

Fifth Sunday of Lent Yr C



### John 8:1-11

**1** Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. **2** At daybreak he appeared in the Temple again; and, as all the people came to him, he sat down and began to teach them.

**3** The scribes and Pharisees brought a woman along who had been caught committing adultery; and making her stand there in full view of everybody, **4** they said to Jesus, 'Master, this woman was caught in the very act of committing adultery, **5** and Moses has ordered us in the Law to condemn women like this to death by stoning. What have you to say?' **6** They asked him this as a test, looking for something to use against him. But Jesus bent down and started writing on the ground with his finger. **7** As they persisted with their question, he looked up and said, 'If there is one of you who has not sinned let him be the first to throw a stone at her.' **8** Then he bent down and wrote on the ground again. **9** When they heard this they went away one by one, beginning with the eldest, until Jesus was left alone with the woman, who remained standing there. **10** He stood up and said, 'Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?' **11** 'No one, sir,' she replied. 'Neither do I condemn you,' said Jesus, 'go away, and do not sin any more.'

Other readings: Isaiah 43:16-21 Psalm 125 (126) Philippians 3:8-14

Having had gospel readings from Luke for many Sundays now, we might be surprised that this Sunday gospel is from the Gospel of John. All is not as it seems. This gospel story, although found in John, is very similar to stories in the synoptic gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke. It is absent from some ancient copies of John, and has long been considered an insertion into John's gospel. It is, nevertheless, reliable gospel tradition, but comes from an unknown source. The early Christians deliberately put down in writing all the traditions about Jesus they had received.

The theme of forgiveness is prominent, as on previous Sundays. Jesus is being tested, as so often by the religious leaders of his day. The matter of fidelity to the Law of Moses is raised in a dramatic way. The actions of Jesus are eloquent. He crouches down to write on the ground, turning away from judgement and condemnation. He then 'stands up' to deliver words of forgiveness, words which restore her life to the woman and allow her to rise up. Words of forgiveness empower us to stand erect, and to accept the challenge not to sin again.

*Am I prepared to understand and pardon the sinner?*

*Do I value the Sacrament of Reconciliation as a way of receiving for myself the new future offered to the woman in the gospel passage?*

*We pray for readiness to seek the forgiveness of Christ.*

*We pray for all those trapped in lifestyles of abuse.*

