

Fifth Sunday of Lent

Is, 43.16-21, Phil. 3.8-14, Jn. 8. 1-11

The targeted audience and purpose of the four Gospel writers could be summed up as follows; St. Matthew wrote to show Jesus as the King to the Jews, St. Mark writes to present Jesus the servant and customs to the Jews in Rome, St. Luke writes to point that Jesus came for Jews and Gentiles, and St. John writes to all mankind to demonstrate that Jesus is God.

Throughout St. John's Gospel St. John quotes Jesus as identifying himself as "I am" seven times. We should recall that when Moses asked God His name He replied "I AM WHO AM" (Ex. 3.14). Jesus in revealing Himself as "I AM" adds the following to His I AM, Bread of Life, Light of the World, the Door, the Good Shepherd, the Resurrection and the Life, the Way, the Truth and the Life, and the True Vine.

St. John is writing today's Gospel as an eyewitness as the details in the writing demonstrate. For example the statement "early in the morning" is very specific. St John gives further details such as Jesus was in the temple area, people came to Him, and He sat down and taught them. In the Jewish culture the "Teacher" would teach in the temple. The Teacher would be well versed in Mosaic law, that is the laws given to Moses by God.

The Pharisees and scribes bring a woman caught in adultery to Jesus. The goal was to trap Jesus. If we were looking at this as a court case we see that first the Pharisees and scribes present the woman's fault (the charge), next they state the prescribed act of justice (stoning) according to the law, and lastly they ask Jesus for His verdict. They think they have Jesus trapped regardless of His response. If Jesus says the woman should not be punished then Jesus would be speaking against Mosaic law. If Jesus says she should be punished He then contradicts His own teachings and contradicts Roman law. The Pharisees and scribes truly believe they have Jesus cornered. The Pharisees and scribes demonstrate their unbelief in the Messiah, in Jesus Christ.

Jesus' only known writings are on the ground. Many have given their thoughts and opinions as to what Jesus wrote with His finger. Perhaps Jesus wrote the Pharisees sins. St Thomas Aquinas writes, "some say that he wrote the words: O earth, listen...write down this man as sterile (Jer. 22.29)...the better opinion,

Jesus wrote down the very words he spoke, that is, *he who is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.* However, neither of these opinions is certain.”

As I study John chapter 8 I can't help but notice that as Jesus writes and then asks in verse 7, “let the one among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her.” How often and how easy it is to accuse someone. But let us turn to the words of Jesus. “He who is without sin cast the first stone,” now I can only speak for myself and I can not cast a stone for I am a sinner. Notice the elders, those with wisdom, are the first to leave, then the others. Jesus is calling us to look in the mirror to see what we are doing, both the good and the bad. Before we cast judgment on others we must ask ourselves, are we perfect?

Jesus does **NOT** ever condone sin. Jesus knows our imperfections, He wants us to turn to Him for help, for mercy for guidance and mostly for forgiveness. God desires us to be with Him in paradise. “God did not send his Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through him” (Jn 3.17), “I do not desire the death of the sinner” (Ez. 18.23).

Jesus does not love sin and He does not favor wrongdoing. Jesus condemned the woman's sin but not her nature, saying, “go and sin no more,” He also tells the women that He does not condone her. Jesus' love and mercy go beyond what we can imagine. We need to trust Him.

Being a Catholic is a way of life. This way of life is not always easy. If we turn our hearts, our mind towards Jesus He will give us the graces we need. Through the sacraments of the Church we can also receive the graces we need.

The Gospel of John explicitly illustrates that Jesus is God. The seven I AM verses slowly reveal to all mankind that Jesus is God and how we can identify to him. As we prepare for the Resurrection of our Savior may we recognize Jesus' true presence in the Eucharist for He is the Bread of Life. Jesus, the Good Shepherd is seeking all His lost sheep and through the Sacrament of Reconciliation let us not just turn to Jesus let us run to Jesus. Let us ask Jesus for His help and guidance, for His mercy and love. Let us ask Him NOW! In Jn. 8.12, Jesus says “...I am the light of the world.” Let Jesus shine His light upon us. Like the woman caught in adultery Jesus is directing us to go and sin no more, but we first must ask Him for His help for we can't do it without him.