**OT 3 A Lectionary Catechesis**

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| The gospel suggests two possible directions to go with these readings: the proclamation of the core of the gospel and the call of disciples. The second reading, however, reminds us that either way there is the obstacle of the Cross. In other words, discipleship is not a matter of spiritual materialism, something one can buy to save one’s self. To proclaim the gospel, means we must first be called. How were you called?  |

**FIRST READING: Isaiah 8, 23 – 9, 3**

The prophet’s words are picked up by Matthew in the gospel to make clear why Jesus did not start his ministry and work in Jerusalem, in a sense, the logical place to have gone where all the religious action was at the time, but rather chooses the outlying borderland of Zebulon and Naphthali, the stability of the center is not felt here in such marginalized places. Images we heard during Advent of smashed yoke, pole, and rod of slavery are presented again. The prophet reminds us that the Messiah will come in the borders places, in between, far away from the reaches of political, economic, and religious power to a people who need good news and healing.

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| **KNOW YOUR****FAITH** | Reflect on why the Church repeats the prophecy of Isaiah twice in this week’s readings.What are the yokes, poles, and rods of our world today that enslave us? |
| **LIVE YOUR****FAITH** | What do you feel when you are not in your own cultural or social space, but in a “borderland”?Is your life based on American culture or Gospel culture? |
| **SHARE YOUR FAITH** | What opportunities do you have to be a light in dark places?Who is going to do all this saving work? |
| **WORSHIP** | Share the way in which worship brings you light and joy?When you’ve been relieved of a great life burden, how have you responded? |

  **First Reading**

**RESPONSORIAL: Psalm 27, 1. 4. 13-14**

Our verses are taken from different passages in the whole psalm. I’ve heard somewhere that “Be not afraid” is repeated 365 times in the Bible, once for every day of a year. So, whom shall we fear?

Vs. 4 points us back to I Kings 6, the building of the Solomonic temple. If you’re curious about church architecture, read this chapter. The Temple reproduces the Garden of Eden. Vs. 13 precedes what Jesus says, “The kingdom of heaven is at hand”, therefore, “We shall see the good things of the Lord in the land of the living.”

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| **KNOW YOUR****FAITH** | How does vs. 4 invite us into contemplative prayer? What are the spiritual “goods” that God gives to us and when? (Refer especially to CCC 1468-1469) |
| **LIVE YOUR****FAITH** | When was the last time you made a retreat? Tell the story about it.What do you think about the contemplative lives of monks and sisters? |
| **SHARE YOUR FAITH** | Share your fears about our lives and the current thinking about the apocalypse?What is your ministry in your parish? |
| **WORSHIP** | What parts of the architecture of your local church invite you to worship?How is your worship a “waiting for the Lord?” |

 **Responsorial Psalm**

**SECOND READING: I Corinthians 1, 10-13. 17**

Recent popes have invited us to “think with the Church,” and Paul is doing just that with the divisions in the Corinthians church. The purpose of the unity he preaches is not just to end factionalism. Paul is emphasizing the centrality of Christ, and more specifically Christ crucified. In the subsequent passage, Paul will develop “the wisdom” of the cross”. For Paul, this is fundamentally rooted in God’s actions, not what us human do. The point is that God acts first with grace, humans are servants of this grace.

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| **KNOW YOUR****FAITH** | After reading this passage in light of the gospel, what qualities is God looking for in a disciple?What does it mean for you “to think with the Church?”  |
| **LIVE YOUR****FAITH** | Who do you belong to?What are the parish or family divisions you would like to see healed and reconciled? |
| **SHARE YOUR FAITH** | Paul insists that evangelization is not about “human eloquence.” How do you evangelize then?Why did God make you? |
| **WORSHIP** | What is the “same purpose” (vs. 10) according to Paul that unites us?What is the role of the Cross is Catholic worship? |

 **Second Reading**

**GOSPEL: Matthew 4, 12-23 The Beginning of Jesus’ Ministry and Call of the First Disciples**

When Jesus returns from the forty days in the desert, he settles in Capernaum to fulfill an Isaian prophecy about the borderlands, the in-between space, where culture and politics both mix and clash. It is there on the north shore of Galilee in Capernaum that he calls his first disciples. He has a very simple, direct and yet startling message, “Repent (metanoia), the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” The Greek places the word for “is at hand” first, which indicates an additional emphasis of the word relative to the whole phrase. In fact, it is not a verb + adverb, but rather the present perfect of a verb that is one word in the original. The New Testament usage derives from the usage in Second Isaiah (40-55) and describes a definitive and unique aspect of the Christian life as already complete. Most of our discipleship has lost this essential quality altogether of urgency and immediacy.

**Vs. 17: CCC 1720, 1989** Humans are called to the reign of God. Augustine’s eloquent Latin is quoted

from “The City of God” here to excite us about our noble and high calling. This first reference is at the beginning of the section of the CCC “Life in Christ.” “The first grace of the Holy Spirit is conversion.” Everything starts with God. Then the human person moves toward God. Curiously Augustine is quoted more in the CCC than Aquinas. The “City of God” has ten references. Repentance has received unwarranted negative connotations, whereas its impulse and goal are both toward love; the kingdom of heaven hinges on this and Aquinas is clearly in this tradition when he defines love: “To love is to will the good of another.” (ST I-II, 26, 4) (CCC 1766) Jesus loves his disciples.

**Vs. 19 & 21: CCC 878** This reference, made twice, underscores from the Creed a foundational principle of the Church when we speak of the Church as “apostolic”. “Christ himself is the source of ministry in the Church.” (CCC 874) The Catechism makes a special effort to set out the character of the meaning of “apostolic”, among them in this citation that it does have a “personal character” which is always both communal and subsidiary. CCC 879 should be read in conjunction with these verses, especially if anyone in the group is involved a Church ministry. The frequent challenge presents itself for any who thinks a ministry is a personal possession, which is very different from a “personal character.”

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| **KNOW YOUR****FAITH** | What is the heart of the proclamation of Jesus? (Hint: “is at hand”)Why do we speak of Jesus as being the source of all the ministries in the Church? |
| **LIVE YOUR****FAITH** | How have you heard Jesus call you in your life? Where does this rank in your life on scale of 1-10?How do you “repent” in your life? |
| **SHARE YOUR FAITH** | What skills does Matthew names about Andrew, Peter, James, and John that attracted Jesus’ attention?What nets do we need to mend and how? or: What does Jesus see and like in the disciples?  |
| **WORSHIP** | Share the connection you make between worship and following Jesus.What is the ministry at Mass of the person in the pew? |

 **Gospel**

**Next Sunday: OT 4 A: Zephaniah 2, 3. 3, 12-13; Psalm 146; I Corinthians 1, 26-31; Matthew 5, 1-12a**