**Ordinary Time 15 B Lectionary Catechesis**

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| Prophets and prophecy bring the readings together. The prophet and their work is the subject of discussion still today. Some would argue that all this only refers to Christ; after all prophets make a person nervous. Today they are either dismissed out of hand or break away into small almost cult-like groups on the fringe. Those who claim to be prophets often feel to others as more just self-authorized. The prophet is a difficult role. Thematically rich, the second reading comes down to the two verbs of the sentence: chosen and sealed -- Baptism and Confirmation. Unless good examples or stories arise, a real challenge to take on. |

**FIRST READING: Amos 7, 12-15**

Amos unrelentingly excoriates the rulers of the kingdoms for their injustices against the poor and against the land, including the king of Israel, Jeroboam. The collection of oracles ends with five visions, towards the end of which the northern high place priest of Bethel ejects him from the temple and palace. This does not stop Amos. Some of the same reactionary to the prophetic voice of the Church happens in our own culture that Amos accuses the ancient nations, for example, 2, 6-7a. 12b. The third woe 6, 3-7 is typical of the strong and graphic quality of Amos’ work. You can see why the official court priests drove him out. If the ministry of the apostles only included healing, they would have been welcomed everywhere, of course. But if the ministry includes preaching repentance, well, then we see how it goes. Precious Blood Father Edward Siegman wrote about the false prophets already back in the late 1950s.

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| **KNOW YOUR**  **FAITH** | The CCC has seven citations in the index for the role and mission of the prophets then and today. Read and discuss.  Walter Bruggemann considers the prophetic consciousness and the royal consciousness. The royal sanctuary would be sustained by the royal consciousness of human centered security and power. Vaclav Havel’s famous quote was, “The powerlessness of the powerful.” What kind of power do prophets have? |
| **LIVE YOUR**  **FAITH** | The prophetic task is to challenge “business as usual” and also to comfort the afflicted. In what way is the high priest of Bethel exiling Amos for doing both?  Who do you think are the prophets in the Church today and where would you find them? |
| **SHARE YOUR FAITH** | Sherry Weddell speaks of the “spiral of silence” in her book Intentional Disciples. This means every one thinks alike and all agree silently to remain silent about the “elephant in the room.” In what way does your church circle do this or share this structure?  Whom would you rather not have in your church because they disturb the peace? |
| **WORSHIP** | What are the differences and similarities between preaching and prophecy?  Does being prophetic belong within the scope of pastoral ministry and parish life? |

**First Reading**

**RESPONSORIAL: Psalm 85, 9-10. 11-12. 13-14**

Hearing and listening, frequently mentioned in the Bible, represent not only physical actions of the senses, but more importantly the interior actions of the soul to the divine and holy presence of God. In our media driven culture we hear and see a lot, but we frequently miss the “in-sight”. Our responsorial today has one of the more famous psalm quotes used by the peace and social justice movement, “Love and truth will meet; justice and peace will kiss.” The first half of the psalm (not used today) begs for God’s mercy. Vs. 9 then acknowledges the moment of conversion, a return to listening to God who speaks of peace, vs. 9 in particular describes the contemplative listening of the prophet to God. First the prophet listens to the cry of the poor, and then gives voice to the new vision of God’s peace and justice. The psalm ends on a note of bountiful harvest, and should not be takes to mean God’s blessings on any one people, such as ourselves. Vs. 12a tells us that the fruitful harvest is truth and justice. Four virtues of God are extolled here: love, truth, justice, and peace. Here biblical interpretation veers away from any literalism towards a rhetoric of sign and symbol.

**Vs. 11: CCC 214** This lists the riches revealed God’s holy name, love and faithfulness first and foremost among them.

**Vs. 12: CCC 2795** Heaven, the deep skies of the cosmos, symbolize God’s home. Yet in Christ heaven and earth are reconciled, and we return from our exile through conversion, repentance, and reconciliation.

