter and John could see inside the empty tomb, implies either that they were carrying some sort of torch or that it was beginning to dawn. Light and darkness operate symbolically in the whole narrative. Mary Magdala sees and runs to share the good news; yet she is unclear as to what has happened. She intuits and hopes for good news; on that basis she becomes an evangelist. “They” in the story remain unknown to us. A stone rolled away, an empty tomb, orderly arranged burial clothes suggest that something tremendous has happened here. The very next verse tells us the disciples returned home. Mary remained. John 20, 10ff. In vs. 18 she leaves the garden a second time and shares the news of her encounter with the risen Lord with the Apostles.

**Vs. 1: CCC 2174** Here we are taught in light of the resurrection why Sunday is the Lord’s day, the eighth day, the day of the new creation, and it is because of the resurrection that we gather for worship on this day.

**Vs. 2: CCC 640** This reference is all about the empty tomb and the Easter mystery. It is not in itself anything, but enables its three visitors to believe in the resurrection, sort of as its proof. This may be why the tomb itself was not necessarily a focus of worship for the first followers of Jesus. Very much unlike the empty tomb, the resurrection is everywhere, as they discover during Christ’s appearances.

**Vss. 5-7: CCC 640** This citation, appearing four times for this reading would seem to be the focus.

**Vs. 6: CCC 640**

**Vs. 7: CCC 515** The divine and human mystery of Jesus are inextricably interwoven together.

**Vs. 8: CCC 640**

**Know your Faith:**

What is the resurrection?

What are the other human theories about what happens when we die?

**Live your Faith:**

Every Spring we experience new life. How is the resurrection present to you as new life?

How does the resurrection most challenge your life and thinking?

**Share your Faith:**

Following the reasoning of Peter and companions, the empty tomb points to the resurrection. Share your experience of this same line of reasoning. What are the objections to the logic of the empty tomb?

We’ve all visited cemeteries or been present for graveside services. What are your thoughts at those times?

Mary Magdala is the proto-evangelist. What is her message to the apostles?

**Worship:**

The central time in the life of a Christian is the Sunday Eucharist. How is this the “source and summit” of your life?

Sunday Mass has many facets, among them social, educational, support, etc. Why do you go to Mass?

**Next Sunday: Easter 2 A: Acts 2, 42-47; Psalm 118; I Peter 1, 3-9; John 20, 19-31**