

5TH SUNDAY OF LENT (C) REMEMBER NOT THE PAST EVENTS

God reminded the Israelites in exile the great things He had done. He opened the Red Sea for them to walk on dry land and drowned the Egyptians who were following them; He stopped the Jordan from flowing so that the Israelites could cross to Jericho. Even though He did marvellous things for them, they forgot everything and they were unfaithful to Him. This led them to exile. He then assured them that He was going to do something new, so they should forget about the past. He would take them back and give them water to drink in the desert.

St. Paul, after his conversion, realized that all the earthly things that he boasted of were all useless. This is what he said to the Philippians: "If anyone else thinks he can be confident in flesh, all the more can I. Circumcised on the eighth day, of the race of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrew parentage, in observance of the law a Pharisee, in zeal, I persecuted the Church, in righteousness based on the law I was blameless. But whatever gains I had, these I have come to consider a loss because of Christ," (Phil.3:4b-7).

His desire was to forget about the past, to know Christ and share in His suffering, so that he would share in His resurrection. His goal was "just one thing: forgetting what lies behind but straining forward to what lies ahead, winning the prize of God's upward calling, in Christ Jesus". Forgetting the past and living a new life is what we heard Jesus telling the woman caught in adultery. It was true from the event that the woman committed the sin, but He did not condemn her. He told her to forget about her past life of sin and live a good life of righteousness.

Jesus first drew the attention of those who brought the woman caught committing adultery, that they were equally guilty of sin and they also needed to repent. They left one by one beginning with the eldest, which may mean that they realized they were more sinful than the woman, or they had committed more serious sins than she.

In this season of Lent, the Lord wants to make something new in our lives. He wants to give us living water to quench our thirsty souls. As we heard last week, He wants to make us a new creation. We might have done many wrong things, but He does not and will never condemn us. He

hates sin but loves the sinner. He wants us to forget about our past misdeeds and look forward. We are to put the world behind us and focus on the cross so that we too may share in the resurrection of Christ. Sometimes we focus on our shortcomings to that extent that we fail to have hope in the future. God wants us to look to the future full of hope and not to dwell on the past.

Like the Pharisees and the scribes, we may focus on other people's wrong-doing and forget about our own. Or we may pretend to be clean as they did. With that attitude, God cannot make new things in our lives. Again, worldly positions, financial and earthly securities cannot guarantee us salvation. Our aim is to gain Christ.

There is the temptation to think also that God is a merciful God so He is not going to condemn me no matter what I do. St. Paul knew he had to work hard to reach his goal, as he said: "Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect; but I press on to make it my own, because Jesus Christ has made me His own". He did not take things for granted, that being an apostle he could live any kind of life and gain salvation. The woman was told to go and sin no more, so she had a task of changing her life for the better. God gives each one of us another chance to amend our lives. Jesus once told a cripple He had cured at the pool called Bethesda, "See, now that you are well, give up your sinful ways, or something worse may happen to you," (Jn.5:14). This is a message for us too. We are to leave our past life behind us and live a new life in Christ.