

Homily Notes – 5th Sunday of Lent

What an embarrassing situation for anyone to find themselves in. That poor woman was dragged from the arms of someone she loved and dragged into the street to be condemned. Oddly, Jesus did not argue with the authorities about whether or not she was guilty. We can give her the benefit of the doubt and speculate that she did what she did with the best of intentions and had been following the promptings of her heart. The problem is that the one she loved was already married to another.

Many of us probably don’t have to imagine what that must be like – to follow our heart and to be led astray by our own heart –doing something with the best of intentions only to realize that it is wrong in God’s eyes. We did not think of the rights and feelings of others, or we did not reflect on what the will of God might be for us in that situation. I know exactly what that is like, having put myself in a dilemma like this many times. *Friends, remember these are Fr Gilles’ notes that I’m reading, not mine. (SMILE)*

What is life-giving for us this morning is to see Jesus’ attitude toward both the woman and the authorities. Jesus isn’t a buddy or a partner in crime telling her there’s no problem, God is good, so she can do whatever her heart wants. No, Jesus simply tells her he does not condemn her – in other words she has been forgiven by God in Jesus’ view – and then He declares her free and add a caution not to sin again. Jesus counsels her to make a change, to turn around from the direction in which she had been going.

The authorities insist on the woman’s guilt and want to see her condemned. Jesus simply holds up a mirror to their conscience to show them that only God is without sin and has the right to judge.

How does this fit with the Jesus that I know, the Jesus that each of us knows? It is possible for Christians to make Jesus a buddy, a partner in crime who is so lenient that anything goes and we take the liberty to follow the promptings of our heart even to what is wrong.

St Paul knows Jesus as the Lord who with great power stopped him in his tracks. He had become convinced that the Christians were evil heretics corrupting the Jewish faith and was determined to root them all out to imprison and even execute them.

Jesus showed himself to Paul as the powerful Son of God who is also gentle and loving. Paul let Jesus lead him by the hand and show him the errors of his ways. Paul accepted to turn around from the direction in which he had been going and follow rather the new direction in which Jesus was calling him to walk.

With time, Paul got to know Jesus better and more intimately through the forgiveness of his sins – like the woman caught in the act of adultery – and through the experience of prayer alone and with other Christians. He also came to know Jesus more intimately in his response to Jesus' call to tell others about Him. There is no better way to get to know Jesus than to try to tell others about Him.

The joy God wants to give us is not the world's fleeting joy that comes from following the crooked promptings of the human heart to do things that give temporary pleasure but are wrong because they are not part of God's plan for our happiness and for the salvation of the world. The joy God wants to give us comes as we get to know Him by getting to know Jesus his Son. We get to know Jesus more intimately especially when we reveal to Him our sinful hearts and receive the Father's forgiveness and mercy from Him.

We are privileged as Roman Catholics and are the envy of many other Christians because we can experience a personal encounter with Jesus through the Sacrament of Reconciliation in which we decide to live a conversion, a changing of direction, and do penance to make more room for God's love. Jesus invites you to meet Him this Thursday evening at 7:30 pm at our Reconciliation Liturgy. Give Jesus a positive response, accept to come and see Him, accept his personal invitation to receive his forgiveness and the mercy of his heavenly Father through the absolution He has empowered his priests to give you.