**Lent 5 B**  **Lectionary Catechesis**

 **Fr. Alan Hartway, CPPS and Joan Blossom**

 **Guardian Angels Parish in Mead, CO**

|  |
| --- |
| Our Lent is being completed with themes of light, covenant, service, and sacrifice; in other words all the things we have been working on this Lent with God’s grace. There are rich teachings about prayer here, the time of decisiveness for the disciples, and the purification of the heart/soul.  |

**FIRST READING: Jeremiah 31, 31-34**

Chapters 30-31 describe the restoration of Judah after the Exile; here we find some of Jeremiah’s most eloquent poetry to comfort the people, exhausted by the Exile and the journey of return. God’s promises overflow in these prophetic outpourings. The focus is on new covenant and a new spirit for the people.

**Ch. 31: CCC 1611** The prophets envisioned the covenant as a marriage between God and the people. The books of Ruth, Tobit, and the Songs of Songs particularly elevate the nature of marriage and the quality of faithfulness.

**Vss. 31-34: CCC 64, 715, 762, 1965** The first citation has a powerful quote from John of the Cross about faithfulness to Christ rather than “living with the desire for some other novelty.” We live in such a culture of spiritual eclecticism. Prophetic texts speak explicitly about the Holy Spirit. God will 10 renew our hearts, 2) engrave a new law on them, 3) gather and reconcile the divided and scattered peoples, 4) transform the first creation, 5) dwell with the human race in peace. God’s covenant begins with Abraham and the ingathering of the peoples, because Abraham was promised to be the father of many nations. While Israel is the first people of God, they broke this covenant which led the prophets to look forward to a New Covenant. The New Covenant is a perfection here on earth of the divine law of love as given in the Sermon on the Mount. It is also the work of the Holy Spirit.

**Vs. 33: CCC 368, 580, 2713** The heart points symbolically in the Bible to the depths of one’s inner being. In contemporary language, it is associated merely with the seat of emotions, which are not to be confused with the depths of our being. Jesus fulfills the law and “brings forth justice.” Jesus’ death redeems transgressors of the law. (Galatians 3, 10-13) “Contemplative prayer is a covenant relationship established by God within our hearts.” Contemplative prayer is union with the Trinity which conforms us to the image of God. This sort of prayer is gift and grace.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **KNOW YOUR****FAITH** | Explain God’s relationship to the people as a marriage.What is a covenant? Distinguish a covenant from a contract.  |
| **LIVE YOUR****FAITH** | What is your experience of contemplative prayer?How does the law of God get written on our hearts? |
| **SHARE YOUR FAITH** | The prophet imagines a very radical kind of evangelization. Parents are the first evangelizers of their children. How do they best do this?Who are the least in our community or parish? |
| **WORSHIP** | In light of the Sunday assembly, what does it mean to you to be a people of God?What part of the Eucharistic Liturgy is most contemplative to you and why.  |

  **First Reading**

**RESPONSORIAL: Psalm 51, 3-4. 12-13. 14-15**

The Miserere Psalm permeates the season of Lent as the ultimate cry for forgiveness and mercy. But more than, the penitent begs for God’s purity of heart, which we experience in our encounter with Jesus. Joy accompanies this washing of sin along with steadfastness and certainty of spirit. This experience then enables the person to share the good news of forgiveness with others by forgiving them. This is a challenge for us.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **KNOW YOUR****FAITH** | What do we have to do to earn God’s mercy and forgiveness? Note: for you Jansenists out there, this is a trick question. Why is God compassionate towards us who have broken the covenant and sinned? |
| **LIVE YOUR****FAITH** | What does a clean heart look like to you?What would happen to any of us without God’s Holy Spirit?  |
| **SHARE YOUR FAITH** | How should the Church teach sinners, as the psalmist suggests?Perhaps from your own experiences or encounters, what triggers a person to return to the Lord and the covenant in real life? |
| **WORSHIP** | Share your thoughts on the penitential rite of the Mass.Baptism is a washing away of sin. Explain baptism to a complete non-believeer. How would you do this? |

 **Responsorial Psalm**

**SECOND READING: Hebrews 5, 7-9**

Pope Francis has called for a rediscovery of the gift of tears, in spiritual direction called compunction, which creates a new and deeper level of humanity in our inmost being in imitation here of Jesus himself. The sufferings of Jesus indeed engaged himself in the depths of our humanity. Through this he learned obedience and through obedience, perfection. This path is our own Lenten way to salvation and resurrection. In some sense this reading choice and its theme of lamentation and cry unto God gives a counterbalance to the first reading that describes the effects of unfaithful behavior as played out In history. The reading concludes the teaching about Jesus Christ as the compassionate high priest; what follows is the sacrificial character of his priesthood and the nature of the sacrifice.

