

Fifth Sunday of Lent (C)

Gospel text (Jn 8:1-11): Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. But early in the morning he arrived again in the temple area, and all the people started coming to him, and he sat down and taught them. Then the scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in adultery and made her stand in the middle. They said to him, “Teacher, this woman was caught in the very act of committing adultery. Now in the law, Moses commanded us to stone such women. So what do you say?” They said this to test him, so that they could have some charge to bring against him. Jesus bent down and began to write on the ground with his finger.

But when they continued asking him, he straightened up and said to them, “Let the one among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her.” Again he bent down and wrote on the ground. And in response, they went away one by one, beginning with the elders. So he was left alone with the woman before him. Then Jesus straightened up and said to her, “Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?” She replied, “No one, sir.” Then Jesus said, “Neither do I condemn you. Go, and from now on do not sin any more.”

“Neither do I condemn you”

Fr. Pablo ARCE Gargollo
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Today, we see “Jesus bent down and began to write on the ground with his finger” (Jn 8:6), as if he had more important things to do than having to listen to those accusing “a woman who had been caught in adultery” (Jn 8:3).

We must pay attention to Jesus Christ's peace of mind and sense of humor, even in moments that for others may be of great stress. In our present days, passing as they do at breakneck speed, twisting and compressing our nerves on a great many occasion, this is a practical lesson for each one of us.

The silent and humorous departure of the accusers reminds us that God is the only one who can judge us, and that we are all sinners. In our daily life, in our work, in our family or social relations, we often make value judgments. Oftentimes, our judgment is wrong and harmful to the reputation of others. This is an offense that forces us to retraction. And this is not always so easy. Upon contemplating Jesus amidst that “filthy mess” of accusers, we may very well understand what saint Thomas Aquinas pointed out: "In every work of God both justice and mercy are united and they support each other. Justice without mercy is cruelty; and mercy without justice is ruin, destruction."

Let us fill ourselves with joy knowing with certainty that God forgives us of all our sins through repentance in the sacrament of confession. In these Lenten days, in the sacrament of reconciliation, we have the splendid opportunity to go to the One who is rich in mercy.

Finally, let us make a concrete resolution today: when I look upon others, I will say, deep in my heart, the same words Jesus said: “Neither do I condemn you” (Jn 8:11).

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

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“But is it by punishing her that the law is to be fulfilled by those that ought to be punished? Let each of you consider himself, let him enter into himself, ascend the judgment-seat of his own mind, place himself at the bar of his own conscience, oblige himself to confess.” (Saint Augustine)

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“The Redeeming God, the tender God, suffers because of the hardness of our hearts.” (Francis)

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“Love, like the Body of Christ, is indivisible; we cannot love the God we cannot see if we do not love the brother or sister we do see. In refusing to forgive our brothers and sisters, our hearts are closed and their hardness makes them impervious to the Father's merciful love (...).” (Catechism Of The Catholic Church, N° 2840)