**OT 6 A Lectionary Catechesis**

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| There are four “you have heard it said . . .” statements countered by Jesus adding, “but I say to you . . .”; there are two more next Sunday. This is an Eastern style of teaching. In each case, the point is one’s maturation in keeping the law as one moves the law from being a mere external act of obligation to an internal act of the will choosing God. In no case does Jesus abrogate the law, but rather deepens its meaning and practice for the disciple. The readings this Sunday present a rich banquet to deliberate in our prayers and preparations for Mass. |

**FIRST READING:** Sirach 15, 15-20

Vs 14 should probably be read to get the whole passage. Free will is our great gift from God which we kept even after the Fall, and we can choose to keep God’s command. Vs. 17 is the most memorable of the whole passage. The last three verses extol God’s wisdom and in- sight into the dilemma of the human condition, but God does not command anyone to sin. About this free will, Augustine writes, “We have become a problem to ourselves, and this is my sickness.’ We have free will, which means we also must endure the consequences of our choices.

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| **KNOW YOUR**  **FAITH** | Share and discuss the CCC on this topic of will in # 1734-1735 in light of CCC # 1776.  What does God give us to help us make the best and right choices? |
| **LIVE YOUR**  **FAITH** | Tell of a difficult choice you made that you can share and how you made that choice.  Discuss Plato’s saying, “No one ever acts unjustly deliberately and freely.” (Republic) |
| **SHARE YOUR FAITH** | Discuss how and when our culture chooses life or death.  What in this passage gives you a rationale for belief in God? |
| **WORSHIP** | How does God invite you to worship him freely?  During what sacraments does the Church ask if you have come freely? |

**First Reading**

**RESPONSORIAL: Psalm 119, 1-2. 4-5. 17-18. 33-34**

This is the longest of the Psalms at 176 verses. Every eight verses is named for a letter of the Hebrew alphabet because the lines all start with that letter. It is sometimes called Psalm of the Commandments.

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| **KNOW YOUR**  **FAITH** | What things does the psalmist write that helps us keep God’s commandments? (there are three things)  What is discernment as opposed to de- cision making? |
| **LIVE YOUR**  **FAITH** | What does it mean “to walk in the law of the Lord?”  What gifts does the Holy Spirit give us to help us be firm? |
| **SHARE YOUR FAITH** | How does having Catholic friends help us walking in the way of the Lord?  How do you keep the 7th Command- ment in light of this Psalm and Pope Francis’ ***Evangelii Gaudium***? |
| **WORSHIP** | What words here bring you to worship?  Who are the blessed according to this Psalm? |

**Responsorial Psalm**

**SECOND READING: I Corinthians 2, 6-10**

Human wisdom is contrasted with divine wisdom. This passage connects well with vss. 18-19 of the first reading, and also reminds us of Isaiah 55, 8-9. Jesus, too, knows the thoughts of our hearts. The wisdom, mysterious and hidden, is the heaven that God has prepared for those who love him, which this world rejects because we want a materialistic heaven here and now.

**Vss 6-16: CCC 221** God has destined us to share in God’s eternal exchange of love forever.  
**Vss. 7-9: CCC 1998** Every person has a vocation to eternal life.

**Vs. 8: CCC 446, 498, 598** The title LORD is the same for the Father and Jesus. The second CCC citation connects the Virgin birth to the mystery of the love, who is God. All share in the responsibility for the crucifixion and death of Jesus. These help best to understand the whole passage.

**Vs. 9: CCC 1027** The truth of our eternal communion with God is a mystery beyond understanding.  
**Vs. 10-15: CCC 2038** If you go with the theme of the wisdom of God, don’t miss reading this CCC citation.

**Vs. 1-11: CCC 152** Only God knows God completely, and so therefore the Holy Spirit is God. The depths of God are put in the image of the deepest ocean in the original language.

