**Lent 4 A Lectionary Catechesis**

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| A very rich Lenten set of readings, following after last Sunday’s. Obviously, blindness is the theme here, but the real theme is the healing that enables us to see, and to see as God sees. Focus on the glass half full. The next challenge then is to see as God sees in the reality of God’s light. To live in this Light who is Christ is God’s providential care for us. God acts in our history (globally and personally), but do we see it by living in this new light. Finally the readings are about worship.  |

**FIRST READING: I Samuel 16, 1b. 6-7. 10-13a**

The prophet Samuel goes to Bethlehem, as God directs him, to anoint one of the sons of Jesse as the new king, during the collapse of King Saul’s power. Not judging as humans judge, but as God judges, Samuel surprisingly anoints the youngest son, a shepherd boy. “The Lord looks into the heart.” There’s an irony in the use of the word “handsome”; in the election of King Saul, his only two qualities are that he is strong and handsome in I Samuel 9, 1-2(a word repeated twice). Handsomeness is not a qualification for kingship (or for anything else for that matter), so one suspects a deep sarcasm on the part of the author, but only in the shallow eyes of humans. Remember that God’s ways are not our ways.

**Vs. 1: CCC 436** Jesus fulfills in his person the messianic expectation of priest, prophet, and king.

**Vss. 12-13: CCC 436** David is anointed king during a sacrifice.

**Vs. 13: CCC 695** Jesus’ messianic kingship begins with the story of David’s anointing, for David is the ancestor of Jesus. Just as Jesus is the most frequent name in the O.T, so Jesus is the most frequent name in the N.T. When the man born blind sees, he says, “’I do believe, Lord,’ and he worshipped him,” in acknowledgment of Jesus as the Christ in speech and in action.

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| **KNOW YOUR****FAITH** | What does it mean to say, “The Lord looks into the heart.” Why is Jesus called a “messianic” king?  |
| **LIVE YOUR****FAITH** | How can you learn to stop judging as human judge, and judge as God does? What’s the difference? For example we have some strange notions of “beauty” in this culture which have nothing to do with sainthood or holiness of life or anything else really. When you read the whole story vss. 1- 13, how can Samuel’s actions potentially give you an example?  |
| **SHARE YOUR FAITH** | Share a time when you saw God at work in your life, and not just merely yourself making plans. Why is it so hard to believe that God would really choose the best for us?  |
| **WORSHIP** | When has the Spirit of God rushed upon you and what was your response? When you’ve seen something as God sees, how does that lead you to worship?  |

  **First Reading**

**RESPONSORIAL: Psalm 23, 1-3a-4. 5. 6 The Good Shepherd Psalm**

Arguably everyone’s favorite psalm, we hear it in almost every one of life’s contexts. God’s providential care for us in the image of shepherd is very comforting, especially in the “dark valley” of this world where we are blind. The CCC use here only of vs. 5 for this psalm orients us in a particular way to the gospel.

**Vs. 5: CCC 1293** in the commentary on Confirmation, the anointing with oil signifies and imprints a spiritual seal. Oil is a biblical symbol of abundance and joy, purifying and cleansing us, healing and soothing us, and making us limber.

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| **KNOW YOUR****FAITH** | What are the exact words of the bishop at the Sacrament of Confirmation? Name the three holy oils used by the Church? What makes them different?  |
| **LIVE YOUR****FAITH** | What does it mean to live “with God at your side?” Which facet of the symbol of oil have you personally experienced and share the story?  |
| **SHARE YOUR FAITH** | Share which words in the psalm specifically show joy. What is the most comforting line in the psalm for you?  |
| **WORSHIP** | What does it mean to say, “I shall dwell in the house of the Lord for years to come”? To carry out the image further, if God is your shepherd, in what way are you a “sheep”?  |

 **Responsorial Psalm**

**SECOND READING: Ephesians 5, 8-14**

“Christ Be Our Light” would be a great song to accompany this reading. The light is of God, and God is the Trinity which we are drawn to out of the darkness of this world. Tempting as it is, the disciple does not focus on the phrase here, “expose them”, as it might be taken out of the context of charity were the exposure merely for delectation, shaming, and laying guilt on another rather than having the aim of reconciliation. Likewise, Paul nor the prophet quoted is being demeaning when referring to our human state as a “sleeping.”

