

Read

Isaiah 43:16-21

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

Philippians 3:8-14

John 8:1-11

Fifth Sunday of Lent

April 6, 2025



REFLECTION

This week we read about a woman caught in adultery. The crowd wants to stone her and use this situation as a trap for Jesus. How does he respond? Jesus begins to write something on the ground with his finger.

What is he writing? The Scriptures never tell us. He tells the crowd that anyone who hasn't sinned can throw the first stone. Then curiously, he again begins to write. The crowd slowly dissipates until no one is left except Jesus and the woman.

What did Jesus write on the ground that could change the crowd's behavior? Did he write all the sins of the people in the crowd? He knew what was on their hearts, for he was God. Could it have been a message of love that pierced the hearts of all who read it? Whatever it was, that message is lost to time.

What message does Jesus write on your heart today? What might he say to you when you feel so angry that you want to hurt someone? What could he say when you feel lost or ashamed? What word would he write to move your life in a new direction? Go to Jesus and ask him in prayer.

ACTION

Spend some time in quiet prayer imagining this scene in the Gospel. Reread it and place yourself as a character in the drama. See Jesus write something on the ground. Watch his fingers trace the letters on the ground. Read this word and think about what it means to you and your life. Write down what you imagine Jesus wrote and reflect on it this week.



**I will place my law within
them, and write it upon
their hearts; I will be their God,
and they shall be my people.**

—Jeremiah 31:33

QUESTIONS

- ❖ What do today's readings teach you about the Christian life?
- ❖ How do you think the woman felt about Jesus' message to her?
- ❖ How would you act toward someone if he or she were accused of wrongdoing?



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FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT

LECTIONARY #36C

Isaiah 43:16-21

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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

There are many laws for the Jewish people in the Old Testament. These laws were given so that the people would be able to maintain their society and keep the right religious practices. Although these laws were given for the benefit of the people, today we see the religious leaders using them for their own benefit as they try to trick Jesus into doing or saying something that would give them a reason to take him to trial. They present Jesus with a choice: follow the law of Moses or go against it by acting with mercy as you have done in the past. Instead of falling into their trap, Jesus turns the question on them by calling them out for their own sinfulness. The teens are invited to reflect on how they recognize sin in their own lives.

Q FOCUS: We must reflect on our own sinfulness in light of God's unending mercy.

Liturgical Calendar Connection

On April 11, we commemorate the life of St. Stanislaus (c. 1030-1079). Stanislaus was the bishop of Krakow, Poland. He was a well-loved leader of the faith, generous to the poor, and preached with an eloquence that led many people to have a conversion of heart. He criticized King Boleslaus for his violence, oppression of the poor, and immoral behaviors. In response, the king sent men to kill him, but they would not follow the orders. Enraged, the king himself killed Stanislaus. The people were

outraged and forced the king into exile. Stanislaus is the patron saint of Poland and Krakow.

Church Teaching Connection

"It is the time of mercy for each and all, since no one can think that he or she is cut off from God's closeness and the power of his tender love. It is the time of mercy because those who are weak and vulnerable, distant and alone, ought to feel the presence of brothers and sisters who can help them in their need. . . . It is the time of mercy because no sinner can ever tire of asking forgiveness and all can feel the welcoming embrace of the Father" (Pope Francis, *Misericordia et misera*, 21)

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:

Since the beginning of Lent, we have seen Jesus' convictions being tested, first by the devil in the desert and then by religious authorities who do not believe he is who he says he is. In today's Gospel, Jesus is teaching in the temple when he is interrupted by the scribes and pharisees who want to test his adherence to the law. They are looking for a way to condemn him and his teachings and so they bring him a woman caught in adultery.

► **What emotions might someone experience if his or her core beliefs are constantly being put to the test?**

► **Have you ever had to defend your faith or the principles you believe in? What was that experience like?**

The religious leaders try to make Jesus choose between the law of Moses and the law of love and

mercy that he has been practicing and teaching. Jesus initially ignores their questions. But when they continued to pester him, Jesus quickly turns the tables on them and makes them aware of their own sinfulness. We can imagine what they might have been thinking as they walked away: "If we are asking Jesus to judge her, how would he judge us for our sins?"

► **What are some ways that people become aware of their own sinfulness? How might it be pointed out to them by other people? How might they become aware of it on their own?**

► **How does being aware of your own sinfulness influence the way you treat others when they sin?**

When the woman was left alone with Jesus, he forgave her for her sins. Jesus, who is sinless, could have condemned her. He knew the sin she had committed. However, instead of punishing her, he shows her mercy and sends her on her way with the instruction to not sin anymore.

Jesus does not focus on the woman's sins, or on any of the sins of the people he meets, even those people who would condemn him. Instead, his focus is on bringing people to God. He acknowledges the sins of people, forgives them, shows them mercy, and gives witness to the love of God that they are missing in their lives. In doing so, he helps them to be in a right relationship with God. He wants us to experience the fullness of life that comes when we repent of our sins and accept God's love, mercy, and grace.

► **Is it easy for you to forgive yourself when you sin? What are some things we can do to treat ourselves with the same grace and mercy that God gives us?**

Jesus' last words in today's Gospel inspire us to move forward with our lives after we have recognized our sin. We are called to repent and to turn our hearts back to God by changing our sinful behavior into behavior that expresses our identity as faithful followers of Christ.

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 170.

We are called to show mercy to others.

When we are aware of our own sinfulness, we become open to the work of God's mercy in our hearts.

Jesus wants us to grow in relationship with God.

Act on the Word

Revisiting the Pillars of Lent

For this activity, you will need journals and pens.

Share with the teens that as we contemplate Jesus' love and mercy in these last weeks of Lent, we recall our Lenten pillars of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. Today we are invited to consider these practices in light of Jesus' declaration that we "Go, and from now on do not sin any more." How does our commitment to prayer, fasting, and almsgiving help us to focus on sinning no more, put ourselves in right relationship with God, and allow us to grow in mercy and love?

Remind the young people of the activity from the First Sunday of Lent, in which they created the paper pillars of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving that are displayed on the walls of the room. They also journaled about what practices they were planning to do during Lent to help turn their life back toward God. Invite them to find those pages in their journals and refresh their memories.

Then spend a few minutes talking with them as a large group about their growth during the last few weeks. Some questions to guide the discussion are as follows: How have they grown in prayer during Lent? How has their relationship with God grown? Who have they been praying for? What did they give up for the past four weeks? Have they been

successful and consistent in their fasting? How have they been using their time to focus on their spiritual lives? How have they used their time, resources, and talents for others? How do they feel about their almsgiving?

After the group discussion, remind them that they still have two more weeks until Easter. They can use this time to continue reflecting on their relationship with God and growing in faithfulness. Divide the young people into pairs. Invite them to share with their partner about their growth in terms of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving this Lent. Encourage them to share their honest struggles and successes. Have the teens come up with a plan for the next two weeks to renew their commitment to their practices as they journey closer to Christ as he approaches his passion, death, and resurrection. Ask them to hold their partner accountable in the coming weeks, with regular communication and encouragement.

Closing Prayer

*God,
your Son brought mercy to all kinds
of situations.*

*He showed us how to act justly
and walk humbly.*

*May we follow this example
and create space for mercy and justice
in all that we do.*

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.