**ORDINARY TIME 23 C Lectionary Catechesis**

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**Guardian Angels Parish in Mead, CO**

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| Discipleship costs, and its costs should be carefully considered so that one’s commitment is guided by wisdom. The cost is renunciation of the things of earth. A materialistic consumer culture is unsustainable. Of course there are a number of subsidiary issues here to distract us from our true purpose for being. What does it mean for us to please God so whole-heartedly? Slavery in general could be our reflection and what slavery to sin means, but this needs to handled skillfully if to be done well. |

**FIRST READING: Wisdom 9, 13-18b**

Arguably the last text of the Old Testament, the Book of Wisdom reflects the concerns of late Hellenistic culture: ornate flourishes of rhetorical language, questions about individual faith in a cosmopolitan culture, the role of luck and fortune in life, ethical issues presented by Greek philosophies, the rise of Roman domination and imperialism appearing here as issues of oppression and suffering, The general reflection here is the context of prayer and praise of wisdom make by King Solomon. Essentially the human person is divided and scattered in mind and soul by many concerns and distractions. As a result we are unable to make ultimately clear and certain decisions about earthly things, much less about heavenly things. Human scientific knowledge is limited, but Wisdom helps us. Wisdom throughout this book is personified (Sophia) as a member of God’s heavenly court. So this is really a part of a prayer for the gift of Wisdom, because only through Wisdom are we able to do what pleases God. Many of our actions have only to do with what pleases one’s self. Another theme here again contrasts the things of earth and the things of heaven.

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| **KNOW YOUR**  **FAITH** | Name the gifts of the Holy Spirit.  What does “omniscience” mean? |
| **LIVE YOUR**  **FAITH** | What is the purpose of our lives? Cf. vs.18.  What does it mean after the Lord’s Prayer at Mass, when the presider reads “that we may be always . . . free from all distress” to you? |
| **SHARE YOUR FAITH** | How does our own culture esteem wisdom?  Love is from above and is incorruptible. Love is not an emotion, which are passing and fleeting. How can you share your love with others this week? |
| **WORSHIP** | Worships means to praise God for all the good God does by His very being because only God is Lord of our being in existence. What does it mean for you to worship?  What are proper and most historically traditionally gestures and postures of worship?  Eg. Council of Nicea, canon #20: standing! |

**First Reading**

**RESPONSORIAL: Psalm 90, 3-4. 5-6. 12-13. 14-17**

The editor’s note calls this a prayer of Moses at the beginning. The passing, impermanent nature of this world is stressed, and in that light we pray to “count our days aright”. This “counting” is discernment that enables us to take hold of this divine perspective on earthly things. It’s a theme that appears in the first reading and in the gospel for this week. We are reminded that we are dust and unto dust we shall return; yet God is eternal. For this reason along with God’s mercy toward us, that we return to God in worship. It is odd even in Hebrew poetry for the psalmist to repeat the line, “Prosper the work of our hands.” This does not mean more earthly economic and materialist success, however, but our hands were made for love to be open and not grasping in greed.

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| **KNOW YOUR**  **FAITH** | What is the thing that the psalmist recommends to know God’s ways?  It is not really so much God returning to us, but rather we returning to God. What are the things the petitioner needs from God listed in this passage? |
| **LIVE YOUR**  **FAITH** | What does it mean for you to “number your days aright”?  Life is short. What’s in your bucket list of things to do and see? Then, what’s in your spiritual bucket? |
| **SHARE YOUR FAITH** | The psalmist establishes a tone of urgency by asking “Return, O Lord, how long?” What is the urgency in evangelization?    What place does evangelization have as the work of our hands? |
| **WORSHIP** | The reminder of dust here takes us back to Ash Wednesday liturgy, about six months ago. How does this reminder feel as summer comes to an end?  The psalmist tells us that worship is to return to God with “shouts of joy and gladness”. Do you feel like that at Sunday liturgy or are you depressed and grumpy? |

