

March 13, 2016 Fifth Sunday of Lent

Father, give us new directions!

Isaiah 43:16-21

Psalms 126:1-6

Philippians 3:8-14

John 8:1-11

The Lord's message to Isaiah is clear: remember not the events of the past for I am doing something new. Do you not perceive the things that are now happening? I put water in the desert and rivers in the wastelands so that my people will not thirst. Even the animals honor me so let the people announce my praise.

The psalm describes the captives being brought back from exile. Their mouths were filled with laughter, their tongues with rejoicing. They sowed in tears but will reap with rejoicing and they even pray that their lost fortunes will be restored.

Paul explains to his brothers and sisters in Christ that he accepts the loss of all things in order to gain Christ. He seeks the righteousness that comes through faith in Christ, through the power of the resurrection, and through sharing of his sufferings. He continues this pursuit, forgetting what lies behind and only looking forward to what lies ahead. The prize of God's upward calling comes in and through Christ Jesus and Paul has come to understand a whole new value system.



In the Gospel Jesus is teaching in the temple area when a woman, caught in the act of adultery, is brought to him. He is asked, "Should we stone her as is called for in the law?" Jesus' response calls for the one who is without sin to cast the first stone as he understood the tendency of the human heart to see and point out to interested bystanders whatever is wrong in another. All the accusers slowly walk away and the woman is told not to sin any more.

**Father, you tell us to forget the past,
For Jesus brings us something new.
This newness springs forth through the Holy Spirit.**

The message of our readings emphasizes leaving the past to itself and begin living life anew with the Lord. Isaiah is to observe the new things brought forth by God; the exiles are looking forward to their new found freedom; Paul is only looking forward to what is ahead, and the forgiven adulteress looks to new life instead of one clouded by the threat of punishment. Our saving contact is with Christ who will forgive our sins of the past and help us begin living life fully.

The woman caught in the act of adultery no doubt acted against a moral norm accepted by the community. Damage was done but who should repair it? In Jesus' eyes stoning the woman was no fair way to correct the situation and simply blaming the woman when there was also a man involved could not bring justice. Jesus showed interior power, a love for the sinner but not for the sin. The conclusion of the matter leaves no doubt; given an evil, the noblest thing is to make it good and oftentimes this requires courage and strength to face harm before goodness will dissipate the evil. The easiest action for Jesus would have been to walk away and let the woman be stoned. While our confrontations with evil might not be so dramatic we too must act and let that which is lofty within us tap into the hidden power of the Spirit that overcomes injustice.

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