

Homily for V (5) Sunday of Lent Year C 03-04-2022 by Fr. Lubem Waya, osj.

First Reading: Isaiah 43:16-21

Psalm: Psalm 126

Second Reading: Philippians 3:8-14

Gospel: John 8:1-11

HAVE YOU ALSO CONDEMNED OTHERS?

Truly the Lord comes to lift us up when we are at our lowest moments and our strengths can no longer carry us. This was the reality of an exiled and enslaved Israel, lost to nowhere any close to their beloved Jerusalem. And in the midst of the seeming hopelessness, the Lord sent His prophet to bring them this message of hope. The Lord promised to do a new thing in their lives that would give them cause to be able to sing His praises again. He said He would resettle them back in Jerusalem as He had led them through the Exodus from Egypt to the promised land. Symbolically He would bring His people from death to life. Where are you at the moment in your life's journey? Do you feel stuck on the way and you feel it's over? Are you incumbered by your circumstances, dwindling incomes, insecurity, sickness, pain, loss, and you think your situation is a hopeless case? Remember that with the Lord, we can never say it is over even when we have seen the end, because He sees farther than we see and He alone knows more than what we know. Hence, with Him it is not over until it is over. Only He has the final say, not man. He is going to do a new thing in your life too. If we trust in Him, He will speak into our lives and impossible situations would become possible again as He did for Israel and the woman in the gospel.

In the gospel reading, the scribes and the pharisees contrive a plan. They set up a woman to be caught in the sin of adultery. Having being caught, she knew her end had come. Then they brought her before Jesus to trap him in a moral conundrum. (Notice that nothing is said or done about her male counterpart.) To answer the Pharisees' question, Jesus must propose an action that will be either contrary to the Law of Moses or contrary to Roman law which did not permit citizens to impose capital punishment on others. Though she is brought before Christ for a verdict, she is only being used as a bait to convict Christ who is their target. So, it is actually Christ who is standing trial in His own court. Have you ever been tested like this or have you set similar traps for others? May we not be the cause of another's fall.

Christ could discern their ill intentions with His divine wisdom. And rather than just escape, He seized the occasion to teach us that the rigorous application of the law could be the peak of injustice. And this is true because the flip side of God's justice is mercy, wherein is accommodated not just the letter but also the spirit of the law. It is the reason why Christ spared the life of this woman, without breaking the law of Moses or the Roman law. She received another opportunity like you and me to live again and right her wrongs before God. Our sins are a sentence unto death upon us since the wages of sin is death, but if we repent, God's forgiveness is life-restoring to us as we see also in the life of this woman. The irony of life however is that the guilty ones are always quick to judge and condemn, while the innocent one is always ready to forgive. Remember to judge not, that you be not judged. This injunction nevertheless, does not exonerate us from the sacred ministry of due correction which invites us to rebuke our sinning neighbour but in love, so that he might change for the glory of God. For the Lord does not take pleasure in the death of the wicked man, rather He desires that every sinner should change from their evil ways and live again.

Today we are all called to be agents of this ministry of due correction, to bring the wounded back to God. So, how do we correct those in error? Do we take delight in judging, condemning and bringing their ills to the public? Or do we treat them with compassion as God treats us? God does not condemn us when we sin, but He does not condone our sins either. He told her, I do not condemn you either, but go and sin no more. His grace enables us to confront our sin for what it is, unfaithfulness to God, and to turn to Him in repentance. May He give us the courage to cut away from our sins and embrace a new life in Him. Amen.