**Palm Sunday A Lectionary Catechesis**

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Note that there is a gospel reading for the procession with palms, which may have a brief homily. The readings are the same for the cycles ABC, while the gospel Passion narrative cycles through Matthew, Mark and Luke according to the year. While some feel that the passion is long enough and pause “contemplatively” rather than sharing a homily with the people, this is arguably a mistake for three reasons: the contemplative reflection is too short to be contemplative, the readings themselves and the concept of emptying sacrifice could not be more appropriate for a culture of narcissism, and this would be a missed opportunity to call people into the liturgies of Holy Week. The practices of reconciliation form a scaffolding for the entire set of readings, and this provides an excellent lens through which to take this on and focus a homily. Sin, which precipitates all this should be addressed.

**Isaiah 50, 4-7**

The “Suffering Servant Songs” of Isaiah are 42.1-4; 49,1-6; 50, 4-9; and 52, 12 -- 53, 13. In the prophetic tradition, this is the Messianic King, who because of his faithfulness and righteousness, will be rejected by the authorities who set themselves up in opposition to the will of God. Written during the Babylonian Exile, second Isaiah encourages the people to persevere through their sufferings; their leader will not be above, but with them. Some scholars understand the servant to be the whole of the people Israel, and not an individual person. Christian interpretation understands the servant to be Jesus.

**Vs. 4-10: CCC 713** The four Isaiah “Suffering Servant Songs” reveal the characteristics of the Messiah.

**Vs. 4: CCC 141** The Scripture is venerated as the body of our Lord is venerated by the Church.

**Know your Faith:**

Why is Christ identified with the “Suffering Servant” of Isaiah?

How “well trained” are you in the knowledge of your faith?

**Live your Faith:**

Why does a person who speaks the truths of the gospel get rejected by our culture?

When have you had to “set your face like flint” when in comes to your faith?

**Share your Faith:**

Do you use your words to speak uplifting words to the weary?

Do you share your faith when everyone around you is talking about apocalyptic doom and gloom?

**Worship**:

Do you trust that God is your help?

What is your response to suffering in this world?

**Psalm 22, 8-9. 17-18. 19-20. 23-24**

**CCC 304** This citation takes up the whole psalm, which identifies God as the primary cause of all that is, who acts in our history with providential care. “The prayer of the psalm is the great school of this trust.” God loves us.

**Know your Faith:**

This psalm prophesizes about Jesus. Point out exactly the lines that do this.

Why did the Messiah, the Christ, have to be rejected, suffer, and die?

**Live your Faith:**

Why is living one’s faith such a challenge for this culture?

What do you do when you feel abandoned by God?

**Share your Faith:**

When was the last time you “proclaimed (God’s) name to your brethren?”

When in the assembly at Eucharist in what ways do your have “full and active participation?”

**Worship**:

What does it mean to you to “revere” God as the psalmist says?

How does your life give glory to God?

**Philippians 2, 6-11 Hymn to Jesus Christ**

Vs. 5 begins the call to this Hymn, “Have among yourselves the same attitude that is also yours In Christ Jesus.” An attitude is an orientation of the heart and mind. Among the qualities of Jesus remembered by the apostolic Church is His capacity to “self-empty,” or in Greek “kenosis”. Lent draws us into the humility of Jesus so that we in turn might learn how to be humble ourselves, and in being humble surrender our willfulness to the Father. This surrender is worship.

**Vss. 5-8: CCC 461** The Catechism affirms the connection between the incarnation and the mystery of the cross.

**Vs. 5: CCC 520, 1694, 2842** What Jesus does in emptying himself is our model. We become like this model only through the work of the Holy Spirit, and then the “unity of forgiveness becomes possible.”

**Vss. 6-11: CCC 2641, 2667** The psalms are the prayer book of the Bible and Church.They move us to worship. The cry of the blind men and this Christological hymn form the origins of the great Jesus Prayer.

