**Ordinary Time 11 B Lectionary Catechesis**

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**Guardian Angels Parish in Mead, CO**

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| This Sunday’s discipleship focuses on the parables and the powerful images that a parable uses to promote the disciple further on the journey of faith. One of the images is the cedar, another a seed, and a third is life in the spirit. Holding this Sunday’s gospel and second reading with next Sundays gospel and second reading may be helpful thematically. Discipleship requires certain beliefs to activated in the person: courage is one of them. It takes courage today to practice one’s faith in this culture. |

**FIRST READING: Ezekiel 17, 22-24**

The section today follows a long symbolic recounting of the disastrous end of King Jehoiachin and King Zedekiah of Judah, first by the eagle of Babylon and second by the eagle of Egypt who both seized the new sprout at the end of the Davidic dynasty and replanted them in a foreign land. The wings spread of an eagle appears frequently in the royal iconography of both peoples. Here God himself grasps the new top of a cedar and will plant it on the heights of Judah to begin the dynasty anew. Note that the shoot is tender and so requires the care that only God can give it to have it survive amidst obstacles. Of course, Christian understood this prophecy as messianic and referring to Christ. The concept of casting down the mighty and lifting up the lowly is a Biblical theme used in the mouths of Mary and Jesus. The point of the prophet being that God acts in history to save and restore God’s people. Ez 31 continues the theme of this prophetic parable.

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| **KNOW YOUR**  **FAITH** | How do we know that God acts in history?  Connect this parables tress with the trees and seeds in the gospel parable of Jesus. |
| **LIVE YOUR**  **FAITH** | Most of us are either very curious about the news of the day, and some of us want to avoid the bad news altogether. What does the news (national and international) do to your faith and why?  What are the tender parts of your life needing the mercy of God? |
| **SHARE YOUR FAITH** | What do the three eagles perhaps suggest in your own mind when you note that the eagle is the totemic animal of our country. God is acting as the third eagle in the parable of Ezekiel.  Why is a tree planted by God a good image of the Church which you can share with others? |
| **WORSHIP** | For Catholics, the cross is the tree of life bearing the fruit of eternal life and nourishing all who come to the cross with blood and water from the side of Jesus. Describe the cross in your parish church and what attracts you to it.  You have to remember that cedar wood covered the inside of the Temple in Jerusalem and then that wood was plated with gold. Why are the interior walls of a church important as a part of the setting for worship? |

**First Reading**

**RESPONSORIAL: Psalm 92, 2-3. 13-14. 15-16**

Perhaps the last two sets of verses made a connection for those who constructed our lectionary; these verses mention greenness, fruitfulness, and freshness of the cedars of Lebanon. God is the one who does and preserves these qualities in our faith. Cedars don’t bear fruit, strictly speaking, but that their wood is used for the interior of the Temple. Symbolic then this tall, majestic tree represents spiritual growth and height on the journey of faith. The tall pride of the cedar can also represent at the same time perhaps the spiritual dangers of human pride. Compared to their size, all trees ultimately begin as relatively small seeds. Part of the psalm grates as the sensitivities of the modern ear when the subject of taking glee over the defeat of one’s enemies is mentioned

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| **KNOW YOUR**  **FAITH** | What is the effect of pride for the spiritually maturing person?  Consider the liturgy of the hours, praising God day and night, commended by vs. 2-3. |
| **LIVE YOUR**  **FAITH** | Imagine your life as a small seed, which indeed once we all were. What sort of qualities does your life have today? Does this “tree” cover the walls of your interior temple of the Holy Spirit. What fruit are you bearing? What is the height of your interior spiritual tree?  When was the last time you praised God for the beauty God gave the natural world? |
| **SHARE YOUR FAITH** | Whom do you praise God with?  For the future, with whom should you be praising God? |
| **WORSHIP** | The greatest work of God is that the human person reconciles with God and others and then gathers in the temple of the church for the Eucharist. This then enables us to bear fruit that will last. Where are you on that journey from reconciliation to Eucharist?  Historically we don’t know if there were actual trees in the temple. However many church building have been painted and embellished with trees, vines, and flowers of every sort. Why do we do this? |

**Responsorial Psalm**

**SECOND READING: II Corinthians 5, 6-10**

Paul compares our earthly dwelling to a tent, no doubt referring also to the sojourn in the desert. Fragile and destructible, we have building from God. Paul speaks of being clothed with our heavenly habitation, referencing perhaps the majestic cedar covering the walls of the temple of Jerusalem. God promises us this and God will do it. Paul invites us therefore to have courage. Here he gives us the lines for a classic American folk hymn, “We Walk By Faith, and Not By Sight,” and we do while in this earthly sojourn in a physical body. This lead Paul to the conclusion that we will all appear before the judgment throne of God according to our actions while in the flesh. The following passage after this one includes one of Paul’s four great teachings on reconciliation, always an act requiring courage; next Sunday picks up this part.

