**ORDINARY TIME 24 C Lectionary Catechesis**

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**Guardian Angels Parish in Mead, CO**

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| Read and heard many times, the Prodigal Son parable is an inexhaustible treasure of reflection and praxis of mercy, reconciliation, and compassion without equal. All the other reading reflect on, point toward, and contribute rich insights into the parables of lost and found in the Gospel. |

**FIRST READING: Exodus 32, 7-11. 13-14**

These verses constitute a story reminding us of God’s forgiving love. God is portrayed in deep ancestral relationships, and so is like the Father in the gospel who forgives his son. Moses, on Mt. Sinai alone with God, reasons with God in the intimacy of their conversation not to destroy the people brought up from Egypt, begging God to remember His mercy. Moses argues on the basis of ancient relationship with the patriarchal family of Israel. Moses evokes a covenant from hundreds of years before that God promised to this people. God relents and is merciful. There are four steps to Israel infidelity: making the golden calf, worshiping it, sacrificing to it, and crying out to it, as if in any way a heap of gold could respond. At each step, the people sink deeper into their sin. The teaching here is that sin is often a slippery slope, once begun, one thing leads to another consequentially.

**Chapter 32: CCC 210** Moses’ intercessions moves God to be merciful.

**Vss. 1 – 34, 9: 2577** In light of his intimacy with God, Moses had the courage and strength to make the outrageous request for mercy to God. It is in the context of a long history of prayer, interior dialogue with God, that we too enter into an intimate relationship with God. This incident suggests that our petitions also should be bold before God.

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| **KNOW YOUR**  **FAITH** | Why is it important for us to realize that God acts first with mercy?  What do you learn about sin from this dialogue between God and Moses? |
| **LIVE YOUR**  **FAITH** | What part of Moses’ or the prodigal son’s plea for forgiveness is appealing to you and why?  What were the promises our own immigrant ancestors treasured that gave them cause for hope in all their own struggles? |
| **SHARE YOUR FAITH** | That God saves is a core belief to be owned and shared in evangelization. Identify the core truth of this in the passage explicitly.  Why is it that people generally like to belong, here in this encounter, to the covenant? |
| **WORSHIP** | What about the false worship of the Israelites in the desert was false and idolatrous?  Does God need our worship? |

**First Reading**

**RESPONSORIAL: Psalm 51, 3-4. 12-13. 17. 19**

Traditionally called the ***Miserere,*** Psalm 51 is the ultimate penitential psalm, an examination of conscience, an act of contrition, intercessory prayer, and penance to pray. The psalmist invites a person to humbly return and submit to God. One could imagine how this psalm would sound and feel in the mouths of each of the characters in the gospel of the Prodigal Son.

**Vs. 12: CCC 298, 431** The CCC argues here that God, who creates out of nothing, can give a pure heart to sinners, even physical life to the dead. Thereby, God gives the light of faith to those in darkness. God does not only brings us “up out of Egypt”, but also save us from our sin when we call on God by name.

**Vs. 19: CCC 1428, 2100** In the first citation, we learn that conversion is not just a one time event, but to be engaged throughout the entire life of the Christian; the “movement of the contrite heart” aligns with the grace of God and responds to God’s mercy. External sacrifice reflects internal sacrifice to God. Sacrifice must be from the heart and therefore have mercy bound with it. Uniting our lives to the sacrifice of Christ on the cross makes our sacrifice acceptable to God.

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| **KNOW YOUR**  **FAITH** | What does it mean for us when the Church says that sin is a pervasive part of the human condition?  How have you experienced God’s forgiveness for yourself or in your family? |
| **LIVE YOUR**  **FAITH** | What does it mean for you to have a clean heart?  What’s the first thing out of your mouth in the morning? |
| **SHARE YOUR FAITH** | Who will hear the praise of God that we open our mouths to proclaim, or are we to be in private when we praise God?  Why is it important to call on God’s name, not just privately, but publically? |
| **WORSHIP** | Think about your own daily prayer. How do you begin your daily prayer? Why?  Why has the Church used the invitation and response of Psalm 51, 17?  “O Lord, open my mouth,  and my lips shall declare your praise.” |

**Responsorial Psalm**

**SECOND READING: I Timothy 1, 12-17**

This passage is from the opening of the letter, just after Paul warns about and condemns those who claim a knowledge (gnosis) based on myths and the like. Balancing the warning, he then moves to affirm the authenticity of the gospel he brings and the ministry he holds. He speak of being trustworthy when it comes to the core kerygma: Christ came into the world to save sinners. The last verse is a doxology.

**Vs. 15: CCC 545** The story of the prodigal son is coupled with Jesus’ statement “I came not to call the

righteous, but sinners.” Mt 2,17 St. Paul embodies God’s mercy; he was not only forgiven, but

became the primary missionary of the gospel in the New Testament.

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| **KNOW YOUR**  **FAITH** | How can Paul be forgiven after he originally set out to persecute the followers of Jesus?  Why was Jesus incarnate into the world? |
| **LIVE YOUR**  **FAITH** | How have you experienced God’s forgiveness for yourself or in your family?  What makes us trustworthy to be ministers of the gospel and servants of the sacraments? |
| **SHARE YOUR FAITH** | What is the one ministry that every single Christian is responsible to share in? Why?  To whom is evangelization directed? Explain your answer. |
| **WORSHIP** | How does St. Paul praise God in the second reading? Find the actual words of praise.  Why is it important to praise God in Sunday worship? |

**Second Reading**

**GOSPEL: Luke 15, 1-32 Parables of the Lost Sheep, Lost Coin, and Prodigal Son**

Jesus consistently receives sinners at table in his ministry. He effectively reintegrates them into the community. The Catechism uses Luke 15 as a premier example of Jesus’ forgiveness, defining his very name, including the Eucharistic words “for the forgiveness of sins.” Lost and found are the swings of the pendulum upon which these three parables hang. **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** | Reconciliation is a great biblical teaching. What is reconciliation exactly?  What does the CCC mean by calling this a process of perfection toward ultimate charity? |
| **LIVE YOUR**  **FAITH** | When you reflect on these readings how will the message fit into your life? What does this mean for you?  What do you walk away with this evening on your mind or in your heart? What will you take home? |
| **SHARE YOUR FAITH** | What does it feel like for you to be forgiven or to extend forgiveness to people in your life? Whom do you eat with? Whom do you not eat with?  Whom do you eat with? Whom do you not eat with? |
| **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? |

**Next Sunday: OT 25 C: Amos 8, 4-7; Psalm 113, 1-2. 4-6. 7-8; I Timothy 1, 1-8; Luke 16, 1-13**