

April 6, 2025

Daily Reflections

Journeying through Lent



Center for Spiritual Development

MERCIFUL JESUS

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Excerpts from Today's Readings

Thus says the LORD, who opens a way in the sea and a path in the mighty waters, who leads out chariots and horsemen, a powerful army, till they lie prostrate together, never to rise, snuffed out and quenched like a wick. Remember not the events of the past, the things of long ago consider not; see, I am doing something new! Now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? In the desert I make a way, in the wasteland, rivers.

ISAIAH 43:16-19

The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in adultery and made her stand in the middle. They said to him, "Teacher, this woman was caught in the very act of committing adultery. Now in the law, Moses commanded us to stone such women. So, what do you say?" They said this to test him, so that they could have some charge to bring against him. Jesus bent down and began to write on the ground with his finger. But when

they continued asking him, he straightened up and said to them, "Let the one among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her." Again, he bent down and wrote on the ground. And in response, they went away one by one, beginning with the elders. So, he was left alone with the woman before him. Then Jesus straightened up and said to her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" She replied, "No one, sir." Then Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn you. Go, and from now on do not sin anymore."

JOHN 8:2-11

Reflection

As this fifth week of Lent begins, the first reading from Isaiah provides a helpful framework to reflect on our past, present, and future. Isaiah and his people find themselves suffering under Babylonian rule. The prophet's words are a bit perplexing because on one hand, he is reminding the people of the great intervention by God in their history. On the other hand, he is extolling his people to not remember the events of the past and to put their focus on what has unfolded in their lives.

While this can seem contradictory, it in fact happens to us, too. It is important to remember what God has done for us in the past -- though we are not to dwell in the past. The sacrament of the present moment is filled with the presence of God as well. If we nostalgically cast our eyes only to the past, we will miss the beauty and grace of the present. While our past helps inform the present, it does not dictate our current realities because we are continually being transformed by God in the here and now.

In the passage from John's gospel today, we encounter Jesus deep into his public ministry of teaching. This scripture never ceases to move me because it shows Jesus as merciful and wise. As this passage begins, John notes that Jesus sat down. What this conveys to me is that he had time for the "ordinary" people of his time. He wanted to teach the people how to live good and fruitful lives. When the Pharisees bring the woman caught in adultery before him, he does not condemn her; rather, he uses it as a teaching moment.

Can't you just picture Jesus bending down and writing in the sand or dirt as a way to keep his temper? It is something we can all relate to -- when we don't strike back angrily at the person before us who would like to evoke such a response. Jesus uses his intelligence and simply responds with a command for the ages -- "Let the one among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her."

He leaves his words hanging in the air for all to grasp, and patiently waits for their response. It is such a beautiful modeling for us on how to handle times in our lives when we want to strike back at those provoking us, rather than using our minds to counter what they are saying or doing. In this passage, Jesus is reminding us to look within ourselves and weed out our own sinfulness, rather than looking at the sins of others.

As this Season of Lent continues, let us remember the compassion and mercy of Jesus as we turn our gaze inward and seek to follow Jesus -- with the desire to live as Jesus has taught us.



Photo of The Figure of Christ Above the Iconostasis in the Cathedral of the Resurrection of Christ
Photo by Sergey Platonov

For Pondering

- Recall a time when you experienced yourself under “attack” by others. How did you handle this situation?
 - How did your faith help you respond in ways that reflect your own values and commitment to following Jesus?
 - In your own walk of faith, how do you intertwine the past, present, and future in a manner that enables you to remain open to God’s involving influence in your life?
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For Prayer

*O God of our journey,
we pray for the grace and wisdom to respond to life’s events
with integrity and honor.
May our words and actions convey the influence of your Word
in our lives.
Amen.*

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