



13 March 2016

5th Sunday of Lent

Year C

## ***Blessed Are the Merciful, For They Shall Find Mercy***

**A**s we proceed in our Lenten pilgrimage, today we are enriched by the unforgettable example of Jesus who offers his forgiveness and restores dignity to the adulterous woman who had been dragged in front of him in shame and fear. The teaching of mercy and forgiveness conveyed last Sunday through a parable, today is offered us through an example from real life.

The challenging sentence: "Let the one among you who has no sin be the first to cast a stone" is directed not only to the hypocritical scribes and Pharisees of two thousand years ago, but also to those among us who easily judge and condemn others. We should never forget that we, too, are frail and sinful, and that we must learn to be merciful if we want to enjoy God's mercy.



### **INTRODUCTORY RITES**



#### **Entrance Antiphon**

*(To be recited only when no Entrance Hymn is sung.)*

**Give me justice, O God, and plead my cause against a nation that is faithless. From the deceitful and cunning rescue me, for you, O God, are my strength.**

#### **Greeting**

**P** –The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all!  
**All** –And with your spirit!

#### **Penitential Act**

**P** –As we prepare to celebrate the sacred mysteries, let us realize how much we need God's forgiveness and peace.  
*(Pause)*

**All** –I confess to almighty God and to you, my brothers and sisters, that I have greatly sinned, in my thoughts and in my words, in what I have done and in what I have failed to do, *(strike your breast)* through my fault, through my fault, through my most grievous fault. Therefore I ask blessed Mary ever-Virgin, all the Angels and Saints, and you, my brothers and sisters, to pray for me to the Lord our God.

**P** –May almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us our sins, and bring us to everlasting life.

**All** –Amen!

**P** –Lord, have mercy!  
**All** –Lord, have mercy!

**P** –Christ, have mercy!  
**All** –Christ, have mercy!

**P** –Lord, have mercy!  
**All** –Lord, have mercy!

#### **Collect (Opening Prayer)**

**P** –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.

**All** –Amen!

### **LITURGY OF THE WORD**



#### **1st Reading** *Is 43:16-21*

*The prophet Isaiah has words of hope for all his countrymen in exile, as he promises a NEW EXODUS. This foreshadows the new liberation to be brought about by the Messiah, Jesus Christ.*

**R** –A proclamation from the Book of the Prophet Isaiah

Thus says the Lord, who opens a way in the sea and a path in the mighty waters, who leads out chariots and horsemen, a powerful army, till they lie prostrate together, never to rise, snuffed out and quenched like a wick.

Remember not the events of the past, the things of long ago consider not.

See, I am doing something new! Now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? In the desert I make a way, in the wasteland, rivers. Wild beasts honor me, jackals and ostriches, for I put water in the desert and rivers in the wasteland for my chosen people to drink, the people whom I formed for myself, that they might announce my praise.

The Word of the Lord!  
**All**—Thanks be to God!

**Responsorial Psalm** Ps 126

**R** –*The Lord has done great things for us. We are filled with joy!*

R. M. Velez



\* 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.**

**2nd Reading** Phil 3:8-14

In the passage we are about to hear, the Apostle Paul states with enthusiasm the all-important role which Jesus Christ has been having in his life. Such should he also be for all of us.

**R** –A proclamation from the Letter of Paul to the Philippians

Brothers and sisters:

I consider everything as a loss because of the supreme good of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have accepted the loss of all things and I consider them so much rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having any righteousness of my own based on the law but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God, depending on faith, to know him and the power of his resurrection and the sharing of his sufferings by being conformed to his death, if somehow I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

It is not that I have already taken hold of it or have already attained perfect maturity, but I continue my pursuit in the hope that I may possess it, since I have indeed been taken possession of by Christ Jesus. Brothers and sisters, I for my part do not consider myself to have taken possession. Just one thing: forgetting what lies behind but straining forward to what lies ahead, I continue my pursuit toward the goal, the prize of God’s upward calling, in Christ Jesus.

The Word of the Lord!  
**All**—Thanks be to God!

**Verse before the Gospel**

**All**—(Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ, King of endless glory!)

Even now, says the Lord, return to me with your whole heart; for I am gracious and merciful.

(Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ, King of endless glory!)

**Gospel** Jn 8:1-11  
A woman caught in adultery seems to offer Jesus’ enemies a

good chance to make him say or do something that is clearly against the Law. But Jesus skillfully reverses the situation and forces the plotters to leave shamefacedly.

**P** –The Lord be with you!  
**All**—And with your spirit!

**P** –A proclamation from the holy Gospel according to John

**All**—Glory to you, O Lord!

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.”

The Gospel of the Lord!  
**All**—Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ!

Homily

Profession of Faith  
(Nicene Creed)

**All**—I believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker

of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible.

I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Only Begotten Son of God, born of the Father before all ages. God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father; through him all things were made. For us men and for our salvation he came down from heaven, (bow)\* and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and became man.\* For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate, he suffered death and was buried, and rose again on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead and his kingdom will have no end.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son is adored and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets.

I believe in one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church. I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness of sins and I look forward to the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen!