**Vs. 8: CCC 1216, 1695** Baptism is an enlightenment. It is as if a ray of the divine light were in every one of us. CCC 339 teaches us that a ray of God’s light is in every creature. So the light enables us to see things differently and correctly as God sees; it is a light for us to follow. We ourselves are called light. Mt 5.

**Vs. 9: CCC 1695** Here, we are advised to “learn what is pleasing to God.” God’s light produces every kind of goodness.

**Vs. 14: CCC 2641** Here the decision to lives of darkness or light is explicit. Here the CCC teaches us that this light from God changes everything for us and about us.

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| **KNOW YOUR****FAITH** | Why is Baptism called enlightenment and what symbol do you receive representing this?What does St. Paul mean by “darkness” and “light”?  |
| **LIVE YOUR****FAITH** | Name the works you do exposed by the light? In other words, name the fruits of the Spirit.In what way are we living a life in darkness, spiritually dead, in our culture?  |
| **SHARE YOUR FAITH** | What part of being light is challenging to you?There’s the children’s hymn: “This little light of mine, I’m going to make it shine.” What is this “little light?”  |
| **WORSHIP** | In what way does worship please God? Why does God need this? Where is the joy in living in the light?  |

 **Second Reading**

**GOSPEL: John 9, 1-41 The Man Born Blind**

While certainly a part of the story, the confrontation between Jesus and the Pharisees is not the point of the Gospel in the context of Lenten catechesis and encounter with Jesus as Lord. Nonetheless Jesus is a “sign of contradiction. The main point of focus is our human “blindness”, our failure to “see as God sees,” and the human condition of sin in a shattered world. This story reminds me always of Plato’s Republic, Book 7, The Cave. The healing comes in that Jesus seeks us out so that we might seek God’s kingdom over us.

**Vss. 6-7: CCC 1151, 1504** Jesus uses signs, especially noted in the structure of John’s Gospel. These signs are connected to the miracles and explain them in light of the mystery of the reign of God. Jesus himself is the sign of resurrection. Jesus frequently asks the sick for their faith; the sacramental are a healing remedy for us.

**Vss. 16-17: CCC 995** Here and in CCC596, the misunderstanding and confusion about Jesus’ true identity is explained in His cultural context. While mostly thought of as a rabbi, long standing dissension was the norm.

**Vs. 16: CCC 596, 2173** Jesus is lord of the Sabbath, and he declares the Sabbath a day for doing good.

**Vs. 22: CCC 575, 596** Jesus was a “sign of contradiction” to his culture. John’s phrase, “the Jews” typically refers to the temple and rabbinic leadership and not the whole people.

**Vs. 31: CCC 2827** Here is a comment on the power of the Church’s intercessory prayer united with the prayer of Jesus and Mary. For the AMA studies available refer to the AMA Journal of Medicine, Byrd 1988 and Harris 1999, a wealth of statistical data based on scientific studies to this age old question.

**Vs. 34: CCC 588** Here the Catechism comments on the blindness of religiously righteous and their blindness.

**Vss. 40-41: CCC 588** Jesus’ teaching, curing of the man born blind, and confrontation with religious figures, re- minds us that Jesus came to call sinners, and we all have sinned.

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| **KNOW YOUR****FAITH** | What is the true identity of Jesus to you?How do you understand sin as a form of blindness?  |
| **LIVE YOUR****FAITH** | How is Jesus a “sign of contradiction” in your life?What are the “contradictions” facing the Church or your faith in our own culture and world?  |
| **SHARE YOUR FAITH** | How do you respond when anyone asks for your faith?With whom do your share your visions, your way of looking at the world, or your blindnesses?  |
| **WORSHIP** | Do you believe and worship Jesus? What does that look like for you? What do you think about the intercessory prayer at your parish as worship?  |

 **Gospel**

**Next Sunday: Lent 5 A: Ezekiel 37, 12-14; Psalm 130; Romans 8, 8-11; John 11, 1-45**