**Vs. 6: CCC 769** The Church awaits the coming of Jesus to be fully manifest as who she is with Christ in glory. Here is suggested that the Church’s trials help to perfect her during this earthly and temporal journey. This is a hard teaching in the midst of the contemporary loss of cache of the Church in the world.

**Vs. 8: CCC 164** While on earth we see spiritual realities only dimly. “We walk by faith, and not by sight.” II Cor 5, 7. Our reality in this world is distant from the promise of heaven. The world as it is shakes our faith.

**Vs. 8: CCC 1005, 1021, 1681** First two teachings: to rise with Christ we must die with Christ and secondly, Death separates the soul from the body until the resurrection. After death, there are two encounters with Christ the Judge: immediately and individually and then the one most mentioned in the New Testament – the final and universal judgment. For the Christian, death is only understood in light of the death and resurrection of Christ.

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| **KNOW YOUR**  **FAITH** | What does the Scripture here teach about the final judgment?  Courage is one of the cardinal virtues. What does courage mean for you? |
| **LIVE YOUR**  **FAITH** | Are you walking by faith?  In the very next verse after our passage, Paul speaks of trying to persuade others. What is persuasive about your life of your Christian convictions? |
| **SHARE YOUR FAITH** | It takes courage in our culture to share faith with others. We are so eager not to offend or on the other hand be challenged. How do you feel when talking about faith matters with others?  In our modern culture, we want to be reassured by the light of seen evidence shown by science. We want to prove the existence of God, which of course means that one does not have to have faith, because it is proven. How can our apologetics overcome this obstacle of the pseudo-conflict of faith and reason? |
| **WORSHIP** | What pleases God?  How does the liturgy of the Eucharist focus on this struggle between flesh and spirit? |

**Second Reading**

**GOSPEL: Mark 4, 26-34 The Kingdom as Seed, Mustard Seed, and a Teaching about Parables**

The gospel brings together three short teachings from among a number of his teachings taught by the seashore, perhaps viewed as two parables and a teaching about how to interpret and integrate the parables into the life of the disciple. The parables here are deceptively simple; in fact they represent the disciple’s entry into the reign of God. The two seeds show that we are but creations of God fixed for God’s harvest, to produce the fruit of the kingdom so that all might find shelter and security and peace. Growing into the meaning of parables is a life long work, as we are able to understand. So a second grader’s knowing is going to be very different from the mature disciple of 65 years. People wonder why Jesus keeps it secret from the public. It is because discipleship is not a purchased commodity that one thinks to buy and then put it on one’s mantle like a trophy won by one’s own efforts. Rather, faith and discipleship are interior processes of the soul not measured by any purchase of spiritual materialism. One is never done in the work of the parables and of discipleship. Immediately after this Jesus will cross the sea to the other side, during which crossing he calms the sea. Here is preparing the disciple for that spiritual crossing over. To understand the notion of parables read the earlier part of Mark 4, 10-20.

**Vss. 33-34: CCC 546** Jesus invites the future disciple with parables, which the disciple must complete with their own real deeds. Discipleship is radically decisive. Discipleship is the way and the “door” to understanding the parables.

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| **KNOW YOUR**  **FAITH** | Why does Jesus teach the kingdom of God in parables?  Why does the CCC speak of discipleship as radically decisive, when most of us were simple born and baptized into the faith? |
| **LIVE YOUR**  **FAITH** | Choose one of the two saying about seeds and apply it to your life. Share.  How far in the spiritual journey crossing the sea are you? What are the storms? |
| **SHARE YOUR FAITH** | How do you imagine the Church being a shelter for all in the field of the world?  Who will you be inviting in the year ahead into the RCIA journey? Give the names to your parish RCIA person. Thank you. Plan to attend with them. |
| **WORSHIP** | Disciples worship the Master, Jesus. Share how that looks for you at Eucharist.  What is radically decisive about the Eucharist in the Catholic faith and why? |

**Gospel**

**Next Sunday: Ordinary Time 12 B: Job 38, 1. 8-11; Psalm 107; II Corinthians 5, 14-17; Mk 4, 35-41**