### Prayer of the Faithful

**P** –Encouraged by Jesus’ merciful attitude toward the sinful woman, let us present our petitions to him for our own needs and the needs of all mankind. Let us say together:

**All**—Merciful Jesus, hear us!

**C** –For the Church, the custodian of the moral law: That while firmly upholding the moral principles, she may show understanding and compassion toward the individuals who fail to live up to those principles, let us pray! **R.**

**C** –For all those who struggle to live a decent moral life: That they may succeed in overcoming external temptations and internal moral weakness with the help of God’s grace and the support of the Christian community, let us pray! **R.**

**C** –For those who have been victims of human passions: That they may find in God’s mercy and in our compassion the strength they need to rebuild their lives, let us pray! **R.**

**C** –For all the students who are about to begin their summer vacation: That this may be for them a period of healthy relaxation, accompanied by spiritual growth according to the moral principles they have learned in school, let us pray! **R.**

**C** –For all political candidates who are running for public office: That they may be really determined to serve the country rather than their own interests or those of their party and friends, let us pray! **R.**

**C** –Let us pray in silence for our personal intentions. (Pause) Let us pray! **R.**

**P** –Keep us under the mantle of your protection, Lord, and guide us along the way of compassion and mercy toward our neighbor. You who live and reign for ever and ever. **All**—Amen!

### LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST



#### Preparation of the Gifts

**P** –Pray, brethren . . .

**All**—May the Lord accept the sacrifice at your hands, for the praise and glory of his name, for our good and the good of all his holy Church.

#### Prayer over the Offerings

**P** –Hear us, almighty God, and, having instilled in your servants the teachings of the Christian faith, graciously

purify them by the working of this sacrifice.

Through Christ our Lord. **All**—Amen!

### Preface of Lent II

**P** –The Lord be with you!

**All**—And with your spirit!

**P** –Lift up your hearts!

**All**—We lift them up to the Lord!

**P** –Let us give thanks to the Lord our God!

**All**—It is right and just!

**P** –It is truly right and just, our duty and our salvation, always and everywhere to give you thanks, Lord, holy Father, almighty and eternal God.

For you have given your children a sacred time for the renewing and purifying of their hearts, that, freed from disordered affections, they may so deal with the things of this passing world as to hold rather to the things that eternally endure.

And so, with all the Angels and Saints, we praise you, as without end we acclaim:

**All**—Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of hosts. Heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest!

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest!

### Memorial Acclamation

**P** –The mystery of faith!

**All**—When we eat this Bread and drink this Cup, we proclaim your Death, O Lord, until you come again!

### COMMUNION RITE



**All**—Our Father . . .

**P** –Deliver us, Lord . . .

**All**—For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and for ever.

### Sign of Peace

#### Breaking of the Bread

**All**—Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world: have mercy on us. (2x)

Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world: grant us peace.

## Communion

**P** –Behold the Lamb of God, behold him who takes away the sins of the world. Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb.

**All**—Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed.

### Communion Antiphon

*(To be recited only when no Communion Hymn is sung.)*

**Has no one condemned you, woman? No one, Lord. Neither shall I condemn you. From now on, sin no more.**

### Prayer after Communion

**P** –We pray, almighty God, that we may always be counted among the members of Christ, in whose Body and Blood we have communion. Who lives and reigns for ever and ever.

**All**—Amen!

## CONCLUDING RITES



**P** –The Lord be with you.

**All**—And with your spirit!

**P** –Bow your heads and pray for God’s blessing.  
*(Pause)*

Bless, O Lord, your people, who long for the gift of your mercy, and grant that what, at your prompting, they desire they may receive by your generous gift.

Through Christ our Lord.

**All**—Amen!

**P** –Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by your life!

**All**—Thanks be to God!

## The Wonder of Forgiveness

**T**hat day, Jerusalem was set to witness the public execution of a confessed sinner – a woman caught in adultery. The case was clear. The punishment was known to all: death by stoning. *(See Lv 20:10 ff and Dt 22:22ff.)*

But that day, the zealous scribes and Pharisees were determined to catch two birds with a stone – the adulteress and Jesus. The same stone could be used for both, since Jesus, too – in their view – had gone against the law, and more than once.

The trap was set. *(See Jn 8:5f.)* It was just a matter of delaying the execution by a short while – until Jesus expressed his view, thus causing his own ruin . . . But that day, Jesus hesitated to speak. There was an icy silence after the initial shouts. The silence of the woman was understandable. She could offer no justification, and any pleading for mercy would have fallen on deaf ears. The silence of Jesus, however, was not only unexpected, but above all, provocative.

His enemies demanded an answer. But when the answer came, they regretted it. When finally Jesus rose and spoke up, it was the turn of the noisy crowd to grow speechless. Their angry voices fell silent; their faces dropped; the stones landed timidly on the ground, almost with shame. All the scribes and Pharisees present made an about-turn, and then strode off like a routed army.

Only Jesus and the adulteress remained. As the woman heard the voice of her defender, all her fright vanished and was replaced by a confident trust in God’s mercy. God’s forgiveness had made her “new,” alive once again and free – free from sin and from the fear of human condemnation and mercilessness.

There is much of that woman in us, though our sins may be of a different kind. We, too, may have experienced the terror that our sins might be known, and thereby we might lose our good name, if not our life, at the hands of the many who enjoy exposing and condemning the failings of others . . .

But God is different from us. He is “one of a kind,” even when it is a matter of judging our sins. We see His attitude revealed in Christ who stands discreetly by us even as we recoil in shame and fear. He shows Himself to be infinitely more understanding than our fellowmen can be.

His readiness to forgive, of course, should not be interpreted as indifference to sin, and even less as an encouragement to continue sinning. His forgiveness is always accompanied by the invitation and the empowerment to avoid sin in the future. *(See last verse in today’s Gospel passage.)* He knows well that we are molded out of clay.

When God touches us with His forgiving love, He heals us thoroughly and gives us peace. He sets us free not only from our past sins, but also from our fears. With His loving presence He strengthens us, and makes us determined to live as He pleases, even when there are no human judges to condemn us.



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