

Fifth Sunday of Lent (Year C)

Reading 1: Isaiah 43: 16 - 21

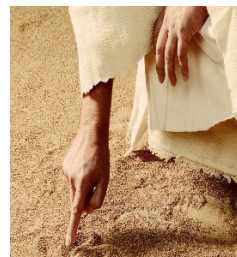
Responsorial Psalm: Ps 126: 1 – 2, 2 - 3, 4 – 5, 6

Reading II: Philippians 3: 8 - 14

Gospel: John 8: 1 - 11

Readings may be found on the US Bishop's website:

[Fifth Sunday of Lent | USCCB](#)



Jesus writes on the ground

The passage from Isaiah announces that the return from Babylonian exile will be like a new Exodus. (The "former things" refer to the Exodus led by Moses.) The people will experience freedom and entrance into the land that God promised. In the exile, the people wondered if God had rejected or forgotten them, just as the people in Egypt thought God had abandoned them. They are to envision the journey back to Judah and how God will guide them just as God brought the people from Egypt to the promised land.

Each person is on a journey. Some parts of the journey are enjoyable and life-giving, while other portions are challenging. As you reflect on your life journey, be attentive to how God has guided you and the times that you felt God had forgotten you.

St. Paul presents a vision of new life in Christ. He considers those things prized by civil society as rubbish. The attainment of power, position, wealth, and fame are nothing compared to a relationship with Christ. For Paul, it is not what he has accomplished, but what God has done in him that brings true and lasting worth. All human achievements end with death. One shares in the resurrection through Christ, which brings life with God forever.

While we have been introduced to this new life in Christ, we do not share in eternity yet. One must live like Christ to grow to maturity. Our sharing sacramentally in eternal life is a beginning but not yet fully realized. Paul calls Christians to forget the old way of life and continue the journey that will lead to the full experience of eternal life with God forever. This journey takes effort. There are challenges and temptations to turn back and prioritize the old practices. There are challenges in surrendering to God and being ridiculed by contemporaries.

Parenting is a good example. One can be misunderstood when one makes parenting and helping children grow and develop in virtue the priority. While contemporaries spend enormous effort getting ahead and acquiring more possessions, one can be seen as lagging behind. When one does not participate in all the corporate social events but instead goes to little league games and band concerts, one is judged as being not a collaborator. Which values does one implement in life? Each value will have different priorities, and there are consequences to each choice.

The scribes and Pharisees try to trap Jesus between the rules that Rome prescribes and the prescriptions offered by the scholars of the Jewish law. Rome did not allow Jewish authorities to impose capital punishment. The law of Moses ordered death for the sin of adultery to keep the community clean and not allow this destruction to be a cancer in the community. Jesus takes a distinct set of priorities.

Instead of responding to the Pharisees, he doodles in the dust. God's focus is on people and their needs. Jesus challenges the crowd to look at themselves first. It is crucial to look deeply at how one makes judgments of people and situations. Many different priorities push one's understanding and perceptions. Disciples should use the gospel values in evaluating situations.

Jesus offers forgiveness as an example of God's desire and hope for the human family. This challenges the transactional mentality that was strong in Judaism. Based on the Deuteronomic editor, those who do good will be blessed, and those who do ill will be punished. Jesus turned this around and taught that those who seek God would be blessed, and those who trust in their efforts will be unfulfilled.

Reflection Questions:

Have you experienced times when you felt God had abandoned you? How does the Isaiah passage speak to your experience?

How is your life different because you have come to know Christ? What are you willing to surrender because of your relationship with Christ?

Being judged is a harsh experience. When have you felt judged? How did you respond?

When have you judged others? How does the Gospel challenge this action?

Themes

New beginnings

Knowing Christ and being conformed to him

Repentance and reconciliation

Judgment of others

Prayer Suggestions:

For the Church: that we may be instruments of God's mercy and forgiveness as we refrain from judging others and instead offer encouragement and support to those seeking to change their lives

For enlightenment: that knowing Jesus as our savior will bring peace and wholeness to our hearts and reveal the inadequacy of fame, wealth, and pleasure to fulfill our deepest longings

For conversion of heart: that we may stop downplaying or rationalizing our sinfulness and instead accept God's generous offer of mercy

For a spirit of openness: that we may recognize and cooperate with the new things that God is doing in our hearts and our world