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| **KNOW YOUR**  **FAITH** | Why have peace and justice been central issues for the Church, especially since Pope Leo XIII in 1892, *Rerum Novarum*?  Who is the source of all that we have? |
| **LIVE YOUR**  **FAITH** | Where do you see peace in our world and where justice? Asked to counter the tendency to always see and hear the negative.  Consider your day. What have you been hearing all day? Have you heard the small whisper of God’s voice? |
| **SHARE YOUR FAITH** | Share about one or the other of the peace and justice issues facing our society today and reflect upon how our society is addressing these hot button issues. Consider, for example, the environmental message of *Laudato Si’*.  What can you or your parish do more to evangelize and share your faith? Think peace and justice concerns. |
| **WORSHIP** | Why ought good ecclesial art have the qualities of peace and justice in it?  Name the benefits you receive from God at the Eucharist. |

**Responsorial Psalm**

**SECOND READING: Ephesians 1,3-14**

Paul writes incredibly long and dense sentences in Ephesians especially. Our twelve verses here are in fact only one Greek sentence, and six in English. Unraveling it challenges. The core verbs are “God **chose** us and God **sealed** us in the Spirit to praise God.” It is a little difficult to see this in English, but the two verbs in Greek bookend and frame the sentence. The Greek word for “sealed” is the only Greek word in the entire Catechism, under the sacrament of Confirmation. The middle concept, always significant in Greek rhetoric, is grace, which is in, through, and from Christ, God’s beloved. This is the opening to the whole letter, and Paul introduces his themes of the letter, including “redemption by his blood” and “forgiveness of transgressions.” Later in the letter, Paul will build on his theology of reconciliation.

**Vss. 3-14: CCC 2626, 2641** Prayers of blessings respond to God’s gift. Hymnody expresses the Christian mysteries in song; it is not about our emotional lives.

**Vss. 3-8: CCC 381, 1077** At the beginning of the Sacrament section, the CCC quotes this whole

**Vs. 3: CCC 492, 1671** Mary is among humans first and foremost chosen for God’s praise. “With every spiritual blessing”, is why the Church has a book of blessings for many persons, objects, and places.

**Vss. 4-5: CCC 52, 257** God’s self revelation invites our response to His choice. Grace conforms us to Christ.

**Vs. 4: CCC 492, 796, 865, 1426, 2807** First one, see above.Next, are references to the bridal imagery of Christ and Church; Christ gives himself to the Church to sanctify her, making her “holy and blameless in love”. The sacraments of initiation enable the person, still in their humanity and frailty, to become by grace responsible for the choice and sealing God made in us, overcoming sin/concupiscence. A commentary on the Lord’s Prayer connects the holiness of God with our own being drawn into God’s plan.

**Vss. 5-6: CCC 294** The glory of God is the showing forth of God’s utter and absolute goodness.

**Vs. 6: CCC 1083** The liturgy unites us to God, as God’s greatest gift which we seek. Our response is giving of our own gifts to God in praise and adoration.

**Vs. 7: CCC 517, 2839** “Redemption by his blood” is the center of Christ’s life and “mystery.” The “hallowing” of God’s name, in fact, makes us more holy. This confessional petition is in a sense a cry for mercy and this divine holiness.

**Vss. 9-11: CCC 2823** The mystery of God’s will is the gathering of all things to Himself, to choose us.

**Vs. 9: CCC 257, 1066, 2603, 2807** #257, see above. Second is the opening paragraph on the sacraments, referencing here “the mystery in Christ” and the “economy of salvation.” The prayers of Jesus in the gospels inform us of the “mystery” of Jesus and the Father. #2807, see above.

**Vs. 10: CCC 668, 772, 1043, 2748** The Ascension of Christ both reveals and fulfills the true trajectory of human history in Christ’s authority and primacy. God’s plan is to unite all things in Himself; bridal imagery helps us understand this new union. God will renew and transform heaven and earth. Christ is the “definitive realization of God’s plan.” The final prayer of Jesus is for just such unity.

