



Bringing Home the Word

Fifth Sunday of Lent

March 13, 2016

Can You Hear It?

By Janel Esker

The adulterous woman should have been stoned. Instead, the only sounds piercing the air were those of stones hitting the ground—thud, thud, thud—and sandaled feet trudging away in defeat—shuffle, shuffle, shuffle.

“See, I’m doing something new. It springs forth; do you not perceive it?” The Israelites were grounded in memories of God’s great deeds for them. To be told by God to “remember not the events of the past” and anticipate something new presented quite a challenge.

“Let the one among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her.” Doing something new, Jesus turned the law upside down. His wisdom exposed the foolishness of the scribes and Pharisees. They could only shake their heads in silence, drop their stones, and shuffle away.

We are the Israelite people. We are the woman caught in adultery. We are the stone-grasping accusers. We cling to our expectations of how God should act. We cling to sinful behavior. We cling to judgment of others. Yet God bursts forth with mercy and compassion. This God makes ways in wilderness, makes rivers in wastelands, and showers us with forgiveness and love. Mercy trumps vengeance. Compassion trumps violence.

Can you hear the new thing God is doing? The woman caught in adultery heard it. The scribes and Pharisees heard it. It sounds like stones dropping. It sounds like accusers shuffling away. It is the mercy of God pouring down on us.

Do you not perceive it? †

Sunday Readings

Isaiah 43:16–21

“See, I am doing something new! ... In the desert I make a way.”

Philippians 3:8–14

“I consider everything as a loss because of the supreme good of knowing Christ.”

John 8:1–11

“Let the one among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her.”

A Word from Pope Francis

God promised to restore to unity and prosperity a people dispersed by disaster and division. For us, as for the people of Israel, this is a promise full of hope: it points to a future which God is even now preparing for us. Yet this promise is inseparably tied to a command: the command to return to God and wholeheartedly obey his law. God’s gifts of reconciliation, unity, and peace are inseparably linked to the grace of conversion, a change of heart which can alter the course of our lives and our history, as individuals and as a people.



—Morning Meditation, “The Pillars of Christian Salvation,” June 22, 2013



- What do I need to let go of from my past?
- To what new law, relationship, or reality is God calling me?

Embrace All Sinners, Including Ourselves

By Jeanne Hunt

For some, skipping stones is still a popular pastime. Stoning may not be a common or legal form of execution, but public killings still occur, and throwing insults, accusations, or judgments upon others always deadens our relationships with each other.

Sometimes in family life, arguments begin with, “Whose fault is this?” Our energies would be better used to fix the problem, offer forgiveness, and make amends. That would leave the placing of any blame, guilt, or judgment to God (who I doubt is counting our mistakes).

Let’s follow Jesus’ advice, put down our stones, and embrace all the sinners in our midst, including ourselves. As a family, strive to make peace with one another regardless of who is responsible for the distress or separation. Ignore the little annoyances, and “forgive those who trespass against us.” Love the restless preschoolers and outrageous teenagers. Have listening hearts. Save the advice for those occasions when it really matters and is likely to be received.

Jesus wants us to love one another and give up the eye-for-an-eye approach: the latter simply doesn’t work.

Spring Cleaning

Since the topic of today’s Gospel is adultery, this week is a perfect time to “clean up” sexuality within our homes:

Discuss (or study) marriage and sexuality with older children and teens using the wisdom of our faith and Catholic



resources, such as those that teach chastity and the Theology of the Body. Keep the topic and responses relaxed and age-appropriate, respecting both the listener and our need for privacy and discretion.

Everyone, even younger children, can grow in appreciation for and support of marriage and family. Donate to or volunteer with a charity that serves these groups. Assist or pray for families you know who need extra help.

Have spouses set aside some time to pray or read the Bible together. Together they can evaluate their relationship in terms of spirituality, sexuality, and family planning.

Most households have easy access to television, radio, and the Internet, which engage us with the news, arts, sciences, literature, and religion. Sadly, these gifts also come with nearly instant (and potentially continuous) exposure to images, lyrics, and videos that contradict our faith and promote sinful behavior and attitudes. Increasingly sophisticated security features offer parents greater

control over what information and media enters the home and the digital worlds of each family member. Parents are responsible for protecting their sacred spaces, their domestic Church, from temptation and corruption through formation and prevention. The first step in this task is setting a healthy and positive example:

- This Lent, create (or review) your family’s digital agreement or contract—basic rules and guidelines on expected behavior.
- Review the privacy settings on all TVs and smart devices. Block all pornography and X-rated material and sites from everyone and everything. Let your cyberspace be a place where goodness and the highest ideals are proclaimed.
- Without invading or judging (remember the Gospel?) take an inventory of the music, books, and subscriptions within your home. If any items are troublesome or not edifying, strongly request its disposal and offer to replace it with a better option. †

PRAYER

Lord, your grace and love make me whole. Help me to trust in the endless possibilities of the present moment.

—From *Mindful Meditations for Every Day of Lent and Easter*,
Rev. Warren J. Savage
and Mary Ann McSweeney

WEEKDAY READINGS

March 14–19

Mon. Lenten Weekday: Daniel 13:1–9, 15–17, 19–30, 33–62 / John 8:12–20 or John 8:1–11
Tue. Lenten Weekday: Numbers 21:4–9 / John 8:21–30
Wed. Lenten Weekday: Daniel 3:14–20, 91–92, 95 / John 8:31–42

Thu. Lenten Weekday: Genesis 17:3–9 / John 8:51–59
Fri. Lenten Weekday: Jeremiah 20:10–13 / John 10:31–42
Sat. St. Joseph: 2 Sam. 7:4–5a, 12–14a, 16 / Romans 4:13, 16–18, 22 / Matthew 1:16, 18–21, 24a or Luke 2:41–51a