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
(Ciudad de México, Mexico)

Today we see Jesus "write on the ground with his finger" (Jn 8:6), as if he were both busy and amused by something more important than listening to those who accuse the woman brought to him because she "had been caught in adultery" (Jn 8:3).

The serenity and even good humor that we see in Jesus Christ is striking, even in moments that for others are very tense. A practical lesson for each one of us, in these days of ours that are fast-paced and nerve-wracking on many occasions.

The stealthy and graceful flight of the accusers reminds us that it is only God who judges and that we are all sinners. In our daily life, at work, in our relationships with family and friends, we make value judgements. More than once, our judgements are wrong and stain the good reputation of others. It is a real lack of justice that forces us to make amends, a task that is not always easy. Contemplating Jesus in

the midst of this “pack” of accusers, we understand very well what St. Thomas Aquinas pointed out: Justice and mercy are so closely linked that one sustains the other. “Justice without mercy is cruel,” and “Mercy without justice is the mother of dissolution."

We must be filled with joy knowing, with certainty, that God forgives us everything, absolutely everything, in the sacrament of confession. In these days of Lent, we have the magnificent opportunity to turn to those who are rich in mercy in the sacrament of reconciliation.

And, furthermore, for today, a concrete resolution: when I see others, I will say in my heart the same words of Jesus: “Neither do I condemn you” (Jn 8:11).

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- “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)

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

- “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, № 2840)