**Vss. 6-9: CCC 1850 “Sin is an offense against God.”** We choose to become “like gods” and not with God.

**Vs. 6: CCC 449** Here the Trinity is professed; Jesus and the Father of the same “form”. Jesus rightly is LORD.

**Vs. 7: CCC 472, 602, 705, 713, 876, 1224** Jesus’ very humanity manifests his capacity to will to empty himself. We have been ransomed by His precious blood. (I Peter 1, 18-21) While we remain ourselves in the image and likeness of God, sin has disfigured us, and so we are deprived of the glory of God, restored by the resurrection. The character of all Church ministry is this service of self emptying, because we are never ministers of our own accord, but called by God. Ministry is never a personal possession or a territory in the parish.

**Vss. 8-9: CCC 908** We have the governance of free will like a king so that we might give our will to God.

**Vs. 8: CCC 411, 612, 623** The cup of the new covenant at the Last Supper is the cup in the Garden of Gethsemane. Jesus accepts the Father’s will; this is our same covenant with the Father. Jesus atones sin.

**Vss. 9-11: CCC 449, 2812** Jesus reveals both the name of the Father and the Holy Spirit because He is LORD.

**Vss. 9-10: CCC 434** Jesus is the name above all other names; the resurrection glorifies our Savior God.

**Vss. 10-11: CCC 201** The CCC blends this verse with Isaiah 45, 22-24.

**Vs. 10: 633, 635** Jesus descends into Hell to redeem the just men and women who lived before Him. He also destroys death itself by the resurrection. The second citation is a fragment of a Easter homily of the apostolic fathers.

**Know your Faith:**

What is the Jesus Prayer?

How did God the Father “greatly exult” Jesus?

**Live your Faith:**

How does the obedience of Jesus atone for sin?

When do you have opportunities to empty yourself, if Jesus is to be our model?

**Share your Faith:**

How do you find yourself using the name of Jesus?

In what way does this passage call us to evangelize?

**Worship**:

Why do Catholics genuflect in church, and why do we pray on our knees?

What other liturgical gesture do we use at the name of Jesus? Why are these important?

**Matthew 26, 14 - 27, 66 The Passion according to Matthew**

The Catechism offers 35 citations for this Passion narrative. For the sake of clarity, it may be best just to focus on the references in the # **571 – 630** section of the Catechism. This part of the Creed teaches us the central mysteries of Christ’s life, especially on: “Jesus Christ suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried.” This is the Passion Narrative in a single sentence. It is a proclamation central to our faith. In these paragraphs, perhaps the thing most challenging to the modern mind is the sacrificial nature of Jesus’ act, which is explained in #**595-618**. These 23 paragraphs could well be read in advance to assist the group participants in grasping the profound theology herein. This is at the very center of our faith. There is much Precious Blood theology here. The references appear in the Catechism on Prayer in # **2719, 2733, 2839, 2846, 2849,** the latter being all about the importance of forgiveness and prayer; never enough of this.

K**now your Faith:**

Who is responsible for the suffering and death of Jesus? CCC 598 “And it can be seen that our crime in this case is greater in us that in the Jews.” This is a quote from the Roman Catechism of Trent.

What does this mean to you from St. Paul in II Cor 5, 21 God “made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”?

Discuss the meaning of #613-615 for your faith.

**Live your Faith:**

What is your response to sacrificial love? How do you take up your cross and follow Him?

How does the catechism explain God’s actions and free will? (Hint: CCC #600)

**Share your Faith:**

Why is it that God alone takes the initiative in human redemption and we can’t redeem ourselves?

How does the sacrifice of Jesus open up for you the possibility of sacrifices you make for others?

**Worship**:

Look up and sing the hymn “Vexilla Regis”.

Why does the CCC 618 call the cross “a ladder to heaven?”

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**Next Sunday: Easter: Acts 10, 34a. 37-43; Ps 118; Colossians 3, 1-4 or I Cor 5, 6b-8; Jn 20, 1-9**