**Advent 2 A Lectionary Catechesis**

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| At this point in Advent, the Church wants us to focus on the figure of John the Baptist. We go out to see and hear this charismatic preacher and prophet with all Judea and the surrounding region, which is to say with all the sinners. Is he just like one of our celebrities, or is he a manic religious figure whom we fear or ridicule. We need purification of our ways and a repentance to prepare the way of the Lord. But both are viewed in terms of bearing good fruit, and that fruit is in relationship to our neighbor. As the Advent wreath is lit, so too in a very deep way the whole Church is being called to be “on fire” again for the Lord Jesus. We long for this kind of “peaceful kingdom”, yet we ask ourselves what are we willing to do to work with God in its realization, in practice, in our lives. Our lives sometimes wallow or are ensnared by the anger, fear, hatreds, and in short the things of this world. |

**FIRST READING: Isaiah 11, 1-10**

Isaiah 9-12 prophesies a restoration of the Davidic dynasty in the person of new and ideal king, the Messiah. The character of this new Davidic king is extolled in chapter 11 as well as the renewed Garden of Eden.

**Vs. 1-9: CCC 672** From the Catechism’s teaching on the incarnation, the church identifies John the

Baptist’s role as precursor and final prophet. “He inaugurates the gospel, already from his mother’s womb,…”

**Vs. 1-2: CCC 712 and 1831** These two verses prophesy the characteristics of the coming Messiah, and

In listing these characteristics, we find the gifts of the Holy Spirit for all. These verses list the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit. In the beginning of the moral teachings of the Catechism, the gifts are listed again as the completion and perfection of the virtues.

**Vs. 2: CCC 436, 536, and 1286** #436 gives a detailed explanation of the meaning of the word “Christ.”

#536 teaches the meaning of the descent of the Spirit as Jesus’ baptism. #1286 emphasizes the role of the Holy Spirit in Confirmation and the fundamental union of the Trinity.

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| **KNOW YOUR**  **FAITH** | Memorize the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit.  What virtues are brought to completion in these seven gifts?  What is the work of a prophet? |
| **LIVE YOUR**  **FAITH** | Identify one of the gifts of the Spirit and share with the group how that manifests in your life.  How are justice and faithfulness important value to you? |
| **SHARE YOUR FAITH** | How have you come to “knowledge of the Lord” in your life?  Discuss the difference between knowledge and wisdom and why they’re both important. |
| **WORSHIP** | How or why does worship focus on “fear of the Lord”? What does this phrase mean to you?  What part of your parish church building is “awesome” to you? |

**First Reading**

**RESPONSORIAL: Psalm 72, 1-2. 7-8. 12-13. 17**

This is a prayer for the King, but also for the coming Messianic King, and indeed for the God of Creation who rules over all. Many of the verses begin with “May . . . “, and so the psalm is an extended series of petitions for blessings upon the king. Vss. 12-13 in particular deserve our attention in light of Pope Francis’ new Apostolic Exhortation, “*Evangelii gaudium*” from which the group may wish to reflect on #54 – 58 in particular. They are strong words to consider.

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| **KNOW YOUR**  **FAITH** | Why does this psalm connect human dynastic rulers with the rule of God over all creation?  In what lines do you see our relationship to Christ and why do you think that? |
| **LIVE YOUR**  **FAITH** | What do you do to create justice for the poor?  What does Pope Francis mean by saying “the sacralized workings of the prevailing economic system”? |
| **SHARE YOUR FAITH** | In what way to you share in the abundance and great bounty named in this Psalm?  Do you use your sacramental power and grace as a blessing for others in your life? |
| **WORSHIP** | How do you experience God’s divine justice?  In what way can you “rescue” and “show pity”? Why is this a part of worship? |

**Responsorial Psalm**

**SECOND READING: Romans 15, 4-9**

The text makes three important points. First is the role of Scripture instructing us. Second “thinking in harmony” for the purpose of glorifying God. Third the importance of hospitality to all in imitation of Christ.

**Vs. 4-6: CCC 2627** Here prayer includes both an “ascending” and a “descending” of the Spirit, which our harmony and accord with God.

**Vs. 5: CCC 520** “In keeping with Jesus Christ,” is St. Paul catch phrase for conforming ourselves to

template and model of Christ.

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| **KNOW YOUR**  **FAITH** | Where does Jesus himself pray for unity in faith among the disciples? (cf John 17)  What is the central instruction of the season of Advent from the Scriptue?  Consider together the distinction between “unity” and “uniformity” in the Church? |
| **LIVE YOUR**  **FAITH** | What opportunities for hospitality this Advent season?  How will you keep Christ in Christmas? |
| **SHARE YOUR FAITH** | Who will you be praying with during this Advent season?  Do others around you see the reflection of Christ in your life? |
| **WORSHIP** | How does your active and contemplative prayer consist of “ascending” and “descending” of the Spirit?  What can our parish do to improve its hospitality? |

**Second Reading**

**GOSPEL: Matthew 3, 1-12**

This whole chapter in Matthew’s gospel is about the end of John the Baptist’s ministry and the beginning of Jesus’. The transition is seamless; in vs. 13, the simple “then” announces the appearance of Jesus for baptism. The whole chapter begins with the famous quote of the prophet Isaiah we all know about Advent. Using this quote enables Matthew to link all of salvation history in the scripture. To most capture the intention and spirit of this holy season, notice in particular vs. 8, connecting good fruits with repentance.

**Vs. 3: CCC 523** Identifies John the Baptist as the “immediate precursor” giving witness to Christ’s

coming by preaching, by baptism of repentance, and by his martyrdom.

**Vs. 7-12: CCC 678** John the Baptist announces a coming judgment on the world. The CCC says, “Our

attitude about our neighbor will disclose acceptance or refusal of grace and divine love.” The reference is to Matthew 25, 40.

**Vs. 7: CCC 535** Among the “mysteries” of Jesus public life is his baptism by John. The gathering of the

crowd of sinners launches John’s vision of impending judgment and the call to bear good fruit.

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| **KNOW YOUR**  **FAITH** | In what way is baptism for us an initiation into discipleship and ministry?  What does the phrase, “The kingdom of God is at hand” mean to you? |
| **LIVE YOUR**  **FAITH** | How does repentance produce good fruit?  Name the fruits of the Holy Spirit. |
| **SHARE YOUR FAITH** | What is the “fire” in our baptism?  What is the “new evangelization” about for you? |
| **WORSHIP** | Share the story of an important baptism to you?  What parts of the liturgy are preparations for the way of the Lord? |

**Gospel**

**Next Sunday: Advent 3 A: Isaiah 35, 1-6a. 10; Psalm 24; James 5, 7-19; Matthew 1, 18-24**