

## 'FORGIVEN BY JESUS WHO ADVOCATES FOR US'

5<sup>th</sup> Sunday Lent Year C – 7<sup>th</sup> April 2019

This is a well-known account, with many points for reflection.  
Some points are raised here.

### SEXISM

Reflecting back on the Old Testament passages  
in Leviticus 20:10 and Deuteronomy 22:22-24,  
the quotes speak of the punishment of the man and the woman.

### SO WHY DO THE PHARISEES AND SCRIBES ONLY BRING THE WOMAN FORWARD?

The woman who has sinned – caught in the act.  
But so has the man.

The man is not brought forward, only the woman –  
and it is stacked against her, as she is alone with no defender.  
They are using her to trap Jesus.

A particular group of male leaders are being sexist, manipulative and violent.  
This passage is one of many texts used in a critique of sexism now and in church history.  
It also gives inspiration for women and men who oppose sexist attitudes towards women  
and girls in society.

There been so many learned texts written in recent decades about the depth of today's  
Gospel and its application to today.

### LET US PAUSE

Imagine yourself there before the authorities, and the crowd.  
Alone before them.  
Having heard that the authorities want you punished and killed.

Yet Jesus is there to intercede for you.

WHAT DOES JESUS WRITE ON THE GROUND FOR YOU AND FOR THOSE WHO DESPERATELY  
SEEK TO PUNISH YOU?

HOW DO YOU FEEL WHEN THEY DEPART AND YOU ARE ALONE WITH JESUS?

AND WHEN HE SPEAKS TO YOU?

AND HOW FREES YOU?

HOW DOES JESUS LOOK AT YOU?

AS YOU DEPART, HOW WOULD DESCRIBE YOUR GAZE INTO JESUS' EYES?

## ABOLITION OF CAPITAL PUNISHMENT

This same passage is also one of several references in the New Testament that inspires church teaching to oppose the death penalty for people.

Imagine being in jail in some country overseas and facing

- \* either your hearing which could contain the death sentence
- \* or with your case heard, you are on death row.

## WHAT WOULD YOU BE SAYING TO GOD?

## CONTEXT OF ENTRAPMENT

This Gospel passage has its own story as to how it was placed in John's Gospel. We heard some of that background on Wednesday night at the [RCIA](#) discussion. As we know it today, it is placed after Chapter Seven of John's Gospel. Let us view its context in John.

We note the efforts to trap Jesus in the previous chapter.

Earlier in 7:1 *'Jesus went about in Galilee.'*

*'He did not wish to go about in Judea'*

because the Jewish authorities

*'were looking for an opportunity to kill him.'*

Later he went up privately to Jerusalem in Judea.

Jesus knew the risks involved.

In 7:32 *'the chief priests and Pharisees sent temple police to arrest him.'*

In 7:44 *'Some of them wanted to arrest him, but no one laid hands on him'*

And in 7:45-52 the chief priests and Pharisees ask the temple police why they didn't arrest Jesus. They accuse the police of being *'deceived'*. Nicodemus is a lone voice of reason, but he is ignored by the authorities.

Ancient law quoted the death penalty.

But some scriptural scholars remind us that, at the time of Jesus, the Roman law opposed Jewish authorities using this way.

If Jesus says YES – he is trapped – opposing Roman law

If Jesus says NO – he is trapped – opposing Jewish law of centuries before.

Yet in 8:59 at another time, we hear about some of the listeners

*'So they picked up stones to throw at him,  
but Jesus hid himself and went out of the temple.'*

It was not yet time to die.

We know that sin can manipulate, divide and oppose integrity.

We ponder how we might be tempted

to use and manipulate people –

even if they are in the wrong.

We all need God's forgiveness.

## LENT

Again, this passage is a part of Church teaching in the way we speak about morality and reforming our lives. Hence the Church chooses it as one of the Sunday Gospel passages during the Season of Lent.

Let us read today's Gospel passage for ourselves.

## JOHN 8:1-11

*'while Jesus went to the Mount of Olives.  
Early in the morning he came again to the temple.  
All the people came to him and he sat down and began to teach them.*

*The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in adultery;  
and making her stand before all of them,  
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.  
Now what do you say?'  
They said this to test him,  
so that they might have some charge to bring against him.*

*Jesus bent down and wrote with his finger on the ground.  
When they kept on questioning him,  
he straightened up and said to them,  
**'Let anyone among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her.'***

*And once again he bent down and wrote on the ground.*

*When they heard it, they went away, one by one, beginning with the elders;  
and Jesus was left alone with the woman standing before him.  
Jesus straightened up and said to her,  
**'Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?'**  
She said, 'No one, sir.'  
And Jesus said,  
**'Neither do I condemn you.  
Go your way, and from now on do not sin again.'***

## CONFLICT RESOLUTION

In the Gospel scene the people are there in full view. According to the culture of the day, if Jesus keeps them in continual eye contact, then this can encourage conflict.

Instead Jesus looks down;  
giving the people gathered a chance to move away.

God gives us the chance to ask for forgiveness.  
The people do not take this chance to move away.

So Jesus looks up, speaks to them and puts it back to their sin first.  
According to their culture, for the younger people to move away,  
they would need the elders to move away first.

### WHAT DOES JESUS DO?

He looks down again, as He is sensitive to their culture.  
He has challenged them and gives them a way to go.

The second time Jesus looks up and this time,  
only the woman is there.  
Jesus says,

***'Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?'***  
*She said, 'No one, sir.'*  
*'And Jesus said,*  
***'Neither do I condemn you.***  
***Go your way, and from now on do not sin again.'***

### SENT

Jesus has freed her and sends her on her way.

God continues to invite us to ask for forgiveness.  
When God forgives us, it is not for us to just wander away.

God sends us on our way, to live our mission as followers of Jesus,  
and tells us to not sin again.

### THREE QUESTIONS

We remember the Gospel of last week with three parts.

We asked ourselves, individually and as parish community:

- \* HOW ARE WE LIKE THE OLDER SON WHO IS SELF-RIGHTEOUS AND RESENTFUL?
- \* HOW ARE WE LIKE THE YOUNGER PRODIGAL SON WHO SINS AND WASTES EVERYTHING, AND FINALLY RETURNS, EVEN WITH IMPERFECT MOTIVES?
- \* HOW ARE WE LIKE THE FATHER'S LOVE FOR THEM BOTH?

**Today we ask ourselves, individually and as parish community:**

- \* HOW ARE WE LIKE THE SCRIBES AND PHARISEES IN TODAY'S GOSPEL?
- \* HOW ARE WE LIKE THE WOMAN?
- \* HOW ARE WE LIKE JESUS?

Let us pause and ask ourselves these questions. [pause]

The chief priests and Pharisees and scribes will continue to plot against Jesus.

The woman in today's Gospel has been forgiven, freed and sent, and told to sin no more.

Jesus invites us to be open to forgiveness and tells us to sin no more.

We come before God and we pray:

*Loving God,  
we ask your help:  
When we find it hard to forgive someone,  
help us to forgive.  
When someone has not yet forgiven us,  
we pray your intercession to grace them to forgive us.  
When we lose our focus during these 40 days this Lent,  
reach out to us in love.  
Amen.*

Fr. Gerry

[Readings: <http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/040719-yearc.cfm>]

[Parish Facebook: <http://bit.ly/parishFacebook07042019>]

Guercino | Christ with the Woman Taken in Adultery | public domain



Located: [Dulwich Picture Gallery London, UK](#)