

## 5th Sun in Lent – John 8:1-11

*The message in John's gospel today is that God sent his Son **to save the world**, not to condemn it; if some are condemned, it is because they themselves choose to reject Jesus. He himself does not judge anyone. And It is no sentence of condemnation that he writes on the ground. This writing recalls a verse of **Jeremiah**: "Those who turn away from you, shall be written in the ground, because they have forsaken the Lord, the fountain of living water." Jesus was the source of living water. He promised it to the woman of Samaria; it flowed from his side after his death.*

The strongest form of argument is a dilemma. **A dilemma gives you only two options.** You are free to choose between the two "horns of the dilemma" but whichever one you choose, you're impaled on the horn, you lose. or instance, Jesus once gave the Pharisees this dilemma: "Was John's baptism of heavenly or of human origin?" So, their only option was to take the coward's way out and say, "we do not know," which is like taking the Fifth Amendment: "I refuse to answer on the grounds that it may incriminate me."

Today's Gospel, the scribes and Pharisees pose a dilemma to Jesus, the woman caught in the act of adultery. There was not a question about the fact. And we know his answer to their dilemma: "Let the one among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her." That is not an evasion of their dilemma. They were evading the real question. The real question was themselves—**their own hearts and motives, their own sins.** The adulteress was a **mirror of their own sins.** But instead of seeing themselves in that mirror, they shut their eyes. Jesus opened them with his answer. His answer destroyed their evasion.

When ever Jesus is questioned, his answer turns the situation around so that he becomes the questioner and his questioners become the ones who are questioned. A good example is the answer to the dilemma about paying taxes to Caesar or not? We know his reply, "Repay to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God." Jesus incriminated them for giving divine honor to Caesar and only human honor to God. They were like many people today who are "religious" about politics and "political" about religion, who have a religiously passionate commitment to politics, whether to the donkey or to the elephant, and a politically pragmatic commitment to religion. Jonathan Ranuch says much the same in his book, *Cross Purposes: Christianity's Broken Bargain with Democracy*.

When they hear Jesus' answer, they all go home, beginning with the oldest and wisest, for they realize that they are now the ones being questioned. Jesus is implicitly giving them his dilemma. Do they have no sin or not? They now understand that they are standing under the question, not standing over it. That ***standing-under*** God's question is the very first step in ***under-standing***.

"Go and sin no more." Forgiveness is not indifference. He does not say, "There is nothing to forgive." There is. He does not say, "Don't worry about it." She must. He not only loves the sinner but also hates the sin, precisely because ***Jesus loves the sinner***. He knows how harmful sin is and how costly forgiveness is. He will have to pay for her sins, and he knows how costly that payment will be, **on the cross**.

I would love to take credit for the above but this beautiful reflection on today's gospel is the best that I have ever found, and is taken from Peter Kreeft in his book *Food for the Soul, cycle C*.