**ORDINARY TIME 21 C Lectionary Catechesis**

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| Discipleship is the theme of these readings, yet clearly cast from a prophetic standpoint. The disciple must be faithful through strength and perseverance to enter the kingdom of God. The scope and breath of the kingdom of God as an all inclusive ingathering of the nations presents a strong message for our own time, torn as we are by prejudices of every kind. The universality of the Church as people of God is emphasized. There are no reference citations to the CCC for this week’s readings. |

**FIRST READING: Isaiah 66, 18-21**

The book of the prophet Isaiah ends with Chapter 66 on a very expansive note, except of course for the very last verse of doom for those who failed to come to the new Jerusalem. Dispersed among the nations, the people of Judah necessarily had to change the ways that they’d long thought of themselves and of the other nations. The prophet voice announces a new creation – the restoration of the whole human family as one, a dream since Babel. He describes these peoples of the nations as “kin”, which must have been a surprise to the people of Judah In exile, as much as it is for our own nation today, that regardless of skin color, background, nationality, language, all are meant to be one human family. Note carefully that the text does not say anything about any group losing its unique identity; this is important because some people seem to think that everyone has to become an English speaking American and lose their own culture. The prophet is even more bold in his announcement because the old law of cult purity is transcended, and ever more so because some of these strangers and foreigners will even become priests! The “sign among them” has long been understood to be the cross, as sign of the new covenant, although in fact the sign of the new covenant is the Eucharist, which includes the whole Paschal Mystery, not just the cross. The new evangelists will represent all the nations.

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| **KNOW YOUR****FAITH** | What does the word “Catholic” mean in the dictionary?What do you think is the sign that God will place among the peoples? |
| **LIVE YOUR****FAITH** | What is your role in healing the national racial wounds of our country?What can you do personally to build up the hospitality quotient in your parish? |
| **SHARE YOUR FAITH** | Why should the Church always avoid an enculturation and identification with only one culture, nation, or language?The text says the nations came on every kind of transportation and arrive in Jerusalem. What are the ways your parish helps people “get in the door”?  |
| **WORSHIP** | The Catholic Church has always ordained priests from every sort of cultural background. What is your experience when you have priests from all over the world at Sunday Mass?The prophet speaks of “clean vessels” as the “kin from all the nations”, no longer concerned with the purity laws of the covenant. What are our requirements for receiving the Eucharist? |

  **First Reading**

**RESPONSORIAL: Psalm 117, 1. 2**

This is the briefest of psalms; just these two verses. By the way, the CCC index has a printing error here when it cites a teaching based on vs. “24”. There’s only two verses. This whole psalm obviously accompanies the theology of the first reading and the gospel. There is a direct universal call to praise and extol God, and God’s mercy and faithfulness are enduring forever. The psalmist suggests for our own time that all bragging and self-praise needs to be turned into praise of God. With so short a psalm, it is very difficult to develop a full set of questions and group reflection prompts.

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| **KNOW YOUR****FAITH** | Why does God desire the praise of the nations?Tell the story of Babel and compare it with the new creation God is bringing about in our times. |
| **LIVE YOUR****FAITH** | What kind of diversity is present in your “crowd” (neighbors, family, friends) as you build community?Why is diversity a blessing and an enrichment? |
| **SHARE YOUR FAITH** | Is there any national, racial, language group that is somehow off limits for evangelization and why might that be? |
| **WORSHIP** | When you look around at those who came for Sunday Mass, so you see the diversity peoples whom God has invited to come? If not, why not?What are the features of praise that infuse your parish’s Sunday liturgy? |

 **Responsorial Psalm**

**SECOND READING: Hebrews 12, 5-7. 11-13**

After his review of the lives of faithful witnesses and saints, the author encourages the recipients of this letter not to forget the discipline that comes from God, for this is what will make of us also faithful and enduring witnesses of God covenant, mercy, and forgiveness. Discipline is clearly the word, after all used 5 times in the text. This is challenging for most of us today, because discipline is a word with negative connotations. We live in a “Nobody tells me what to do” culture. When approached from this attitude, it is difficult to grasp or accept the implications of this teaching. Our culture tends to spoil our children, rather than give them good, orderly, direction. The author’s analysis about pain seems accurate enough. Our culture tells us to do everything possible to avoid pain, and physical pain is not what is meant here. Rather than address the root problem, we mask over the symptoms. Here it is all about pleasure.

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| **KNOW YOUR****FAITH** | What is the discipline of the saints? Perhaps you could think of your favorite or patron saint and in reviewing that life, discover the discipline of that saint. What do you suppose this text means by saying that discipine, “brings the peaceful fruit of righteousness to that who are trained by it”? |
| **LIVE YOUR****FAITH** | Share how you find God “disciplining” your life right now. In other words, how is God at work shaping your life, and perhaps what ways you are cooperating or resisting.Why does discipline have to be painful and so much work? |
| **SHARE YOUR FAITH** | Evangelization is the great work required of the contemporary Church; it is something not just for the mission. In what way do think the north American Catholic Church needs to be disciplined by the Lord?What does the Church need in order to evangelize in the modern world of north American culture? |
| **WORSHIP** | Sunday worship is a discipline, a commitment. How are you doing with that? What is the fruit of the discipline of weekly worship?Share the ways that the Eucharist is for you a strength and a healing. |

 **Second Reading**

**GOSPEL: Luke 13, 22-30 The Knocking at the Door: the Gathering of the Nations**

The narrow gate and the closed door are enduring images from this gospel passage. Entry requires strength. The qualities of this sort of strength are faithfulness, perseverance, and kind of humility in the face of rejection. The words of Jesus seem harsh to us; in another similar parable, the householder does open the door for the neighbor and shares the bread of charity for the guests. Yet not here, where there is only a severe warning to the crowds. Citing the patriarchs, Jesus evokes the holy and faithfulness witnesses of the past; it may be possible to imagine that the newly formed disciples thought themselves superior to their own Jewish background. Among the elect, so they thought, a kind of arrogance and pride may have set in. Jesus’ statement about the east and west, north and south is a prophetic reminded about the ingathering God intends. The last saying takes the prophetic vision further as Jesus teaches that the kingdom of God will overturn all previous order. As for how many will be saved: some actually think themselves and a few others, while others have a much broader view of God’s mercy.

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| **KNOW YOUR****FAITH** | What does it mean to say we are a “catholic” Church? When were we first called Catholic?What does this response of Jesus teach us about humility, since we’re always saying as a nation that we are the first? |
| **LIVE YOUR****FAITH** | What does the narrow gate mean for you personally?What does this gospel story mean by saying that some “will not be strong enough”? What is this “strength”? |
| **SHARE YOUR FAITH** | If the peoples are coming from east and west, north and south, how are we to welcome them? What does this teach us about things like refugees today and immigration reform?When anyone knocks at the door of the church, what is the challenge of our hospitality? |
| **WORSHIP** | We ate and drank in your company, could be taken to refer to the Eucharist. Amplify what this means about Mass for you. In other words what happens to us when our communion is merely an empty show?Good church architecture has one main entrance. Why is this? Should parking lot access be more important so that we can get to brunch?  |

 **Gospel**

**Next Sunday: OT 22 C: Sirach 3, 17-18. 20. 28-29; Ps 68; Hebrews 12, 18-19. 22-24a; Lk 14, 1. 7-14**