

March 30, 2020
Monday of the Fifth Week of Lent
JOHN 8:1-11

Activity for today:

- Read Today's Readings
- Fr. Brian's Gospel Reflection
- Prayer of the Day
- Challenge for Today

Good reading of the Day? You judge! John 8:1-11

We might call today's gospel a case of 'Show and Tell' or maybe better described as 'Kiss and Tell'? Of course, most of us jump to the conclusion of this dramatic story, to summarize it with Jesus' point to all of us to be slow to condemn others, until first examining ourselves and our own need of forgiveness. But there is a lot to be gained from investigating the real set-up presented here. I mean the staging and 'entrapment-fix' this poor woman fell into. One obvious sign of bad intent among the judging men is the evident fact that the sin she is accused of is a two-person sin charge. So, any judgement is already lopsided and unjust. But let me back up a minute, to highlight how cleverly Jesus handles this case.

When I was a kid growing up between two brothers, it happened maybe, a time or two that one of us would snitch on the other for our own personal gain. However, often our snitching implicated ourselves. So, with mom or dad, we kids snitching to them could be a tricky proposition. For example, let's say that I learned that my older brother snuck out and went to a friend's house down the street. How do I know? Was I up past bedtime and did I actually sneak out the window too spying on his destination? My mother asked me, to check out her source, 'Just how do you know he went all the way down to Julie's (*names changed to protect innocent!*)? In such a case, if it happened, I just snitched on myself. And we find just such a situation in today's gospel. It is pretty convenient that a crowd, just happened to discover a clandestine adulterous meeting. And Jesus knows full well that this sudden 'test question' presented to him, that this is a trap not only for the poor woman, but also for Him. So, Jesus, as the perfect wisdom He is, settles the case by doodling something on the dirt in this court-yard. ***Don't we all want to know what he wrote on the ground?*** Some guesses have been suggested like that He was writing the actual name of the hidden-protected male offender (who happened to be a prominent Temple Boss). Or He wrote the

names and other dirty laundry-sins of each person in the crowd, since they were so quick to judge her harshly. Or He copied out her whole ‘black book’ of patrons if she was the local village ‘madam’. Or He was writing out Jewish atonement prayers in Hebrew that the elders couldn’t read to show them up as actually uninformed to judge in Mosaic Law matters. Whatever Jesus wrote, apparently it was what was needed to de-escalate a nearly fatal judgement. It also offered every by-stander a moment to reflect upon the needed reform in their own lives. One by one, the judges walked away until only Jesus and the woman remained. This one on one, sizes up so accurately how our judgment before God will occur. We each will answer for ourselves and appeal only to Jesus, our Merciful Savior. Pointing my finger at someone else may distract me from my sin, but it does nothing to hide my sin from God. In Matthew 7:3 Jesus tells us, “Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye?” And the letter to the Romans 14:10 & 12 says *“Why then do you judge your brother? Or you, why do you look down on your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of God... So then each of us shall give an account of himself to God.”* So until my own heart is pure in observance of God’s commands, I have plenty of moral work to occupy myself with, before meddling into others’ business. Jesus calls us to begin the cleansing purge of sin from our own hearts first. “Let the one among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her” (John 8:7).

Prayer for the Day - Father in heaven, most merciful God, relying on Your mercy and compassion, I come to You with childlike confidence to confess my sins and to beg Your forgiveness. You do not reject a contrite and humble heart. Bless me with humble awareness of my faults before you. I admit my arrogant blindness to my own sins and my quickness to condemn your other children. Forgive me, as I realize that I have been most ungrateful to You. I desire to serve and follow your will. Despite my straying from your path, I wish to express my repentance and sorrow. I want to confess my sins with complete sincerity. My Jesus, I beg You for the grace to examine my conscience well. Enlighten my mind and strengthen my will that I may know my sins, humbly confess them, and sincerely amend my life. In your name, I pray. Amen.

Challenge of the Day: Start if you haven’t already, a daily journal of this ‘quarantine’ time for your later reflection (& history’s sake) and as a record of thanks to God for blessings, and as an examination of each day’s conduct and business.

