**LENT 5 C Lectionary Catechesis**

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| The gospel story is so well known and so many readers get fixated on whatever Jesus mysteriously wrote in the dust of the Temple pavement. Sometimes the main message of the personal encounter with Jesus is missed, but perhaps this is the binding link for the readings. If anything, the highlights of the Philippians read are key to our Lenten journey of faith. Lent moves us from repentance to the joy of forgiveness. |

**FIRST READING: Isaiah 43, 16-21**

This text comes from a longer passage announcing God’s actions in history which examples the prophet sets out to build up the faith and hopes of the people in the distress of exile and return. For all of God’s actions of redemption, the people ought to have responded with praise and worship, but instead they fail. This is set out what follows; God calls them into the court room of divine justice. Notice the weaving together of very strong images from the natural world with images of the collapse of military power. Of course God is leading us to the new covenant, and the water springing forth is eventually seen as Baptism. We are chosen not of our own righteousness, but because God desires our praise, and in the context of this prophecy, the praise arises as a result of God’s power in the natural and historical world.

**Vs. 19: CCC 711** God will create new things. This is quoted again in Revelations 21, 9. This points to the coming of the Messiah, the Holy Spirit, and the new heaven and earth.

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| **KNOW YOUR**  **FAITH** | Why does God create a new heaven and a new earth?  What is the living water in the desert of this world for God’s people to drink? |
| **LIVE YOUR**  **FAITH** | What are the new things God is creating in your life?  Like the flood of Noah, God destroys the powers of this world in the waters. Why do you continue to believe in the military strength of armies to solve problems? |
| **SHARE YOUR FAITH** | Name ways the Church can better “announce God’s praise.”  What role does the practice of “remembrance” play in evangelization? |
| **WORSHIP** | The purpose of the natural world, according to this prophecy, is simply to praise God. What is our human purpose for existence according to the last verse of this passage?  How are you praising God each week, each day with your life? |

**First Reading**

**RESPONSORIAL: Psalm 126, 1-2. 2-3. 4-5. 6**

One of the Psalms of Ascent, in two parts, celebrates the joy of return from the Babyblonian Exile. The first part expresses the astonishment at God’s saving action in human history. The second part has a saying about planting and harvesting. Perhaps the connection to the gospel story of radical forgiveness is that God plants the seeds of repentance in us that these seeds (God’s word) might bear the fruit of salvation and redemption. The first necessary stage of repentance cannot be skipped in the spiritual life and rush straight for the joy of salvation. The sacks of seed are meant to be understood as smaller than the great sized bundled sheaves. In other words saying that the endurance of repentance is not so heavy a burden as the fruits of the Holy Spirit at the harvest.

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| **KNOW YOUR**  **FAITH** | Why can God’s Word be called a seed?  What are the fruits of the Holy Spirit? |
| **LIVE YOUR**  **FAITH** | Share the way your faith is a joyful thing in your life.  Share a story of God’s providential care for you. |
| **SHARE YOUR FAITH** | Share ways to best welcome the exiles, refugees, and immigrant in the modern world.  Who are the captives of our modern culture? |
| **WORSHIP** | How is return, repentance, conversion experessed in the Liturgy of the Eucharist?  What is the joy in the Liturgy? |

**Responsorial Psalm**

**SECOND READING: Philippians 3, 8-14**

This is a very complicated and challenging reading. It is somewhat autobiographical for Paul, but the conformity of our own lives to the kerygmatic narrative of Jesus Christ is foundational to the life of the intentional disciple. Paul sets out the journey of maturation in Christ, the principles for spiritual growth, and his eagerness and dedication to the task: God’s upward calling. The play on words here may be the calling and the word Church are related, and so the calling is into the community of disciples in Christ. Vs. 10 is certainly the center of the passage.

**Vss. 8-11: CCC 428** One cannot teach Jesus Christ unless one knows Jesus Christ, and this knowing encounter is always a result of healing and forgiving. To know Jesus means to lose all things, obtain Jesus, and be found in Him. The sharing of sufferings organizes this knowing.

**Vs. 8: CCC 133** This is a very strongly, almost insistent statement about the importance of knowing Christ through the Scripture St. Jerome is quoted: “Ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ.”

