**ORDINARY TIME 20 C Lectionary Catechesis**

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**Guardian Angels Parish in Mead, CO**

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| The fire of the Holy Spirit in its confronatiation and somewhat eschatological components is difficult to grasp In our own ecclesial culture and in our modern media culture. The Church in the United States is largely ineffective in speaking with a prophetic voice for a variety of reasons and as a result of much modern history. In some circles the most prophetic thing to say has to do with a confrontation against a certain traditionalist mentality of fear and a political culture of fear and anger. Perhaps the “cloud of witnesses” motif in Hebrews helps focus the readings. Perhaps the question may be to ask ourselves how we too can be saints in this particularly discouraging culture. |

**FIRST READING: Jeremiah 38, 4-6. 8-10**

During the reign of King Zedekiah, the Babylonian appointed ruler over Judah, the prophet Jeremiah relentlessly confronts the court to return to the covenant with God. For his efforts, the prophet is repeatedly hounded by the royal court. In this story here, the courtiers conspire to have Jeremiah arrested and abandoned in a cistern. Jeremiah preaches the unthinkable to the people (go out of the city and stand with the Babylonian conquerors) that is almost treasonous. For this he is imprisoned by the princes. An Ethiopian pleas for the king to save Jeremiah; note that it is a foreigner who does this. Prophets, speaking in the Holy Spirit, come to set a fire in this world. Prophets disturb the business-as-usual attitude of daily lives and all the things that power structures assume in their false sense of privilege. While Jeremiah is temporarily released, not much later the Babylonian Emperor Nebuchadnezzar conquers Jerusalem and King Zedekiah is brought down from his throne. When all the upper classes are taken off into exile, Jeremiah remains behind with the poor and the remnant of Judah.

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| **KNOW YOUR**  **FAITH** | What does a prophet do?  Are there prophets in our culture and Church today? |
| **LIVE YOUR**  **FAITH** | Jeremiah’s prayer in the cistern could have been Psalm 130, “Out of the depths, I cry unto you, O Lord.” Have you ever felt like this in your life? |
| **SHARE YOUR FAITH** | Have you ever been in a position where you’ve had to defend your actions, values, and faith?  How does Jeremiah give witness to his faithfulness? |
| **WORSHIP** | When in the liturgy do we make our promise of commitment to God?  When you think of the opposite space from the Eucharistic Table of the Lord, where would you be? |

**First Reading**

**RESPONSORIAL: Psalm 40, 2. 3. 4. 18**

The psalmist experiences God’s saving love and so turns to God in thanksgiving and praise. Our responsorial is the opening and then the last verse of the psalm. It sounds similar to the cry of Jeremiah from the cistern. How often we are in danger and we turn to God who has all along done great things for us. God especially hears the cry of the poor and the marginalized. No one is too insignificant for God’s attention. In the rest of the body of the psalm, we hear again that God desires a pure heart and just will, rather that all sacrifices and offerings in the Temple. Vs. 11 is an evangelizing teaching for the Church today. It is this: when one realizes and experiences the saving power of God, then this must be shared with all the people; there’s no holding back or silence.

**Vs. 2: CCC 2657** The Holy Spirit instructs us to pray in hope of Christ’s return. Prayer grows hope in us.

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| **KNOW YOUR**  **FAITH** | How can we say that God saves us when we see so many examples around us that God does not seem at all to be present?  Why does God have a preferential option for the poor? |
| **LIVE YOUR**  **FAITH** | Share a personal story of God rescuing you.  What is the rock or foundation that you stand on in your life? |
| **SHARE YOUR FAITH** | Why is the American Catholic Church holding back in the public and civil forum from proclaiming God’s ways?  Why must every true disciple also be an evangelist? |
| **WORSHIP** | What is the new song in our mouths?  Is church on Sunday the only place to praise God? What are other venues? |

**Responsorial Psalm**

**SECOND READING: Hebrews 12, 1-4**

The author of Hebrews concludes the history of faithfulness witnesses with an encouragement to believers to stayed pure from sin and continue their race to the goal of eternal life. Cloud of witnesses and keeping an eye fixed on Jesus. Jesus’ struggle is our struggle. The sin is faithlessness, wavering in commitment to the gospel. The author rather chides the disciple that the smallness of their own efforts hardly compares to all that Jesus faithfully endured. We have not shed blood as Jesus shed blood. We recall however the Precious Blood martyrs of our time who have indeed witnesses with their blood to their faithfulness and to the gospel. It is challenging for Americans to think of themselves as martyrs for the sake of the Gospel, but Americans are perfectly willing to give their lives over to a culture of gun violence and waiting on Black Friday for the Walmart doors to open. The north Ameri

can Catholic Church enjoys all the cultural privileges without any of the hardship of the gospel.

