

Read

Isaiah 43:16-21

Psalm 126:1-2a, 2b-3,
4-5, 6

Philippians 3:8-14

John 8:1-11

LIVING THE WORD

Fifth Sunday of Lent

April 3, 2022



REFLECTION

What really happened to this woman? A group of men, scribes and Pharisees, bring a woman to Jesus. They claim to have caught the woman in the act of committing adultery. The accusation of adultery puts the woman at fault in the relationship—and at risk of being killed as punishment. The scribes and Pharisees push Jesus to agree with them: this woman should be stoned.

But what about the woman's point of view? We do not get the chance to hear the woman's explanation of what happened. She's gone down in biblical history as "the woman caught in adultery"—but what if another sin took place? What if the woman was actually the survivor of sexual harassment or abuse? What if the sinful actions were not committed by her, but by the other person—the man—caught in the act?

As is often the case in such situations, the public will never know exactly what happened. Most abuse happens behind closed doors. Jesus knows there is more to the story. He does not immediately side with the men in power. Jesus recognizes the dignity of this woman and does not condemn her.

May we, too, not be so quick to condemn—and instead, be quick to listen.



ACTION

Do you believe everything you read? These days we are inundated with news from all sorts of sources, each carrying their own biases. Our opinions can be greatly influenced by others, depending on which websites we visit or stations we watch. Next time you come across a news story, commit to searching for multiple perspectives. Consider the different points of view. Dig deeper in search of the truth.

Catholic social teaching should be one of the lenses we use to evaluate our own biases and reprioritize Jesus' teaching in our lives. Check out these videos from Catholic Relief Services:

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLt5PsPjJAK-0b9BYRHUAXnIKMlv7qyZca>



QUESTIONS

- ❖ What do today's readings teach you about the Christian life?
- ❖ How has God shown you patience and forgiveness in the past month?
- ❖ Is there someone you need to forgive in your life right now? How can you do this?



April 3, 2022

FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT

LECTIONARY #36C

Isaiah 43:16-21

Psalms 126:1-2a, 2b-3, 4-5, 6

Philippians 3:8-14

John 8:1-11

Prepare for the Word

The following elements may be used by the catechist, teacher, or youth minister to prepare to facilitate today's session with teens. You may integrate this information into the reflection and discussion on today's readings.

Leader's Context

In today's Gospel, we find the Pharisees and the scribes trying to trap Jesus through his response to a religious teaching. They bring a woman to him telling him that they caught her in adultery and asked him what to do with her. They know that by the law of Moses they can stone her to death, but they also know that Jesus is not going to tell them to do that based on his previous teachings. Jesus avoids their trap by turning their focus to their own sinfulness. Jesus shows mercy to the woman and offers her forgiveness. Encourage the teens to reflect on the way they can approach others with mercy rather than accusations.

Q FOCUS: *We reflect on our sinfulness in light of God's abundant mercy and forgiveness.*

Liturgical Calendar Connection

On April 4, we commemorate St. Isidore of Seville, bishop and doctor of the Church. Born around 560 in Spain, he had two brothers and one sister who are all recognized by the Church as saints. Isidore was a very learned man who led the Church in Spain with great knowledge and wisdom. He wrote an encyclopedia, encouraged seminaries and schools to be built, and contributed to the liturgical development of the Spanish Church. Today he is known as

the patron saint of the internet because of his expertise in a wide variety of topics.

Church Teaching Connection

"'Mercy' the Pope explained, 'is something which is difficult to understand: it doesn't eliminate sin', for 'it is God's forgiveness' that does this. 'Mercy is the manner in which God forgives'. . . . Pope Francis then compared God's mercy to the sun: 'we look at the sky, the many stars, but when the morning sun comes, we don't see the stars. Such is the mercy of God: it is a great light of love, of tenderness'" (Pope Francis, Morning Meditation, April 7, 2014, in *L'Osservatore Romano*).

Hear the Word

Use this resource, a lectionary, or a Bible to proclaim the reading. The book should be held reverently or placed on a lectern. If possible, light a candle that is placed near where the Gospel will be proclaimed. Gesture for teens to stand.

Gospel Acclamation

Use the same musical setting that is used in your parish or at school Masses. Teens may help with music and proclaim the Gospel.

**Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ,
king of endless glory.**

Gospel

John 8:1-11

Reader: A reading from the holy Gospel according to John.

All: Glory to you, O Lord.

All make the sign of the cross on their forehead, lips, and heart.

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."

Reader: The Gospel of the Lord.

All: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Everyone may be seated.

