

Fifth Sunday of Lent -C '2019
Is. 43.16-21///Phil. 3.8.14///John 8.8-11

→*with grace and gladness*....that has been our theme this year for Lent

→we chose that theme so that we might embrace the hallmarks of Lent...prayer....sacrifice....almsgiving....with a sense of grace and gladness as we look forward to once again celebrating the great feast of Easter....

→and here we are...now beginning the 5th week of Lent....

→hopefully these last few weeks have allowed us to enter into a deeper sense of prayer...strengthening our relationship with God so that we might live more fully a life of faith.

→to sacrifice...so that we might become more complete

→and finally to give....reaching out and...going beyond what is expected and perhaps giving a bit more of our precious time and talents....especially to those in need and trouble.

PAUSE

→in just 7 short days...it will be Palm Sunday...and the long shadow of Holy Week will once again cross our paths...and hopefully *with grace and gladness* we will be ready to celebrate, remember, and recall the life changing events of our faith....

→but before that happens, today we hear one more moving story of forgiveness and healing.

→our gospel reading today finds the Lord with a woman in need....a person who was hurting and troubled...in doubt and lost.

→and once again this is a story about forgiveness and reconciliation

→a reoccurring theme of what we have been hearing about over the past couple of weeks.....true and sincere forgiveness and reconciliation...///...

and just like last week....this is a story we are all too familiar with...

PAUSE

→it begins with a woman, who had committed a sin, being brought before Jesus
...the Pharisee's ask Jesus what **he** thinks should be done with her...

→**fully** expecting Jesus to condemn her and have her stoned as the law prescribes

...but then again, just like last week, there is a twist....

→because instead of doing what the Pharisee's expected...Jesus asks them...**who among you is without sin...whoever it is...you go ahead and cast the first stone...**and in response...they go away one by one until he is left alone with the woman...and then what happens....

Jesus asks her...**where did they all go...has no one condemned you?** And neither do I.....**now go and from now on...sin no more.**

---and...that.....**is the true spirit of reconciliation**

PAUSE

---you see...when it comes to true and genuine reconciliation....I think one of the common mistakes we make is the tendency to dwell and focus **ONLY** what we have done wrong...forgetting about what we need to do to become better.

→all too often, I think, we make the common mistake of thinking the **ONLY** part of reconciliation [of confession] is admitting to all the wrong we have done...forgetting about the other part of reconciliation which is deciding upon

→what we need to do to become better,

→what we need to do to become more holy...

→what we need to do to become more like Christ.

PAUSE

→isn't it interesting...that in today's Gospel story...just like last week...the wrongdoings, the sinful act of the woman, the wildness of the son...aren't even dwelt upon by Jesus...

[the woman and the son were concerned about what they had done as they should be]

....but for Jesus.....the actions...the sins...[they] were forgiven and more importantly they were forgotten.

[in today's story] we don't find Jesus, chastising the woman after everyone has left them do we?

Jesus doesn't ask....how many times did you do it, who did you do it with, is this the first time and so on

...and last week recall...upon his son's return, the father didn't question him....about what he did with all the money, or...why did he do it...or how could you be so stupid and so on....instead...he welcomed the son back instantly

→...and the same thing happens to you and me when we are reconciled to God as well...

→the significance of embracing God's forgiveness in our lives happens when we admit our wrong doings and express our sorrow for them....but more importantly it happens when we accept the challenge to change who we are...when we

accept the call to transform our lives...when we accept the challenge to try our hardest to be the best we can be and try to sin no more....

→perhaps to put it in more common terms....

--I have come to realize that...you don't go a doctor because you are sick...you go to a doctor because you want to get well...just as you don't go to a dentist because your tooth aches...you go to a dentist feel better....likewise, reconciliation, true reconciliation, the sacrament of reconciliation in the church...is not something we should engage in solely because we have done something wrong....

but more so because we want to become more holy...we want to become better people...better Christians and better human beings

--and that is the lesson, I believe, contained in our gospel story today

PAUSE

→we are well beyond the halfway point of Lent....

→however.....there is still time for us to examine our Lenten practices...to examine our lives...to examine what we have done and what we have failed to do

→and perhaps we need to ask ourselves if this Lenten journey has truly been one of awakening our faith.....moving us towards true and sincere reconciliation or has it been one of just doing or not doing certain things for forty days?

→has this Lent been a time for each of us to make a change for the better in my life, or has it been one of whiling [spending] away the time until Easter?

PAUSE

--- Today once again...God is offering us the gift of forgiveness...forgiveness with the opportunity to change...to become different...to become holy and whole

And once again...the choice is ours....to accept this gift of forgiveness and all that it entails....or to remain as we are.

PAUSE

In the end, all we have to do is ask the Lord to be with us when we are in trouble...when we are in doubt, when we are in need, when we are lost

and truly listen to the words of Jesus and make them our own.....

to go...move on and from now on learn and try to sin no more.