**Vss. 1-2: CCC 165** Because we have seen the “cloud of witnesses” precede us and succeed, we know that we too can share in the crown of life.

**Vs. 1: CCC 1161, 2683** The “cloud of witnesses” supports our faith. The Saints are still are part of our experience of prayer today. Among their roles in heaven is to accompany our prayer on earth in their continuous love for us and in their service to God.

**Vs. 2: CCC 147** The Old Testament is rich in witnesses to God’s presence in their lives and history.

**Vs. 3: CCC 569, 598** Sinners are responsible for the sufferings of Christ, including certainly all Christians, so that one can never say that the Jews are responsible for Christ’s death on the cross. Here the Tridentine Catechism and St. Francis of Assisi are quoted. Jesus willingly journeyed to Jerusalem, knowing that he was to offer himself for sinners.

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| **KNOW YOUR**  **FAITH** | Who are the “cloud of witnesses” appealing and encouraging to you since this letter was written?  What is the rationale for our theology of saints? |
| **LIVE YOUR**  **FAITH** | Who is your patron saint? From Confirmation?  What do you do to keep your eyes fixed on Jesus? |
| **SHARE YOUR FAITH** | In what way can the Church be a “cloud of witnesses” in the civic forum today?  Research and name the U.S. martyrs for their faith in missionary countries. |
| **WORSHIP** | What does the mystical body of Christ do in our Eucharistic Liturgy?  Review the Good Friday petition for the Jewish people. |

**Second Reading**

**GOSPEL: Luke 12, 49-53 Jesus’ Teaching on His Mission**

Luke 12-13 has sayings and parables that evoke a certain foreboding of confrontation between himself and the authorities of the day, religious, political, and legal. His teachings have a certain edge; the sayings commend faithfulness in the midst of struggle and perseverance. The fire, however, is most likely pointing to the Holy Spirit, because a common symbol of the Spirit’s presence is fire throughout the Scripture. Fire means that God is present, and with God comes the gifts and fruits of the Spirit. The baptism is beyond the water purifying baptism of John, but here he is referring to baptism in the Spirit for the Church. The peace refers to negotiate peace after a war; we know from other passages that this is not Christ’s peace, which is beyond all human understanding. It is hard for us to grasp the distinction between these two kinds of peace. Vss. 52-53 are actually more difficult to understand, but in fact decisiveness for the reign of God will end old ways of relating to one another and create new relationships around the heavenly banquet table. In any event, Luke’s account places Jesus in the ancient prophetic tradition of Jeremiah, who stands up to kings.

**Vs. 49: CCC 696** Fire is one of the signs of the presence of the Holy Spirit from the burning bush unto the Pentecost experience, so that image influences our interpretation of this passage.

**Vs. 50: CCC 536, 607, 1225, 2805** In baptism, Jesus accepts the Father’s mission that he should offer himself for us by receiving the Holy Spirit. Jesus completely embraces the Father’s will for himself. His Passion is extension of the fountain of Baptism through His Most Precious Blood so that we will born of the water and of the Spirit. The second series of petitions in the Lord’s Prayer includes our hopes for God’s mercy in our lives: giving, forgiving, leading us not into temptation, and delivering us from evil.

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| **KNOW YOUR**  **FAITH** | Can’t the prophets just be nice? Why do they challenge and confront our culture?  Why is fire a sign of the Holy Spirit? |
| **LIVE YOUR**  **FAITH** | What would it mean for you to be on fire with the Holy Spirit?  What is the core value in your relationships? |
| **SHARE YOUR FAITH** | Why is it so important for the modern Church to be prophetic and faithful?  What does the fire have to do with evangelization? |
| **WORSHIP** | How does the fire of the Holy Spirit appear in our liturgy?  What do you think it would be like if God actually appeared during the liturgy? |

**Gospel**

**Next Sunday: OT 21 C: Isaiah 66, 18-21; Psalm 117, 1. 2; Hebrews 12, 5-7. 11-13; Luke 13, 22-30**