

Homily – John 8: 1-11

Fifth Sunday of Lent, 2nd / 3rd April, 2022

“Love keeps no record of wrongs”

There is a beautiful story on God’s forgiving and merciful love.

It was the sixth day of creation and on that day, God created Father Adam and Mother Eve. And on the seventh day, as God was resting, they asked Him if He would give them something special to commemorate their birthday. So, God reached into His treasure chest and took out a sacred coin. And there on the coin, it was written: “Love.”

It was the eighth day now. And on that day, Father Adam and Mother Eve sinned. And as they were leaving the Garden of Eden, they asked God for an assurance that He would not abandon them. And God said: “Look! You have the coin,”. Well! They said: “The coin says Love,” but we have lost love. Now, will we find it again?” God looked at them with compassion and then with a gentle smile He said: “Just, turn it over,” And they did. Well! On the other side of the coin was the word “Forgiveness.”

I believe, there is a great truth in that. Love and forgiveness are the two sides of the same coin. And the Good News is just this: that God loves you no matter what you've done, or what you've thought of doing. God always loves you.

In today's Gospel, the woman caught in adultery is brought before Jesus by the Scribes and the Pharisees. And here they're seeking to test Him: "Master, they said, this woman was caught in the very act of committing adultery. And Moses has ordered us in the Law to condemn women like this to death by stoning. And, what have you to say?"

Now Jesus is confronted with a dilemma. If he were to say: 'release her, let her go', the Scribes and the Pharisees would accuse Him of violating the Mosaic Law saying: "The Law means nothing to You". On the other hand if He were to say: "Stone her, they would still point a finger at Him saying: 'how could You ever preach about God's love, mercy and forgiveness?' "

Jesus says nothing. Instead, He bends down and starts writing on the ground with His finger. We don't even know what Jesus wrote. But to their persistent question, He tells them this: "if there's anyone among you who is

without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her.” And one by one, they leave beginning with the eldest.

Well, Jesus doesn't deny or condemn sin here. But His entire concern is to rescue the woman from her terrible plight and to offer her the possibility of a new life. He tells her: “Woman, neither do I condemn you. Go, and from now on, sin no more”. A lesson of mercy, which probably we are all very slow to learn in our lives.

The episode of the woman caught in adultery may appear very dramatic. We may even laugh at the foolish behavior of the Scribes and the Pharisees who brought that woman to Jesus to be condemned. But if we pause a moment to examine our own lives, we may not be any different.

It is here that our Holy Father inspires the whole world with his great sense of mercy. Speaking on the need for mercy in today's world, Pope Francis in his book, *The Name of God is Mercy* says: "The fragility of our era is this: we don't believe that there is a chance for redemption; for a hand to raise you up; for an embrace to save you, forgive you, pick you up, flood you with infinite, patient, indulgent love; and to put you back on your feet."

He then goes on to explain his "special relationship" with prisoners. And he would say: "I have always been very attached to the prisoners, precisely because of my awareness of being a sinner. Every time I go through the gates into a prison to celebrate Mass or for a visit, I always think: why them and not me? I should be here. I deserve to be here. Their fall could have been mine.

"And so, I repeat and pray, he says: why him and not me? It might seem shocking, but I derive consolation from Peter: he betrayed Jesus, and even so, he was chosen."

Ron Lee Davis, in his book, *"A Forgiving God in an Unforgiving World"*, tells the true story of a priest in the Philippines, a much-loved man of God who carried the burden of a secret sin he had committed many years ago. He had repented of it, but still had no peace about it.

Now, in his parish there was a woman who deeply loved God and who claimed to have visions in which she spoke with Christ. The priest, however, was skeptical about that. And one day, to test her he said, "The next time you speak with Christ, ask Him what sin I committed while I was in the high school." The woman agreed. A few days later the priest meeting the

woman asked her, “Well, did Christ visit you in your dreams?” “Yes, He did,” she replied. “And did you ask Him what sin I committed back in the high school?” “Yes, I did, she told him” “And what did He say? the priest was curious”. And she gently replied: “Well! Christ said, ‘I don’t remember.’”

As our Holy Father repeatedly says: “Mercy is God’s identity card”. Mercy is His name. Yes, dear friends, the God we believe in, is a saving God. The Master we follow is the Saviour of all. Let us then show mercy and compassion to those who sin because we ourselves are sinners in need of God’s mercy and forgiveness.

God bless you all, **Amen.**