**Advent 1 A Lectionary Catechesis**

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| We begin a new Church year during which we will read the Gospel of Saint Matthew. Matthew’s central themes are discipleship, covenant, and church in relation to Jesus. We begin with a season of penitential expectation for Christ’s imminent coming. In the darkness of this world, our sins are glaring; we are violent, unjust, and self-serving. Yet, our God comes to save us from our slavery and entrapment to earthly things. Advent invites to re-orient ourselves to the coming light of Christ. We are being challenging to attend to our stewardship of our wakefulness, rather than let the structures of this world control our lives. |

**FIRST READING: Isaiah 2, 1-5**

Prophets enable people to imagine the future. The prophets sees a day to come when all the nations will will seek out the Holy One of Israel. The result of this recognition of divine sovereignty over all is a universal peace. God acts first by raising the mountain highest. The passage might be read to say that Israel’s religion is the only true religion. This attitude is from the royal consciousness which believes that a person takes care of one’s own self without God, not prophetic. Of course the most frequently quoted lines is, “They shall beat their swords into plowshares and the spears into pruning hooks.” (Vs. 4)

**Vs 2-5: CCC 762** Ancient Israel is to be a sign of the future gathering of the nations, not a sign of

one people over another. A new covenant will be created in Jesus Christ. There’s no

of one nation lording it over the others. This prophecy appears in other prophets and

is a fundamental understanding of Vatican II *Lumen Gentium* 9.

**Vs. 2-4:CCC 64** The CCC affirms that God will redeem not only his people of the first covenant but

peoples from all the nations. Besides the prophets, this CCC text chooses to name

a list of hopeful people, singling out only Biblical women, Mary “purest” among them.

**Vs. 4: CCC 2317** In the final comment on the 5th commandment, the CCC uses this passage to condemn

war, which is a sign of our sinful human condition in need of salvation.

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| **KNOW YOUR**  **FAITH** | What is just war theory? (hint: CCC 2307-2317 lists the qualifications)  What does the Church teach about atomic, biological, and chemical war? |
| **LIVE YOUR**  **FAITH** | What does this reminder of the unity of the human family mean for you personally in your actions?  What “sword” or “spear” in your life needs to be transformed into an instrument of peace? |
| **SHARE YOUR FAITH** | What do you contribute to the ministry of hospitality in your parish?  Does our faith represent to others a “royal consciousness” or a “prophetic consciousness”? |
| **WORSHIP** | How is it for you when on vacation you attend Mass in a different parish?  Why do we worship God for giving us commands, laws, traditions that are challenging to follow? |

**First Reading**

**RESPONSORIAL: Psalm 122, 1-2.3-4. 4-5. 6-7.8-9**

We just had this psalm recently; the liturgy uses the whole song. The Hebrew poetry is audibly rich in sounds and repetitions. Vs.6a, “Pray for the peace of Jerusalem,” would sound roughly like “Sha’alu shalom Yerushalayim.” If you say this out loud perhaps you would hear the “sh” and “l” repetitions; the poet here is deliberately evoking an almost lullaby quality of sound that moves the human heart.

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| **KNOW YOUR**  **FAITH** | Why do we pray for others, even others not of our ethnicity, nation, or faith?  Besides peace and prosperity, what are the other two main Biblical promises God extends to us? |
| **LIVE YOUR**  **FAITH** | What words of Scripture do you think of as most beautiful and share that with the group?  Who is your community with whom you pray and share faith? |
| **SHARE YOUR FAITH** | Does your life praise God in the public sphere?  Medieval letters often ended with “pax et bonum,” meaning “peace and the good” to you. Do you pray for the good of others?  What is “THE good”? |
| **WORSHIP** | What role does thanks play in your Sunday worship?  How is justice a part of worship? |

**Responsorial Psalm**

**SECOND READING: Romans 13, 11-14**

Reading the signs of the times is the work of discernment for preparedness for Christ’s coming. Paul contrasts sins committed in darkness with a life wholly lived in the light. He concludes telling us to “make no provision for the desires of the flesh.” Paul is not condemning the body here in this passage, but rather promoting actions and thinking that lead to harmony, order, and proportion in our lives because of our awareness that the Day of the Lord is at hand. The CCC does not quote from this passage, probably because this text is representative of several others like it. The focus is not on the list of sins but rather on the proximity of the day of the Lord.

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| **KNOW YOUR**  **FAITH** | What do you know about Pope John Paul II’s theology of the body?  Why is it a Catholic vocation to enter monastic life? |
| **LIVE YOUR**  **FAITH** | What are five things you could do without that are piled up in your basement, attic, or garage?  How many hangers are in your closet? |
| **SHARE YOUR FAITH** | What can you do to restore purity in your life in relation to others?  What is rivalry like in your life or family or with members of your parish? |
| **WORSHIP** | How do you attend to the “Sacrament of the Present Moment”? (de Caussade)  When did you “put on the armor of light” in the sacraments? |

**Second Reading**

**GOSPEL: Mathew 24, 37-44 Staying Awake for the Final Coming of Christ**

In the gospel of Matthew, this is his apocalypse. Jesus is portrayed as leaving the Temple. In this part of his account of the end times, he is very clear that no one knows the day or hour. This gospel is a part of Jesus’ final teaching discourse to his disciples. During the lifetime of Jesus, the Jewish people were filled with an expectation that a messiah would come to save them from Roman Imperial oppression; they put their hopes in a human king/savior. The newly renovated Temple was nearing completion. Many who knew Jesus lived long enough to see it destroyed by Vespasian and Titus, the emperors. It felt very apocalyptic for them and their culture and religion.

**Vs. 44: CCC 673** The CCC affirms the truth of our faith that Christ could return at any moment, but no one knows when that moment is.

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| **KNOW YOUR**  **FAITH** | Why do you suppose the day nor the hour of Christ’s coming is not known or revealed to us?  What does our faith teach about the end times? Contrast and compare with what movies promote. |
| **LIVE YOUR**  **FAITH** | What can you do to keep Advent a season of penitential expectation? Or what does a “penitential season” mean to you?  What helps you to stay awake and alive in your faith? |
| **SHARE YOUR FAITH** | We just experienced a devastating flood on the front range of Colorado. What did you do to help? Use local examples.  What are your personal reactions to the end of the world scenarios? |
| **WORSHIP** | Why do you suppose the first Sunday of Advent readings call our attention to the end of things, rather than the beginning of things?  At what part of the Mass are you most awake and attentive? Why? |

**Gospel**

**Next Sunday: Advent 2 A: Isaiah 11, 1-10; Psalm 72; Romans 15,4-9; Matthew 3,1-12**