**Vss. 10-11: CCC 989, 1006** Teaching that just as Christ has been raised from the dead, so we too shall be raised out of our conformity to Christ. Physical death is an unavoidable aspect of the human condition; just as faith understand it results from the wages of sin, so faith understands that they by participation in Christ are raised from the dead.

**Vs. 10: CCC 648** The resurrection is God’s “transcendent intervention” in human history. All the powerful acts of the Father and Son correlate to one another revealing the true relationship of Jesus and his power. The Father raises Jesus up. In this way the humanity of the Son is “introduced . . . into the Trinity.”

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| **KNOW YOUR**  **FAITH** | What are the ways you can encounter Jesus Christ?  What is the core kerygmatic narrative? |
| **LIVE YOUR**  **FAITH** | What helps you to mature in your faith and in Christ?  Share the things you value or categorize and make a hierarchy of the things of value in your life. |
| **SHARE YOUR FAITH** | How does the evangelize invite “conformity” to Christ?  What does Paul’s teaching on suffering have to offer the modern world? |
| **WORSHIP** | Scriptures are read at every Mass and sacrament and frequently blessings. Share your thoughts on the power of the readings at the Liturgy.  Thinking ahead towards Easter, the Vigil liturgy is unlike any other. Since Pius XII it holds the primary place in the liturgical year. Why is the Resurrection so important that it holds the central place in our Catholic faith? |

**Second Reading**

**GOSPEL: John 8, 1-11 Jesus Forgives the Woman Caught in Adultery**

Numerous early manuscripts do not have these verses. The Church wrestled with including this story in the text or to exclude it. The story is scandalous, literally a stumbling block for the righteous. The forgiveness of Jesus, the lightness of his sentence, his strong condemnation of the men shocked the earliest audiences of the story, and surely all those present at the original event. As the modern Church wrestles with the contemporary issues of marriage and re-marriage (although no one speaks any more about adultery which the media has somehow made acceptable), this story has the possibility of the same modern shock. But isn’t this encounter all about reconciliation, forgiveness, mercy, and repentance? Yet these, too, are shocking things in our current cultural climate of fear, judgment, bigotry, and anger? Note that Jesus is seated in the Temple. No one sits in the Temple but God alone upon the cherubim on the Ark, which is God’s footstool. Jesus is God. Accordingly, seeing this position the leaders bring this women in to be judged by God! Instead the judgment is turned on them. Of course everyone is wondering what Jesus was writing on the pavement dust. Perhaps, “Mene, tekel, peres,” from the Book of Daniel at Belshazar’s Banquet, Daniel 5, as judgment on the materialism of this world and the misguided rule of the powerful priests and scribes. Some suggest that Jesus was writing their sins in the dust from Jeremiah 17, 13. Or following Greek legal practice, he may have writing down the sentence against the men who caught the woman; some suggest that the priest wrote the sentence of the accusers on the floor of the Temple in the presence of the accused. Finally some suggest that as God’s finger wrote the Law/Torah on the stone tablets at Sinai, so now Jesus is writing the New Covenant of the Love Commandment.

**Vs. 2: CCC 583** Jesus deeply and consistently gives reverence to the Temple in Jerusalem. His whole life is marked by points he was in the Temple. As he purifies the Temple, so he purifies the inner temple of this woman’s heart by the power of his Word.

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| **KNOW YOUR**  **FAITH** | Why are our hearts, minds, bodies, and souls called the temple of the Holy Spirit?  What is the sixth commandment? And how do we understand it today? |
| **LIVE YOUR**  **FAITH** | Who are you in this story?  Have you personally experienced the divine mercy of Jesus Christ? |
| **SHARE YOUR FAITH** | How do we explain and share such mercy with others in order to evangelize?  Reconciliation, mercy, and forgiveness are at the heart of the Church’s work even today. Share how these are manifest in your life and parish today. |
| **WORSHIP** | How is our worship space holy?  What three words would be written on the walls of churches today to condemn us, and what three words to show God’s mercy? |

**Gospel**

**Next Sunday: Palm Sunday C: Isaiah 50, 4-7; Psalm 22; Philippians 2, 6-11; Luke 22, 14 – 23, 56**