**Ascension B Lectionary Catechesis**

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**Guardian Angels Parish in Mead, CO**

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| The Ascension has been moved generally across the US to the 7th Sunday of Easter. Of the paschal mystery, it is the least understood at the parish level, yet it is a core part of the kerygma. Christ’s entry into heaven assures our own final into heaven. In Christ’s divinity and humanity, it points the wedding feast of heaven and earth, the union of the divine and human. The Ascension is about the mission of the Church, which is the salvation of souls. |

**FIRST READING: Acts 1, 1-11**

We hardly write letters anymore, and even less, letters such as Acts from Luke to Theophilus. Acts continues the kerygma begun in Luke. The introduction feels like a form of the fundamental kerygma – it tells the story of Jesus. The theme of the book is the presence of the Holy Spirit in the Church. The Ascension is a core part of the mystery of redemption.

**Vss. 1-2: CCC 512** Ascension is one of the mysteries of redemption in the Creed.

**Vs. 3: CCC 659** The cloud and the heavens symbolize Jesus’ final glorious entry into heaven. A last note is given here that “only in a wholly exceptional and unique way would Jesus show himself to Paul . . .”

**Vss. 6-7: CCC 672** With the Ascension the “hour” has come, and the Church is prepared with Pentecost.

**Vs. 7 CCC 474, 673** Jesus knows things according to both his divinity and humanity. The Ascension also serves notice of Christ’s return “at an hour we do not know.” It is imminent; the Christian should live accordingly.

**Vs. 8: CCC 672, 730, 735, 857, 1287** First, see above. At his death, Jesus returns his spirit of the Father, which he receives back in the resurrection, and breathes then upon his apostles, which is the first fruit of our life in the Spirit as Church. The Church receives its life and power. This Church is apostolic because of their witness to the mysteries of redemption. The promised outpouring of the Hoy Spirit signals the beginning and presence of the Messianic Age.

**Vs. 9: CCC 659, 697** Cf. above. Accompanying the Ascension, the symbols of cloud and light identify the presence of the Holy Spirit.

**Vss. 10-11: 333** As with all other moments of Christ’s life, here in the Ascension he is surrounded by angels.

**Vs. 11: 665** Christ, in his humanity, has entered heaven.

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| **KNOW YOUR**  **FAITH** | Why is the Ascension a part of the core gospel narrative?  When will Jesus return? |
| **LIVE YOUR**  **FAITH** | Share those things that assure for you the apostolic quality of the Church?  What will happen to our own humanity when we die? |
| **SHARE YOUR FAITH** | What is the core mission of the Church?  Who will you invite and propose to the Church for the sacraments of initiation later this year? |
| **WORSHIP** | Share the difference between the transcendent and imminent quality of Christ.  Name the sacraments of initiation and their role in the RCIA. |

**First Reading**

**RESPONSORIAL: Psalm 47, 2-3. 6-7. 8-9**

Memories of this psalm include that late 1960’s guitar song at Mass, “All You Peoples Clap Your Hands,” and almost everyone actually clapped their hands during the song. We thought that that was the new liturgy of Vatican II; it was remarkable to actually clap your hands in church at Mass. Music has fortunately come along way since then; there’s been a major movement to restore the “sacred” in sacred music. The psalm praises the ascent of God to claim his throne over all the peoples. While there is a small note of Israelite “nationalism”, at the end the descendants of Abraham and the princes of the peoples are all on one level in their position and praise of God. This very festive psalm voices the clapping hands, shouts of joy, and trumpet blasts of the divine ascent. In the light of Christ’s Ascension then it is not so much that we’ve “lost” Jesus to the heavenly court, and it would appear to some that he is no longer here with us, in fact the psalm orients the Church towards its fundamental and foremost obligation to worship. Vs. 7 is the highlight of this worship. The psalm also reminds us of the universal nature of the Catholic Church, crossing every “national”, ethnic, cultural barrier.

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| **KNOW YOUR**  **FAITH** | Why are we here on earth?  Who is to be included in the reign of God? |
| **LIVE YOUR**  **FAITH** | Share your personal level of participation in the Mass when it comes to the music.  Name the ways God is King over your life. |
| **SHARE YOUR FAITH** | How will all the nations come to gather before God’s throne?  Share your witness to the Ascension in your life. |
| **WORSHIP** | Processionals and recessionals are a part of Mass. They can be elaborate or very simple. Most of us think of the ones that begin and end the Mass. Name the other processions during the Mass.  Why are the Tabernacle and Altar both elevated and central in the architecture of the Church? |

**Responsorial Psalm**

**SECOND READING: Ephesians 1, 17-23 (or alternatively Ephesians 4, 1-13)**

The reading sounds like a hymn celebrating the work of Christ in the Church in the first verses and the dominion of Christ over the cosmos in the last verses. This is a Pauline prayer that we have the gift, knowledge, and wisdom to know Christ in faith, hope, and charity. This brief passage is loaded with many truths of our faith. This is a radical and humbling view of the nature of things.

**Vss. 16-23: CCC 2632** Christian prayer is ordered toward the coming of the kingdom; petition prayer has a certain hierarchy. We pray for the reign of God and all that is ordered toward hastening its coming.

