**Advent 4 A Lectionary Catechesis**

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| The readings this week center around the themes of God’s intervention and visitation in human history, and in the uniqueness of the virgin’s conception of the Christ. The readings also point to our response to what God does: joy, obedience of faith, and service to the gospel. CCC 497 is cited four times, so begin there.  |

**FIRST READING: Isaiah 7, 10-14**

King Ahaz of Judah, 736-716 BC, lived through the Assyrian conquest of the northern kingdom in 721 by Tiglath-pileser III. In the Books of Kings and Chronicles he is portrayed as immoral and idolatrous. Hence his confrontation with the prophet Isaiah in this passage. When he asked for a sign about the future security of his much diminished kingdom, Isaiah prophesizes about the virgin having a son. Assurances of Davidic dynastic continuity and a future messianic king are both in the oracle of the virgin birthing a son, who was historically the son of Ahaz, the good king Hezekiah.

**Vs. 14: CCC 497** The Church interprets vs. 14 to refer directly to Mary and Jesus and God’s intervention

 and visitation in human history.

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| **KNOW YOUR****FAITH** | Look up one more Catechism text about the virginity of Mary and share with your group. Discuss.Why does the virginity of Mary matter in our Catholic faith?  |
| **LIVE YOUR****FAITH** | Where do you see God intervening in the history of the world or in your personal life?How do you respond or recognize a divine intervention or visitation?What do sexual generativity and religion have to do with one another? |
| **SHARE YOUR FAITH** | Purity and holiness of life are part of the mystery of a virgin giving birth to a son. How do you share this part of our faith with others?What part of this passage correlates with the gospel explicitly? |
| **WORSHIP** | When during the Mass do you know that God intervenes in our lives and our human history?How do you respond to God’s visitation? |

  **First Reading**

**RESPONSORIAL: Psalm 24, 1-2. 3-4. 5-6**

This Psalm is divided into three parts. The first proclaims the dominion of God over all. The second emphasize is the requirement of “clean hands” and a “pure of heart”. The third part is not used in this liturgy, but announces the King of Glory entering into the gates of the City of Jerusalem and the temple,

like the hymn, “The King of Glory Comes” both an Advent and Lenten hymn.

**Vs. 6:CCC 2582** James 5, 16-18 “The prayer of the righteous is powerful and effective.”

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| **KNOW YOUR****FAITH** | Why do we do certain things to prepare to pray?What does “The Lord’s are the earth and its fullness” mean to you? |
| **LIVE YOUR****FAITH** | What prayer techniques work for you?The Psalm speaks of hearts, hands, and desires. What are yours doing during the Mass? |
| **SHARE YOUR FAITH** | If Jesus ate and drank with sinners, etc, then did he pray with them, too?Have you ever prayed in a spirit of reconciliation with some one you judged to be a sinner? |
| **WORSHIP** | What do you do to prepare for Mass?Why is there a washing of hands at Mass?What are the blessings we receive from God?  |

 **Responsorial Psalm**

**SECOND READING: Romans 1, 1-7**

St. Paul’s very formal greeting at the beginning of the letter constitutes one sentence in Greek. It is more of an exhortation and exclamation: because of the work of Jesus Christ through grace, Paul proclaims, “Let there be grace and peace to you, beloved Romans.” That’s the short form. The rest of the sentence is a summary of the faith claim that St Paul is going to make about his apostleship calling people to the “obedience of faith” and justification in Christ. Most of these Catechism citations affirm the truth of our faith regarding the dynamic relationship between Jesus and the Holy Spirit.

**Vs. 1: CCC 876** Just as St. Paul calls himself a slave of the gospel, everyone who has a ministry is an

ecclesial servant and does not do one’s own thing, but administers a charge given directly by God. Christ “took the form of a slave” (Philippians 2, 7), so too we become slaves to one another out of love in our ministries.

**Vss. 3-4: CCC 648** The Catechism teaches the Trinitarian relationship and character of our salvation,

announced by Paul in his greeting to the Romans.

**Vs.3: CCC437, 496** The earliest Fathers of the Church recognized the virginal origins of Christ, and took

as a certain sign of God’s intervention in human history. Secondly, the Catechism affirms, following St. Paul, that Jesus was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit.

**Vs. 4: CCC 445, 695** The CCC connect this verse to John 1, 14. Anointing is one of the Spirit’s symbols.

**Vs. 5: CCC 143, 494, 2087** The “obedience of faith” means the complete submission of intellect and will

to God. Mary gives her free will over to God’s will for her. Citing the First Commandment, the CCC teaches that our moral life is rooted in our faith.

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| **KNOW YOUR****FAITH** | Share your understanding of the connection the CCC makes of faith, will, and the First Commandment.What is the source of our ministries? |
| **LIVE YOUR****FAITH** | What happens when a person starts to think and behave as if their ministry belonged to themselves?How does your life reflect “obedience of faith”? |
| **SHARE YOUR FAITH** | What ministry do you return to the Church and offer in service to the gospel? Why?To what or whom have you given your will? |
| **WORSHIP** | What is the difference between worshipping Mary (*latria*, which we don’t do) and honoring her?In what way do you have “full and active participation” in the Mass, as Vatican II promoted? |

 **Second Reading**

**GOSPEL: Joseph’s Dream**

This is Matthew’s version of the annunciation which can be compared with Luke’s more traditional account in Luke 1, 26-38; Matthew focuses on Joseph and Luke on Mary. Vs. 25 is a part of the story, but not chosen for lectionary reading; Matthew comments on the purity of Joseph’s intentions toward Mary, which emphasizes her virginity. The CCC citations span all four pillars of the Catechisms, but can be grouped into three essential points of our faith: Mary’s virginity which is about the divine intervention in history, the meaning of the holy name Jesus as “The LORD saves,” and the use of the holy name Jesus in prayer.

**Vss. 10-25: CCC 497** The virginal conception of Jesus is a divine work, the fulfillment of the Isaian promise.

**Vs. 20: CCC 333, 437, 452, 497** Angels accompany the life of Jesus frequently, and here in Joseph’s

dream. They are even called “first evangelizers.”

**Vs. 21: CCC 430, 437, 452,1507,1846, 2666, 2812** Jesus’ name means in Hebrew, “The LORD saves.”

The Church continues this saving mission through its sacramental signs. The gospel is a revelation of

Christ’s mercy to the sinner. This name points directly to the consecration of the Precious Blood at Mass.

While the divine name is not spoken, we pray in Jesus’ name all the time. The revelation to Joseph of the name of Jesus is related to John 17.

**Vs. 23: CCC 497, 744** God’s visitation is fulfilled in the historical moment of the incarnation.

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| **KNOW YOUR****FAITH** | Why does Jesus have angels appear throughout his life?What does the name Jesus mean to you? |
| **LIVE YOUR****FAITH** | How do you encounter the purity and innocence of Jesus?When has God saved you?What are your dreams? |
| **SHARE YOUR FAITH** | When are you an evangelizing “angel”?How can men and women better collaborate in the work of evangelization? |
| **WORSHIP** | Does God speak to us in dreams?What does Joseph do in this story that reflects his worship? |

 **Gospel**

**Next Week: Christmas Vigil ABC: Isaiah 62, 1-5; Ps 89; Acts 13, 16-17. 22-23; Matthew 1, 1-25**