

5<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY OF LENT (C)  
April 7, 2019

# To Forgive and Inspire



## I. A LOOK AT THE THREE READINGS

### FIRST READING (Is 43:16-21)

<sup>16</sup>Thus says the LORD, / who opens a way in the sea, / a path in the mighty waters, <sup>d</sup> / <sup>17</sup>Who leads out chariots and horsemen, / a powerful army, / till they lie prostrate together, never to rise, / snuffed out, quenched like a wick. / <sup>e</sup> <sup>18</sup>Remember not\* the events of the past, / the things of long ago consider not; / <sup>19</sup>see, I am doing **something new!** / Now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? / In the wilderness I make a way, / in the wasteland, rivers. / <sup>20</sup>Wild beasts honor me, / jackals and ostriches, / For I put water in the wilderness / and rivers in the wasteland / for my chosen people to drink, / <sup>21</sup>The people whom I formed for myself, / that they might recount my praise.

**THE FOCUS:** **Something New**

### COMMENTARY

- The Old:
  - a way opened in the sea and a path in the mighty waters (v.16), chariots and horsemen, a powerful army lie prostrate together, never to rise, snuffed out and quenched like a wick (V.17). V.18 stresses to remember not the events of the past, the things of long ago consider not;
- The New:
  - In v.19 a way in the desert, in the wasteland, rivers, Wild beasts honor me, jackals and ostriches (v. 20), for I put water in the desert and rivers in the wasteland for my chosen people to drink, the people whom I formed for myself, that they might announce my praise (v.20).
- This text from second-Isaiah (40-55) addresses the Israelites who have lived long in exile.
- Apparently, the Exiles, due to their prolonged stay there, religious and cultural deprivations, sufferings, etc., are imagining all kinds of things, “busy” remembering the wonderful deeds of God during the Exodus’ time.
- In this context, God announces his new plan for Israel. He is bringing them back to the Promised Land.
- The Israelites must look forward to their return there.
- God is preparing the way and the provisions (water, river).
- It will be another exodus. It will be another experience of liberation and God’s loving care for his people. Their way will be easier.

## REFLECTIONS

### RESPONSORIAL PSALM (Ps 126:1-3, 4-5, 6) THE LORD HAS DONE GREAT THINGS FOR US; WE ARE FILLED WITH JOY.

### SECOND READING ( Phi 3:8-14)

<sup>8</sup>More than that, I even consider everything as a loss because of the supreme good of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have accepted the loss of all things and I consider them so much rubbish, **that I may gain Christ** <sup>9a</sup>and be found in him, not having any righteousness of my own based on the law but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God, depending on faith <sup>10</sup>to know him and the power of his resurrection and [the] sharing of his sufferings by being conformed to his death, <sup>11</sup>if somehow I may attain the resurrection from the dead. <sup>12\*</sup> <sup>k</sup>It is not that I have already taken hold of it or have already attained perfect maturity, <sup>9</sup> but I continue my pursuit in hope that I may possess it, since I have indeed been taken possession of by Christ [Jesus]. <sup>13</sup>Brothers, I for my part do not consider myself to have taken possession. Just one thing: forgetting what lies behind **but straining forward to what lies ahead,** <sup>14</sup>I continue my pursuit toward the goal, the prize of God’s upward calling, in Christ Jesus.

**THE FOCUS:** **Gaining Christ**

### COMMENTARY

- In v.8 Paul is sharing his newfound treasure. Before his conversion, he was persecuting the Christians. He thought he was doing the right thing.
- When he comes to know Christ, Paul’s value system is overturned. What was valuable before, Paul now considers as a loss.
- In v.9, Paul now considers them as rubbish. His plan of life now:
  - **to gain Christ and to be found in him**
- The text here is very complicated. It may be useful to read other translations which simplify the long sentences

of Paul.

- Paul continues his pursuit in hope that he may possess it [resurrection of the dead] (v.12).
- He is already possessed by Christ (v.12).
- He admits he has not possessed Christ yet (v.13).
- In v.14, Paul repeats what he says in v.12. God's upward calling = resurrection.

## REFLECTIONS

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### GOSPEL READING (Jn 8:1-11)

#### Setting

<sup>1a</sup>While Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. <sup>2</sup>But early in the morning he arrived again in the temple area, and all the people started coming to him, and he sat down and taught them. <sup>3</sup>Then the scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in adultery and made her stand in the middle.

#### Testing Jesus

<sup>4</sup>They said to him, "Teacher, this woman was caught in the very act of committing adultery. <sup>5b</sup>Now in the law, Moses commanded us to stone such women. \* So what do you say?" <sup>6</sup>They said this to test him, so that they could have some charge to bring against him.

#### Jesus' response to their nagging

Jesus bent down and began to write on the ground with his finger<sup>7</sup> <sup>8</sup>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.**" <sup>8</sup>Again he bent down and wrote on the ground.

#### Getting his point

<sup>9</sup>And in response, they went away one by one, beginning with the elders. So he was left alone with the woman before him. <sup>10d</sup>Then Jesus straightened up and said to her, "Woman, where are they? Has **no one condemned you?**" <sup>11c</sup>She replied, "No one, sir." Then Jesus said, "**Neither do I condemn you.** Go, [and] from now on do not sin any more."

#### THE FOCUS: Jesus' Mercy to the Sinner

## COMMENTARY

- Vv.1-3 provide the setting of the controversy about to unfold. It is set in the temple; People coming to Jesus; the scribes and the Pharisees too come, but with a woman caught in adultery.
- vv.4-6 reveal the sinister plot of the scribes and Pharisees. They use the woman caught in adultery.
- In v.7, they force him to say something. For whatever he would say should be a cause for condemnation. But his unexpected answer foils their plan.
- In vv.9-11, Jesus is left alone with the woman. No

condemnation from the bad guys and from Jesus, of course.

## REFLECTIONS

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## II. TYING THE THREE READINGS TOGETHER TO DEVELOP YOUR HOMILY/SHARING

### How to develop your homily

Begin by relating your experience of wanting for something new (the newest dress, the latest cellphone, the newest car, ipod, the newest product, etc.).

The readings have different meanings of the word "new."

The First Reading defines new as something that God is going to do for his people (something to hope for). The new things are water in the desert, rivers in the wasteland. New life to the discouraged and desperate people.

The Second Reading defines new as a result of knowing Jesus. Paul has learned a new criteria of judging what is to be valued and what is to be considered trash.

The Gospel Reading defines new as God's unchanging mercy and forgiveness, not affected by pressures and malicious people.

In this season of Lent, the readings call us also to reject what is old (sinful ways). The First Reading considers old as hopelessness, thinking only of the good old days. The Second Reading considers old as values held upon before encounter with Jesus. (*being oppressive, narrow-minded*). In the Gospel Reading, the old can be the sinister plot of the scribes and the Pharisees, bad intentions, their destructive scheme, manipulation, putting others into embarrassing situation, *no delicadeza*, using religion, beliefs, laws to condemn others.

In our families, communities and churches, we must be on the look out for something new. We cannot afford to be basking in the good old days. We should refrain from always telling old stories, citing that our times were better. Do not dampen the spirits of the young at heart.

If we truly believe in Christ, we must dump a lot of garbage that is in us, those that stink, unpalatable behaviors, etc. If we are Christians, we must forgive, even those who give grave scandal, and guide them not to sin again.

New things are our ability to forgive others, better way to deal with sinners (not condemnatory), new goals (to know Christ more), better ways to enjoy life, living moral lives, etc.

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