Reflect on the Word

When beginning the reflection and discussion about today's readings, first refer to the handout for today. Ask teens what they learned about themselves and about Christian discipleship from performing the action for the week and journaling. Ask teens about the readings of the day: What struck them? What do they think the readings mean? How do the readings affect their own lives? Then begin the following reflection:

We know where we are going. A few more weeks and we will be at the trial, death and resurrection of Jesus. This is the Fifth Sunday of Lent and we are seeing Jesus being tested. The people are looking for a way to bring to condemn him and his teachings. They are trying to stir up trouble.

- ▶ Do you know people like that?
- ▶ Are there times when you intentionally stir up trouble?

As they bring him the woman they caught in adultery, the scribes and Pharisees try to make Jesus choose between the law of Moses (which was an important part of their religious tradition) and the law of love Jesus has been proclaiming. But what does he do? He draws in the sand. We all ask God to listen to us. How must have the Pharisees and scribes felt when Jesus seemed like he was ignoring them? When you want an answer to something and

you get ignored, it can be very frustrating. Finally though, Jesus tells them that whoever has never sinned can throw the first stone at the woman. Knowing this is not possible, since they are all aware of their sinfulness, they walk away.

- ▶ Are you aware of your sinfulness? How does this awareness affect your actions toward others who have sinned?

The relief that washed over the woman when they left her must have been easily felt. Yet, she still faced Jesus. She still faced her Lord and was waiting for his judgement.

- ▶ How do you feel when you know you have made a wrong choice and now you are accountable for it?
- ▶ How do you feel after receiving the sacrament of reconciliation?
- ▶ How would you feel if you were in the woman's shoes?

The end of this Gospel passage is very beautiful. The woman does not deny her sin. Jesus does not ask her to explain herself. There is no room for excuses when it comes to our relationship with God. All he wants is our love and when we think about it, that is all we want too.

Jesus notes that they did not condemn her and neither does he. Instead, Jesus shows her mercy. He shows her love and sends her away with peace. There is a freedom in knowing you have sinned, feeling God's forgiveness, and being sent away in peace and mercy.

The scribes and Pharisees were faced with their own sinfulness. The woman was gifted with a mercy she had not known before. Jesus continues his ministry, which will lead to his death and our new life in him.

- ▶ How can you share Jesus' merciful love with others?
- ▶ How is our task of spreading the good news of the Gospel connected to our recognition of sin and God's forgiveness?

Wrapping It Up

Consider these points to conclude the discussion and reflection. Integrate the thoughts and ideas that surfaced during the discussion as well as the "Church Teaching Connection" on page 158.

Acknowledging our sins and asking for forgiveness brings freedom to love as God loves.

The love of God brings forgiveness, healing, and peace.

When has God offered you mercy for your sins?

Act on the Word

Celebrating God's Mercy

For this activity, you will need to print out copies of an examination of conscience (one from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops can be found here: <http://www.usccb.org/prayer-and-worship/sacraments-and-sacramentals/penance/sacrament-reconciliation-young-adults-examination-of-conscience.cfm>). If possible, you will also need to arrange to have a priest available for the sacrament of reconciliation during this time or at another agreed upon time. If you are not able to set it up for a time when you are already meeting, find out when your parish has times for reconciliation scheduled and encourage the teens to go.

Today's Gospel reading and reflection remind us that none of us are free from sin. No matter how small our sins might seem, all of them take us farther away from God. It is especially appropriate to consider our sins during this season of Lent, as we prepare ourselves to celebrate the resurrection of Christ. In the sacrament of reconciliation, we are invited to identify those times when we have turned

away from God and return to him through his grace, forgiveness, and mercy.

Pass out copies of the examination of conscience to the young people. Remind them that sin is not just about breaking the rules, it is about breaking our relationship with God. The sacrament of reconciliation helps us repair that relationship. Encourage the teens to spread out in your meeting space and spend time in prayer reflecting on this examination of conscience. If space permits, do this in a chapel or other prayer space in your parish. You may want to play quiet, reflective music during this time.

If a priest is available, invite the teens to participate in the sacrament of reconciliation. If this is not possible during your meeting time, let them know when they can receive the sacrament at the parish.

Closing Prayer

*God of gentleness and mercy,
you shower your servants
with your compassion and goodness.
Prompt us to be generous
with the gifts of love and kindness
as we witness your joy and care
in the midst of conflict and division.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.*

For Next Sunday

To help teens prepare for next Sunday's Mass, print, email, or share on a blog or social media the handout found on the next page. The JPG and PDF files are available at www.ltp.org/lwgr. Encourage teens to attend Palm Sunday Mass with family or friends. Give teens the Holy Week schedule and encourage them to attend the Triduum liturgies.