

5th Sunday of Lent
March 21, 2010
“Let the One Without Sin Cast the First Stone”

Our Lenten lesson from today’s Gospel, my friends, is a very timely lesson.

A woman caught in serious sin faces a public stoning until she dies.

And Jesus reprieves her from such a terrible fate with the simple words: “Let the one among you stoners who is without sin be the one to cast the first stone!”

What a powerful moment of truth that was!

It stopped them all in their tracks!

One by one, they sheepishly left the scene, knowing full well that Jesus made a good point.

Then comes the mercy and forgiveness.

Jesus says to the accused woman: “Has no one condemned you? Then neither do I condemn you. Go now, and sin no more.”

It’s another of the many times where Jesus condemns the sin, but never the sinner!

And it’s so important for us to remember that.

I say this lesson is very timely for us today because in the recent months, indeed in the recent years, we’ve had, what seems like, more than our American fair share of very prominent public figures, mainly from the political and sports worlds, who have been brought down, much as the woman in today’s Gospel was about to be.

And it’s always so disillusioning when that happens.

People of any culture just naturally hold their leaders and celebrities up on a pedestal.

And sometimes we make that pedestal so high that we can’t or don’t want to see their imperfections, or as the saying goes: “Warts and all!”

But then when the crash comes, we are all saddened and feel betrayed.

And so we take out our pain by just wanting to rid ourselves of that person.

And, of course, the media feeds on that by making a person’s misfortune a spectator sport, especially on the reality shows.

It's true, and many of us older folks can remember times when anyone caught in public disgrace was just through

His or her career was ended.

His or her family life was wrecked.

All that was left was to get a name change and start life anew in another place and another job.

But, you know, I'm prepared to think that maybe we Americans are finally "getting it," and starting to follow the example of Jesus in today's Gospel.

Maybe it's because there have been so many fallen heroes that we all get the sense that it's true: nobody is perfect.

And then we look at the remarkable and amazing recoveries that a lot of our fallen heroes have made.

There have been some tremendous come backs, even in our very recent times.

Just think about the political and sports figures alone, who have made some wonderful new beginnings.

I like to think that these people know personally what Easter is all about; they have experienced resurrection.

And that's what we, too, should think about them, and ourselves, for that matter.

As Our Lord did, condemn the sin, but not the sinner.

Give everyone, including ourselves, that second chance that prodigal son had in last Sunday's Gospel.

Only with us, it comes with the morning of each new day.

We all should learn from our mistakes, sure!

And sometimes we have to re-learn from our mistakes when we commit the same sin again and again.

But we have to remember, with every morning's gift of life, God hasn't given up on us.

So neither should we give up on ourselves, or each other.

Can you see how last week's prodigal son story and today's Gospel about Jesus giving the sinful woman a new beginning, are really setting us up to be an Easter people?

In two weeks, we'll be celebrating Jesus' new beginning, His return from what looked like utter defeat on Good Friday.

And because of His return, we can rightfully celebrate all our own "new beginnings," because we are His Easter people!

Thank you, and God bless you.