



LIVING THE GOSPEL

**Fifth Sunday of Lent
April 5th 2025**

Theme: "If there is one of you who has not sinned, let him be the first to throw a stone at her."

Gathering Prayer

All: By your help, we beseech you, Lord our God, may we walk eagerly in that same charity with which, out of love for the world, your Son handed himself over to death. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Exploring the Word

Gospel Reading: John 8:1-11

¹ Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. ² At daybreak he appeared in the Temple again; and as all the people came to him, he sat down and began to teach them. ³ The scribes and Pharisees brought a woman along who had been caught committing adultery; and making her stand there in full view of everybody, ⁴ they said to Jesus, 'Master, this woman was caught in the very act of committing adultery, ⁵ and Moses has ordered us in the Law to condemn women like this to death by stoning. What have you to say?'

⁶ They asked him this as a test, looking for something to use against him. But Jesus bent down and started writing on the ground with his finger. ⁷ As they persisted with their question, he looked up and said, 'If there is one of you who has not sinned, let him be the first to throw a stone at her'. ⁸ Then he bent down and wrote on the ground again.

⁹ When they heard this they went away one by one, beginning with the eldest, until Jesus was left alone with the woman, who remained standing there. ¹⁰ He looked up and said, 'Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?' ¹¹ 'No one, sir' she replied. 'Neither do I condemn you,' said Jesus 'go away, and don't sin anymore.'

Gospel Focus

In the gospel, it appears that Jesus is taking sides, but the reality is that he offers the same forgiveness to the scribes and Pharisees that he offers to the woman. The ones who are stingy in love and forgiveness, the ones who try to limit the merciful capacity of God, are the ones who are unable to face the love that God offers. The scribes and Pharisees choose their own side. They decide for themselves that they are unable to accept the love that he offers. They insist that they are different from this woman, when they are also sinners in need of God's mercy.

Gospel Reflection

In the gospel today, the case seems clear-cut. A woman is caught in the very act of adultery. The evidence is indisputable, and the law is clear. It is just a matter of carrying it out. Jesus' opponents are not interested in the circumstances that led to the woman's actions—and one must wonder how her partner escaped judgment when both were both caught in the act! The scribes and Pharisees are intent on being able to charge Jesus with transgressing the law. They quote the Law of Moses to Jesus and press him for his judgment. While they wait for an answer, Jesus bends down and begins to write on the ground with his fingers.

Much ink has been spilt by commentators who speculated on what Jesus wrote. It is possible that Luke is making a connection with the giving of the law to Moses.

Exodus 31:18 says, "When the Lord had finished speaking to Moses on Mount Sinai, he gave him the two tablets of the covenant, the stone tablets inscribed by God's own finger."

It is not the content of Jesus' writing that is important, otherwise, the Evangelist would have told us what it said. It is Jesus' action of writing with his finger, replicating God's action in the giving of the law, that helps us understand how Jesus' interpretation of the law is in line with God's intent.

Like Jesus' opponents in the gospel, Christian teachers and preachers have struggled to understand how Jesus could let a blatant sinner off without punishment. Saint Ambrose worried that the gospel could produce anxiety in the inexperienced and tried to dismiss the idea that Jesus could have made a mistake. John Calvin assured his followers that although Jesus remits our sins, he does not subvert the social order or abolish legal sentences and punishments. While the latter maybe true, Jesus does, indeed, abolish the notion that our relationship with God is contained within rules and law. While these are necessary for the peaceable ordering of any organization, whether civil or religious, law does not express adequately how God relate to us in the person of Christ that binds us to God and invites us to a new way of life. It is a gift that is replicated every time we offer forgiveness and compassion to one another.

A marvelous image is given to us by Michelangelo on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel on the Vatican. God surrounded by cherubs, with his left arm draped around a female figure, strains his right arm forward, with his index finger extended toward Adam. Instead of pointing the finger of guilt at humankind, God is exerting every effort to draw the human creature into the divine loving embrace. Their fingers almost touch. If he wanted to, Adam could complete the connection.

Old/New Testament and CCC links

First Reading — Isaiah 43:16-21

¹⁶ Thus says the LORD, who makes a way in the sea, a path in the mighty waters, ¹⁷ who brings forth chariot and horse, army and warrior; they lie down, they cannot rise, they are extinguished, quenched like a wick: ¹⁸ "Remember not the former things, nor consider the things of old. ¹⁹ Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert. ²⁰ The wild beasts will honor me, the jackals and the ostriches; for I give water in the wilderness, rivers in the desert, to give drink to my chosen people, ²¹ the people whom I formed for myself that they might declare my praise.

Responsorial Reading — Ps 126:1-2, 2-3, 4-5, 6

R: The Lord has done great things for us; we are filled with joy (R)

When the Lord brought back the captives of Zion, we were like men dreaming.
Then our mouth was filled with laughter, and our tongue with rejoicing. **(R)**

Then they said among the nations, "The Lord has done great things for them."
The Lord has done great things for us; we are glad indeed. **(R)**

Restore our fortunes, O Lord, like the torrents in the southern desert.
Those that sow in tears shall reap rejoicing. **(R)**

Although they go forth weeping, carrying the seed to be sown,
they shall come back rejoicing, carrying their sheaves. **(R)**

Second Reading — Philippians 3:8-14

⁸ Indeed I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as refuse, in order that I may gain Christ ⁹ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own, based on law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith; ¹⁰ that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, ¹¹ that if possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead. ¹² Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect; but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. ¹³ Brethren, I do not consider that I have made it my own; but one thing I do, forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, ¹⁴ I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

Catechism of The Catholic Church

583. Like the prophets before him Jesus expressed the deepest respect for the Temple in Jerusalem. It was in the Temple that Joseph and Mary presented him forty days after his birth. (Lk 2:22-39.) At the age of twelve he decided to remain in the Temple to remind his parents that he must be about his Father's business. (Cf. Lk 2:46-49) He went there each year during his hidden life at least for Passover. (Cf. Lk 2:41) His public ministry itself was patterned by his pilgrimages to Jerusalem for the great Jewish feasts. (Cf. Jn 2:13-14; 5:1, 14; 7:1, 10, 14; 8:2; 10:22-23.)

Sharing and Discussion

- 1.** In the first reading, The Lord says in Isaiah 43, "Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?" What is this something new that the Lord has done for us?
- 2.** St Paul said in the second reading, "For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as refuse, in order that I may gain Christ". St Paul understands his purpose and did it, so can we. What do you think?
- 3.** Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn you; go, and do not sin again." What is the implication of this statement?

Closing Prayer

All: Lord God you are gracious and merciful, calling us always to return to you. May our prayers for ourselves and all the world draw us more deeply into your love. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Leader: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life.

All: Amen.