

Lent 5th Sunday Homily [April 3, 2022]

Isaiah 43: 16 - 21 / Philippians 3: 8 - 14/ John 8: 1- 11

“Let the one among you who has not sinned be the first to throw a stone”

Reminding us of God’s readiness to forgive sin, give the sinner a second chance, bind up broken lives, and restore people to His friendship, today’s readings challenge us to show the same mercy to the sinners around us and to live as forgiven people, actively seeking reconciliation with God and one another. The central theme of all three readings is a merciful God’s steadfast love. The readings remind us that we should not be self-righteous and condemn the lives of others when God is calling them tenderly to conversion.

Scripture lessons summarised: Explaining how a merciful God forgives the sins of His chosen people and leads them back from the Babylonian exile, the first reading reminds us that we too are forgiven, and we are saved from our own sinfulness. In the second reading, Paul presents himself as a forgiven sinner who has been completely transformed by his Faith in Christ Jesus. His life is an example of the Gospel exhortation, “Sin no more.” Paul loves Christ so much he wants to share in His sufferings and even in His death so that he may share Christ’s Resurrection. The sinful woman’s story of sin committed, and sin forgiven in today’s Gospel, shows the inexhaustible mercy and compassion Jesus offers to repentant sinners. In addition, by making sinlessness the condition for throwing the first stone, Jesus forces the accusers to assess their own souls and to leave. Thus, He grants justice to the accusers and mercy to the sinful woman. In our own lives, we bear witness to the Justice of God by confessing our sinfulness and resolving to avoid sin, and we bear witness to God’s Mercy by accepting the forgiveness of our sins and promising to forgive those who have offended us.

We need to become forgiving people, ready for reconciliation: Jesus has shown inexhaustible mercy and compassion to sinners by dying for our sins. But we are often self-righteous, like the Pharisees, and ready to spread scandal about others with a bit of spicy gossip. We are judgmental about the unmarried mother, the alcoholic, the drug addict, or the shoplifter, ignoring Jesus’ command: “Let the one among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her.” Let us learn to acknowledge our sins, ask God’s forgiveness every day and extend the same forgiveness to our erring brothers and sisters. We need to learn to hate the sin but love the sinners, showing them Jesus’ compassion and working with the Holy Spirit to make our own lives exemplary so that we can help lead them to Jesus’ ways.

We have no right to judge others: We have no right to judge others because we often commit the very faults we condemn, we are often partial and prejudiced in our judgments, and we do not know the circumstances which have led someone to sin. Hence, let us leave the judgment to our merciful God who does read people’s hearts. We should show mercy and compassion to those who sin because we ourselves are sinners in need of God’s forgiveness. The apostle Paul reminds us: “But if we judged ourselves, we would not come under judgment.” (1 Cor 11:31).