**Responsorial Psalm**

**SECOND READING: Philemon 9-10. 12-17**

Philemon is the shortest text in the New Testament at 25 verses total, two verses longer than the Prophet Obadiah in the Old Testament. There are three characters in this letter: Paul, Onesimus the runaway slave, and Philemon the slave owner. Timothy shares the role of sending the letter, and Epaphras, Mark, Aristarches, Demas, and Luke are mentioned as additional co-workers at the end of the letter. These additional names give the effect of adding a kind of “weight” and authority to the purpose of the letter, leaning on the discipleship and mercy of Philemon, which is the purpose of vss. 8-9. Our portion of the letter includes Paul’s rationale for his actions in sending the slave back to his master. Here mercy and discipleship are made real in a very practical example of a new creation in Christ for all parties involved. Consider that slavery and human trafficking is a major problem in our world today; occasionally the news even reports of arrests for this crime in the United States. A good exemplar story is what Michelle Obama said about the White House, that every day she lives in a house build by slaves. In some ways this is true of our whole economy, based as it is on capitalist oppression and colonialization.

**Vs. 16: CCC 2414** Actions or policies that lead to slavery oppose the 7th Commandment and so are sinful. Humans being are never merchandise. Philemon teaches that a slave is “no longer as slave but more than a slave, as a beloved brother, both in the Lord and in the flesh.”

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| **KNOW YOUR**  **FAITH** | What does the Bible teach about slavery?  What is the Catholic Church’s position on slavery and since when? |
| **LIVE YOUR**  **FAITH** | What ideas or concepts in this very brief letter speak to you about your discipleship?  What does this letter teach us about our responsibilities and duties to one another? |
| **SHARE YOUR FAITH** | How can we work like Paul to breakdown human divisions of economic status, race, language, and the like so that the kingdom of God can be manifest among us?  What is the style or tone of our service to one another? In other words, our motivation. |
| **WORSHIP** | What sorts of statements do Popes make and what are their degrees of weight and authority? For example at the top we have encyclicals and at the bottom with least weight we have a kind of statement called a *dubium*.  How do we express our servant status in relation to God in the liturgy? |

**Second Reading**

**GOSPEL: Luke 14, 25-33 Jesus Teaches the Cost of Discipleship**

Jesus is portrayed as on the road, on his way to the third house of a leading Pharisee to dine; he turns to address them about the rigors of discipleship. The emphasis of the teachings about discipleship are on keeping perspective, absolute commitment, renunciation of earthly things, and responsibility. Discipleship has requirements, none of which can be taken lightly. The two examples, building a tower and launching an army, focus on discernment, in other words, we should be asking ourselves, do we have what discipleship will take of us. Yet at the last first, renunciation is the main point. The “hate” of vs. 26 is very strong in Greek, referring to attitudes and not emotions. Along with “bearing one’s own cross”, this all points to a more intense level of personal responsibility. Discernment is put here not so much in terms of prayer, but rather in terms of calculation, both an economic and energy thing. In other words, to ask the question, am I prepared to afford discipleship? Note that at the beginning of this gospel, great crowds are following Jesus, and it is to them that he turns. Some think that this means that the Church should be smaller in number and have only truly dedicated Catholics, and of course, they are part of that number.

**Vs. 26: CCC 1618 “**Christ is the center of all Christian life.” Renunciation of and detachment from earthly things, including marriage, is a unique call in the Church in preparation for the coming of Christ.

**Vs. 33; CCC 2544** Jesus recommends renunciation of earthly things in preference to himself. “The precept of detachment from riches is obligatory for entrance into the kingdom of heaven.

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| **KNOW YOUR**  **FAITH** | Why is Christ the center of the Christian life?  Consider the individuals in religious communities who renounce everything for the gospel. |
| **LIVE YOUR**  **FAITH** | What are things you calculate and discern in your life that have been most important to you and for you?  What are for you the challenging thing that Jesus is saying here? |
| **SHARE YOUR FAITH** | What is your responsibility to the Church community?  Who are those called to be in the Church, if all are not able to renounce earthly treasure? |
| **WORSHIP** | In light of these two examples put forward by Jesus, reflect on the cost of your worship?  Reflect on ways the Eucharist enables you to be a peacemaker? |

**Gospel**

**Next Sunday: OT 24 C: Exodus 32, 7-11. 13-14; Psalm 51, 3-4. 12-13. 17. 19; I Timothy 1, 12-17;**

**Luke 15, 1-32**