



## Fifth Sunday of Lent - C

### Jn 8:1-11

Dear Friends,

Once again we have simple gospel story that draws us into the depths of our human condition. We are both the accusers and the accused. We need to let the teachings of Jesus help us understand this truth about ourselves. We share the sinful condition of both the mob and the woman.

The Jewish leaders had little interest in the law and less in the woman. Their target was Jesus. They wanted to trap him in the choice of either the law or his constant message of mercy. In the eyes of his accusers, Jesus faced nothing but destructive choices. He had to accept the Jewish faith and condemn the woman. This would put him against the Romans and their control of the death penalty. On the other hand, he had to reject the teachings of the law. The leaders saw no way out for Jesus. They felt excited about their victory and his defeat.

Jesus dabbled on the ground to show his disinterest in their supposed dilemma for him. He presented the real issue. It was a woman caught in the senseless blindness of a mob whose ideological rage and sham blinded them to the outrageous terror facing the woman: the stark and immediate probability of death by stoning.

Jesus cut through the layers of deception. He presented a choice that made the mob recognize that, in the end, they shared the fate of the woman. This was a condition common to all human beings. We are sinners and we need forgiveness. Without forgiveness, all of us must face a hopeless misery. The woman faced this stark reality in the clearest of terms: life or death. In the end, only mercy opens the possibility of life for all of us as it did for the woman.

Jesus said to the woman, **“Neither do I.”** (Jn 8:11) The miracle of these words for her and for us was that Jesus put no condition on his declaration of mercy. He accepted her and us as we are. He simply asked that we continue the struggle to sin no more.

This episode highlights the reality of misery and mercy that the Lenten journey presents to us. In the end, our story is about the mercy of God. The Lenten message is to cast away the stones of our misery. These are the stones of our pride and attachments, the stones of our neglect of prayer and sacrifice and service. We need to free our hands and open our hearts to receive the mercy of God in the awesome words: **“Neither do I.”** (Jn 8:11) Then we can cast away all the stones of our accusations, all the grudges and hurts. This Lent is the time to share the mercy and forgiveness of God with all our brothers and sisters, especially the ones we have not loved as we should.