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| **KNOW YOUR**  **FAITH** | In our scientific culture, we trust in a science that will eventually reveal the secrets of the universe.  How do we then know, love, and serve God? |
| **LIVE YOUR**  **FAITH** | Put together a list in your group of the qualities of a person “mature” in faith.  What has God prepared for those who love him? |
| **SHARE YOUR FAITH** | What are your strategies for dialogue with people who have a completely “scientific” mindset?  Why do people in our culture tend to resist faith-based statements as truths? |
| **WORSHIP** | Why does the wisdom of God hinge on the crucifixion, which is a mystery that it happened?  How does the Eucharist point us through and beyond the cross to our final destiny? |

**Second Reading**

**GOSPEL: Matthew 5, 17-37 The Sermon on the Mount**

The Catechism’s use of this passage is overwhelming from all four major divisions of the CCC. The manner of Jesus’ speech reflects the “wisdom of God” from the first two readings. Focus your group around one topic. There’s simply too much here for even the briefest time. The challenge and invitation Jesus sets out seem over- whelming, but with God all things are possible. Perhaps, all this love for us simply leads us to worship, which is always the final process of any authentic reconciliation with one another and God.

**Vs 17-19: CCC 577, 592, 1967** Jesus and the Law are in a relationship of fulfillment. Jesus speaks to those open to the reign of God.  
**Vs. 17: CCC 2053** Jesus teaches a way of perfection that leads to true happiness.

**Vs. 20: CCC 2054** Jesus emphasizes the spirit of the law, not merely the Law itself. Eg. merely not stealing fulfills the law, but our excesses, while we can afford them, are a form of stealing from the poor.

**Vss. 20-21: CCC 2054, 2257** Every society presents a destiny or vision for the human person.  
**Vs. 21: CCC 2262, 2302** “Thou shall not kill” then has many layers of meaning, eg. hatred and anger.

**Vs. 22: CCC 678. 1034, 2302** “Our attitude about our neighbor will disclose acceptance or refusal of grace and divine love.” The next citation regards the truth of the existence of Hell.

**Vss. 23-24: CCC 2608, 2792, 2841, 2845** All these are from the CCC section on prayer. First is the role of prayer in reconciliation. The way this verse connects to the opening words of the Lord’s prayer eliminates the individual ego and the monkey mind. Jesus’ petitions in the Our Father about forgiveness is emphasized here. Cf. Rm. 13, 8.  
**Vs. 24: CCC 1424** The various phrases we use for reconciliation are explained here.  
**Vss. 27-28: CCC 2330, 2336, 2380** Jesus reinterprets the 6th Commandment. The prophets connected adultery to the sin of idolatry.  
**Vs. 28: CCC 1456, 2513, 2528** First is the sacrament of reconciliation’s scope, mostly quoting Trent, but there is a good example given here. Next the CCC notes that the fine arts praise God and are not leading us to sin.  
**Vss. 29-30: CCC 226** Quotes a very simple prayer by St. Nicholas of Flue about good use of created things.  
**Vs.29: CCC 1034 cf**. above in vs. 22.  
**Vss. 31-32: CCC 2382** Leads us to Canon 1141 regarding the indissolubility of a Christian marriage.  
**Vs. 32: CCC 2380** cf. above vss. 27-28.  
**Vss. 33-34: CCC 581, 2142, 2153** First Jesus’ rabbinic method of the whole passage is explained here. The next two references are in the context of oaths and the 2nd Commandment.  
**Vs. 33: CCC 592, 2463** Our greed and excess steals from the poor. Reference Pope Francis, GE 54-58.  
**Vs. 37: CCC 2153, 2338, 2466** The integrity of the chaste person and Jesus as Truth is affirmed when we say yes.

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| **KNOW YOUR**  **FAITH** | Why is Catholicism nor a minimalistic approach to life and its questions?  What does Jesus teach us about the wisdom of God as he reinterprets the commandments? |
| **LIVE YOUR**  **FAITH** | What is more important to Jesus than a literalistic living of the command- ments?  Why do these sayings of Jesus sound harsh or problematic in our culture? |
| **SHARE YOUR FAITH** | Discuss how each of these “new commandments” reflect a spirituality of reconciliation?  Have you ever practiced Jesus’ teach- ing here on reconciliation? |
| **WORSHIP** | At what point in the Mass does the whole congregation give its assent of “Yes!” to the Eucharist?  How do Jesus’ example lead you to praise and worship of God? |

**Gospel**

**Next Sunday: OT 7 A: Leviticus 19, 1-2. 17-18; Psalm 103; I Corinthians 3, 16-23; Matthew 5, 38-48**