**Vss. 7-9: CCC 609, 2606** Christ embraces the human heart; this is the love of God for us. Love accepts death of self for others. Jesus himself prays with tears and a cry to God. Jesus is heard because of this recognition that the human person cannot save themselves, but only the Father.

**Vss. 7-8: CCC 612, 1009** In the garden after the Last Supper Jesus receives in reality the cup of the new covenant. He knows fully the horror of death, yet his offering perfects him and his death saves us. In the basic kerygma of the Church from Peter and Paul, we know that death is transformative because it is our final giving over of self to God, which gives us full share in God’s life.

**Vs. 7: CCC 2741** This citation explains Jesus’ unceasing prayer for us and our salvation.

**Vs. 8: CCC 2825** For us, prayer with Jesus is the school of obedience to the Father. Prayer is a surrender to God. Prayer with Jesus is also humbling, as it teaches us to trust in God and not in our own strength.

**Vs. 9: CCC 617** Trent goes into detail about the sacrifice of the cross as our justification, and so the Church venerates the cross.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **KNOW YOUR****FAITH** | Name at least three things this short reading has to teach us about prayer.The cross is not the end of the disciple’s journey of faith. What is that end-of-journey? |
| **LIVE YOUR****FAITH** | In what is prayer a surrender to God for you?Compunction is the gift of tears. Share your reflections on this experience if you’ve anything like this happen to you. |
| **SHARE YOUR FAITH** | What aspect of your encounter with Jesus does this passage challenge you to share with others? Why?Review the basic kerygma of the Church. |
| **WORSHIP** | Research how the Eucharistic Prayers use the language of sacrifice.Find out also how the Eucharistic Prayers use the concept of reverence. |

 **Second Reading**

**GOSPEL: John 12, 20-33 Encounter in Jerusalem before the Passover**

This chapter begins with Jesus’ anointing at Bethany six days before the Passover; correlated with the days of creation, it is the first day when God made light. Indeed the light is exposing all the works of those near Jesus. Even the oil of Mary’s anointing of Jesus that fills the house is an oil with the qualities of light. Judas’ work is exposed as the apostolic bursar as he argues about the cost of oil. Jews come to see Lazarus raised from the dead. Jesus enters Jerusalem as the Messianic King. Now, even the Greeks are coming to see Jesus, evangelized by the apostle Philip. “We want to see Jesus,” they request. Dying, rising, and losing, saving, and following, serving all becomes the way to Jesus. At vs. 27 the narrative shifts to an almost personal quiet aside from Jesus about his approaching “hour.” His communion with the Father sounds like a thunder clap, much like Mt. Sinai. Finally, he connects the cross with the eschatological moment of crisis, in the sense of judgment and decision. The unread conclusion of this incident returns to the theme of the light overcoming the darkness, inviting the disciple into the light.

**Vs. 24: CCC 2731** The unplanted seed remains dry. Dryness is a spiritual situation of the soul; it is the experience of separation from God. It is the moment when faith is most required. It takes faith to know that the seed in the ground (of the Word of God) will grow to bear fruit.

**Vs. 27: CCC 363, 607** “The soul signifies the spiritual principle in man.” Soul means both the whole person and the person’s inmost self. Jesus came to fulfill the Father’s loving plan of redemption.

**Vs. 28: CCC 434** Citation here elaborates on the name of Jesus.

**Vs. 31: CCC 550, 2853** The exorcism of the evil one who rules this world is a sign of the reign of God. Satan is called the prince of this world, the evil one. The Church prays, “Come, Lord Jesus!” He will drive the evil one out.

**Vs. 32: CCC 542, 662, 786, 1428, 2795** Jesus accomplishes his kingdom by the ingathering of all the peoples. By the Cross, all will be gathered by the power of Christ’s intercession on the Cross of forgiveness; therefore, Christ is the center of the liturgy. The people of God share the royal authority of Jesus, which is a life of service to others, especially the poor. The royal authority is the power to govern one’s self and the power of obedience to a higher power. Christ calls all to conversion; in this work the Church responds to grace. The heavenly home of the Father is our true homeland where Christ rules with the Father and Holy Spirit. The liturgy bridges heaven and earth for this reason.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **KNOW YOUR****FAITH** | What is an exorcism?What is the moisture needed by the soul to grow and bear fruit? |
| **LIVE YOUR****FAITH** | What do you all have governance over in your life really?How has the crisis of the cross been decisive in your life? |
| **SHARE YOUR FAITH** | Has anyone ever asked you to see Jesus like the Greeks in this reading? And your action has been?Name the most attractive aspects of Jesus Christ that would be attractive to our culture. |
| **WORSHIP** | When does the Church today pray, “Come, Lord Jesus!”.Nationally the Catholic Church is more diverse than ever. Do you see this as a sign of the presence of the reign of God? |

 **Gospel**

**Next Sunday: Palm Sunday B: Isaiah 50, 4-7; Ps 22; Philipians 2, 6-11; Mark 14, 1 – 15, 47**