**Vs. 18: CCC 158** “Faith seeks understanding,” says St. Anselm. Faith opens the “eyes of the heart” increasing our desire to know the One we believe in. The understanding is not so much an act of the intellect, but of the contemplative and relational knowing and understanding of God. The Holy Spirit gives us the grace to have faith and understanding (one of the gifts). “I believe, in order to understand; and I understand, the better to believe,” wrote St. Augustine.

**Vss. 19-22: CCC 272, 648** Suffering and evil test our faith. The experience of the resurrection corrects the false ideas that God allows evil or is absent from suffering. In an unexpected way God manifests the mystery of God’s divine presence; Paul calls this the “foolishness of God.” The Resurrection is an object of faith; it manifests God’s power in the created world. In the resurrection, God moves in our human history in a radically new way,

**Vss. 20-22: CCC 668** The Ascension unites in Christ both his divine and human natures. The Ascension certifies Christ’s power in heaven and on earth. The goal of human history is an ascent to the Father.

**Vss. 22-23: CCC 830** The Church is called Catholic, that is, universal by St. Ignatius of Antioch in the year AD 109, The 8th Letter to Smyrna, paragraph 2.

**Vs. 22: CCC 669, 753, 2045** With the Ascension we see the fullness and completion of God’s plan for humans. This is then the mission of the Church. Scripture has many images that reveal the mystery of God in human history to redeem: images from shepherding, agriculture, the craft of building, and from family life and marriage. All Christians have a responsibility to build up the Church in unity, maturity, increase, constancy in the moral life.

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| **KNOW YOUR**  **FAITH** | Define faith as it is given in the passage, especially relating faith and understanding.  Why is the Church called, “Catholic”? |
| **LIVE YOUR**  **FAITH** | What does “Catholic” mean to you in your life as a quality of the Church?  What are your images that you use to think about the Church and offer yourself in service to the ministry of the Church? |
| **SHARE YOUR FAITH** | How do you share your practice of the Lordship of Christ in your life with others?  In the light of faith, share your understanding of evil and suffering in this world. |
| **WORSHIP** | What is the purpose and ordering of the prayers of petition at the Mass?  How is the Mass the wedding feast of heaven and earth for you? |

**Second Reading**

**GOSPEL: Mark 16, 15-20**

This is the end of Mark’s gospel in which Christ commissions the apostles. The passage highlights preaching, baptizing, and healing as the core mission. The Ascension event empowers the apostolic Church to begin and persevere in this work. The continuous presence of Christ in the Church is explicit.

**Vss. 15-16: CCC 977, 1223** Forgiveness of sin flows from faith and baptism, because baptism unites us to Christ. Just as Jesus begins his mission with baptism by John, so too he baptizes us in the Holy Spirtitas the Church prepares for her mission. Mission does not begin without this profound union to Christ and forgiveness of sins.

**Vs. 15: CCC 888** Bishops and presbyters have the first task of preaching the gospel.

**Vs. 16: CCC 161, 183, 1253, 1256, 1257** In order to receive the salvation in Jesus Christ, one must have faith in Him. Like Abraham, faith alone achieves companionship with God, obtains justification, and attains eternal life. “Baptism is the sacrament of faith.” It is a beginner’s faith that matures in the communion of the Church. The ordinary ministers of baptism are ordained, but in necessity anyone can baptize; the person needs the intention of the Church, water, and the Trinitarian formula. Baptism is necessary for salvation, affirmed by Jesus Christ. Two things are required: the request for baptism and the hearing of the gospel.

**Vss. 17-18: CCC 670, 1507** The Ascension completes God’s work in history of salvation that leads to the final phase: Christ’s return and the final establishment of the kingdom. The mission of the Church is not in its own name, but “in my name . . .” says Jesus Christ.

**Vs. 17: CCC 434, 1673** The Resurrection glorifies the name of Jesus, the name above others empowering the work of the Church which evil spirits fear. Exorcism is the official rites of the Church protecting from evil. There is a prayer of exorcism in Baptism. Exorcism expels and liberates from demons; and exorcism is not the work of the modern psychological sciences.

**Vs. 18: CCC 699** Calling down the Holy Spirit, Jesus lays his hands upon apostles, the sick, and the little children in blessing and in power.

**Vs. 19: CCC 659** Refer above.

**Vs. 20: CCC 2, 156, 670** That Christ might be known to all, the Church is given this mission: to manifest the love of God to the world, We are not drawn to believe this because of the some intellectual process or statement, but rather by faith and our experience of the love of God in His holy presence. Despite all the “proofs” something must happen in the human heart and soul to actualize this faith in love. There are many signs pointing to this faith, giving faith credibility, eg., the saints, prophets, revelation, the fruitfulness of the Church, etc. Faith is not just a blind movement of the intellect.

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| **KNOW YOUR**  **FAITH** | Share and answer your questions about baptism.  What is the fundamental mission of the Church? |
| **LIVE YOUR**  **FAITH** | What are the experiences and relationships that have endowed your life with faith?  Which do you prefer: proofs for the existence of God or faith? Why |
| **SHARE YOUR FAITH** | How are you fulfilling and participating in the mission of the Church by showing forth love in the world?  When people have a conversion experience, do you suppose it is because of a Church teaching or because of faith coming through grace? Why do you think this? |
| **WORSHIP** | What is an exorcism?  Share your experiences of baptism. |

**Gospel**

**Next Sunday: Pentecost B: Acts 2, 1-11; Ps104; I Cor 12, 3b-7. 12-13; John 20, 19-23**