**Vss. 13-14: CCC 706, 1274** All human hope is fulfilled in the “Son” of Abraham, the fruition of God’s promise, Jesus, who guarantees our inheritance of heaven as children of God. The “seal” marks us with the sign of faith.

**Vs. 13: CCC 693, 698, 1296** First, title of the Holy Spirit are given. The seal stands with the anointing. Seals represent both identity and possession; unopened they represent authenticity, integrity, and truth. In John 6, 27 (later this summer) Jesus states that he is marked with the seal of the Father.

**Vs. 14: CCC 1107** The Holy Spirit seals us which changes us for the coming of God’s kingdom.

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| **KNOW YOUR**  **FAITH** | Why is “chosen” and “sealed” important for the Christian life? |
| **LIVE YOUR**  **FAITH** | Vs. 13 above uses the word “seal”. Who has their signature all over you? |
| **SHARE YOUR FAITH** | How does the true Christian relate to those deemed not chosen or sealed? Hint: relate this to the goal of evangelization) |
| **WORSHIP** | Share your experience of Confirmation? |

**Second Reading**

**GOSPEL: Mark 6, 7-13 Jesus Summons and Sends out the Twelve**

As quickly as Mark 1, 16 Jesus begins to call his apostles and form them. Now they are sent on the same mission and ministry that they have witnessed in Jesus. They are not named in this passage, because we’ve just heard their call stories. The method is very simple: the work is done is community (two by two), with minimal baggage. The mission is to preach repentance and to drive out evil spirits. Here and in James 5, 14-15 we find the biblical justification for the sacrament of the sick. The focus of Jesus’ verbal instructions seems odd at first; he commends stability and protects them from inhospitality. The phrase “he instructed” suggests that a full teaching about their work was actually included here, but held as an inner knowledge by Jesus and the apostles, lest the method of the work falls into inappropriate hands. The very next incident, before they complete the mission and return to Jesus, in the story of Herod’s antagonism and the beheading of John the Baptist, as if to stress and be clear about the evils oppositional to the apostolic mission – the secular powers of the world. In our own culture, the American bishops have achieved a fragile working relationship with the political, economic (read: corporate America), and cultural powers that be. While respect life issues have clearly drawn lines, it might probably be less so when it comes to environmental issues. There seem to be points where the Catholic Church is too enculturated and therefore comfortable.

**Vs. 7: CCC 765, 1673** Christ gave the Church a structure of authority and ministry that is apostolic in nature. The second citation deals with sacramentals. All sorts of object, places, and events have a minor “sacramental” quality about them in that they help us be pointed towards Jesus. All of these things can be blessed by a priest. Some can be “exorcised” in they the prayer pleas for protection from the Evil One. This is to be clearly distinguished from a major exorcism, reserved only to the permission of a bishop. In our culture illness is to be carefully discerned and distinguished from a possession. The former are the concern of the appropriate medical sciences.

**Vs. 12-13: CCC 1506** The disciples of Jesus take up his care and compassion for the sick by healing with an anointing of oil. This sacrament (**NOT THE LAST RITES**) is alluded in this verse and is made explicit in James 5, 14-15.

**Vs. 13: CCC 1511, 1673** cf. above.

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| **KNOW YOUR**  **FAITH** | Why did Jesus give the Church a structure to organize the works of the Church?  Explain the fundament missionary quality of the Church. |
| **LIVE YOUR**  **FAITH** | Share the story of your favorite sacramentals that you actually have in your home.  What does preaching repentance mean to you? Do you ever hear this form of homiletic at your parish? Why not? |
| **SHARE YOUR FAITH** | What are the missions of your parish that shares the gospel with the poor?  Which mission of the Church engages you the most? |
| **WORSHIP** | What is the sacrament of the sick? Look it up in the Catechism.  What is an exorcism? Use the Catechism, not Hollywood. |

**Gospel**

**Next Sunday: Ordinary Time 16 B: Jeremiah 23, 1-6; Psalm 23; Ephesians 2, 13-18; Mark 6, 30-34**