

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON (or a hymn) Give me justice, O God, and plead my cause against a nation that is faithless. From the deceitful and cunning rescue me, for you, O God, are my strength.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM (Ps 125)

ANTIPHON: The Lord has done great things for us; we are filled with joy.

RESPONSE: The Lord has done great things for us; we are filled with joy.

LECTOR: When the Lord delivered Zion from bondage, it seemed like a dream. Then was our mouth filled with laughter, on our lips there were songs. **R.**

LECTOR: The heathens themselves said: "What marvels the Lord worked for them!" What marvels the Lord worked for us! Indeed we were glad. **R.**

LECTOR: Deliver us, O Lord, from our bondage as streams in dry land. Those who are sowing in tears will sing when they reap. **R.**

LECTOR: They go out, they go out, full of tears, carrying seed for the sowing: they come back, they come back, full of song, carrying their sheaves. **R.**

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ, king of endless glory! With all your heart turn to me, For I am tender and compassionate. Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ, king of endless glory!

COMMUNION ANTIPHON (or a hymn) Has no one condemned you, woman? No one, Lord. Neither shall I condemn you. From now on, sin no more.

TODAY'S READINGS Isaiah 43:16-21; Philippians 3:8-14; John 8:1-11

NEXT WEEK (Palm Sunday, Year C) Isaiah 50:4-7; Ps 21; Philippians 2:6-11; Luke 22:14 – 23:56

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The art of forgiveness



6 April 2025 5th Sunday Lent Year C

During Lent have we passed judgment on anyone? On social media say, which thrives on it, or at home, at work, perhaps in church, wherever we find ourselves. Often, we criticise others so we feel satisfied we're not like them, and as we do, we happily deflect attention from our own lives.

However, in this week's gospel Jesus shines a light on the woman brought before him where he sits in the Temple teaching the people; on the scribes and Pharisees who want to trap him; and on us. There's a lot riding on what Jesus says to the woman's accusers because they hope he condemns himself, whatever about her. She might soon be dead because the Law stipulated, she be killed for adultery, though it called for the man's death too, revealing that for her accusers she is simply a means to an end. Initially Jesus says nothing, so they persist with their questioning. Then he looks up and asks them to consider their own lives if they are to cast the first stone, turning the spotlight back on them: feeling exposed, they move silently away.

Jesus now speaks with her – he's the only one who does - and he doesn't condemn her, or excuse her, instead he offers her the possibility of a first step towards forgiveness. In doing so he reminds us that the naming of our sin and the experience of forgiveness will only happen where there is love, where we are accepted. As happened when a dying man was talking with a friend who often visited him in his flat.

At one point he said, 'Can I just tell you?' He was scared, afraid God wouldn't forgive him.

She replied: 'Why don't you say the names of people who hurt you and the people you hurt.'

He started calling out names and after each one they said, 'Lord have mercy.' It's mercy we need, and like these friends we need to create spaces in our lives where it might happen.

With the woman in the gospel, we're invited to take a first step towards forgiveness, towards a renewed relationship with each other and with God; so that, no longer 'burdened by our persistent judgment, our constant exclusion and our withholding', we might take a first step towards the scribes and Pharisees too. For if we stop condemning her only to turn upon them, we have misunderstood Jesus, who doesn't condemn them. Instead, he encourages in us all, a change of heart.

We're invited to experience the joy of reconciliation in Lent; to experience a change of heart, so we might see a new deed come to light, a vision of new life, which the prophet Isaiah speaks of in the first reading. And this new life doesn't simply depend on our own effort, which Paul powerfully affirms in the second reading, but is God's gift to us, in Jesus: we have only to receive him into our lives.

Damian Coleridge

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