

Jesus' Mercy Towards a Woman Caught in Adultery



While Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. 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. Then 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 any more."

1. EXPLORE IT!

Imagine yourself a judge in a court case. On the prosecution side is a famous lawyer who has practiced law for a long-time and is reputable for his knowledge of the law. On the defense side is a new lawyer whose recent popularity and ability to inspire has caused the prosecution lawyer to be envious. While the court case is about a young woman accused of adultery, the focus is really on the prosecution's desire to brand the defense lawyer as one who does not keep to the law, because no one disagrees that the young woman had committed adultery. As the judge, you do not have to make a judgment on the guiltiness of the young woman, rather,

you decide on what her sentence will be. What will you do?

Today's Gospel is like the story about the court case. While the Pharisees represent the prosecution, Jesus is the new lawyer who the Pharisees are envious of and seek to smear in bringing the adulterer to Him. In their actions, the Pharisees interests are a self-justifying performance of the Law seeking to entrap Jesus so that they have a reason to prosecute Him because the Law of Moses states that an adulterer would be stoned to death. Jesus stops them all in their tracks by inviting her fellow-sinners to keep the Law by stoning her if they are without sin. Nobody is left to throw stones cleanly. Jesus then offers her, a sinner, mercy and forgiveness, and sends her on her way to sin no more.

2. CONNECT IT!

Through the story of the adulterous woman, Jesus reminds us that we are all sinners and are in need of God's forgiveness. There may be times when we are like the scribes and the Pharisees, where we are envious of others because of their knowledge, looks, influences, etc. Other times, we may be like the scribes and the Pharisees

when we judge and condemn others, where we verbally or mentally throw stones at another person. Yet Jesus teaches us that we all need to forgive others who have wronged us or hurt us. Like Jesus, we must forgive and give others a second chance to be good.

3. REFLECT IT!

Just as Jesus approached the woman in today's Gospel, Jesus also approaches us the same way. He shows us mercy and forgiveness, and gives us a choice to either go back to our former way of sin and death or to reach out to a new way of life and happiness with Him. This is true of our own lives and the way we judge others. In what ways have you judged others and "thrown stones"? How can you respond to God's mercy and forgiveness and show mercy towards others? Do you know the joy of repentance and a clean conscience?

4. LIVE IT! (**gentleness**)

This week, show gentleness and forgiveness to those who hurt you. If you have not done so yet, ask God for mercy and forgiveness through the Sacrament of Reconciliation and remember, "Go, [and] from now on do not sin anymore."

5. REMEMBER IT!

"Neither do I condemn you. Go, [and] from now on do not sin anymore." (John 8:11)

6. PRAY IT!

God our Father, we find it difficult to come to you, because our knowledge of you is imperfect. In our ignorance, we have imagined you to be our enemy; we have wrongly thought that you take pleasure in punishing our sins; and we have foolishly conceived you to be a tyrant over human life. But since Jesus came among us, he has shown that you are loving, that you are on our side against all that stunts life, and that our resentment against you was groundless. So we come to you, asking you to forgive our past ignorance, and wanting to know more and more of you and your forgiving love, through Jesus Christ our Lord. (Prayer of Saint Augustine)