

First reading Isaiah 43:16-21

'Behold, I am doing a new thing and I will give drink to my chosen people.'

Thus says the Lord, who makes a way in the sea, a path in the mighty waters, who brings forth chariot and horse, army and warrior; they lie down, they cannot rise, they are extinguished, quenched like a wick:

'Remember not the former things, nor consider the things of old. Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?

I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert. The wild beasts will honour me, the jackals and the ostriches, for I give water in the wilderness, rivers in the desert, to give drink to my chosen people, the people whom I formed for myself that they might declare my praise.'

Responsorial Psalm 126(125):1-6 R3

**What great deeds the Lord worked for us!
Indeed, we were glad.**

When the Lord brought back the exiles of Zion,
we thought we were dreaming.
Then was our mouth filled with laughter;
on our tongues, songs of joy.

Then they said among the nations,
'What great deeds the Lord worked for them!
What great deeds the Lord worked for us!
Indeed, we were glad.

Bring back our exiles, O Lord,
as streams in the Negeb.
Those who are sowing in tears
will sing when they reap.

They go out, they go out, full of tears,
bearing seed for the sowing;
they come back, they come back with a song,
bearing their sheaves.

Second reading Philippians 3:8-14

'For the sake of Christ I have suffered the loss of all things, becoming like him in his death.'

Brothers and Sisters: I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith — that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. Brothers and sisters, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining

forward to what lies ahead, I press on towards the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

Gospel Acclamation Joel 2:12-13

Glory to you, O Christ, Son of the living God.

Even now, says the Lord, return to me with all your heart, for I am gracious and merciful.

Glory to you, O Christ, Son of the living God.

Gospel John 8:1-11

'Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her.'

At that time: Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. Early in the morning he came again to the temple. All the people came to him, and he sat down and taught them. The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in adultery, and placing her in the midst they said to him, 'Teacher, this woman has been caught in the act of adultery. Now in the Law, Moses commanded us to stone such women. So what do you say?' This they said to test him, that they might have some charge to bring against him. Jesus bent down and wrote with his finger on the ground. And as they continued to ask him, he stood up and said to them, 'Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her.' And once more he bent down and wrote on the ground. But when they heard it, they went away one by one, beginning with the older ones, and Jesus was left alone with the woman standing before him. Jesus stood up and said to her, 'Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?' She said, 'No one, Lord.' And Jesus said, 'Neither do I condemn you; go, and from now on sin no more.'

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Feast Days this Week

Monday 7th April: St John Baptist de la salle

Friday 11th April: St Stanislaus

Reflection on the Readings

No more machismo

They brought in a woman they had caught in adultery. Three terms express their sense of dominance: "They caught her." "They brought her." "They made her stand before them all." They bristled with righteous indignation as they asked Jesus for his view. In their eyes, her fate is sealed: it must be death by stoning, according to the law. No one talks about the adulterous man involved. As always happens in a sexist society, the woman gets condemned and the man walks free. Their challenge to Jesus is head-on: "In the law, Moses has ordered us to stone women of this kind. What have you got to say?" Jesus opposes such arrogance and machismo. No sentence of death comes from God. With admirable audacity, he brings in truth, justice and compassion to bear on the act of judgment: "Let the one among you who is guiltless be the first to throw a stone at her".

The accusers go away shamefaced. They know that they are guilty of many things themselves. Then Jesus speaks with tender respect to the woman who has just escaped execution: "Neither do I condemn you". He encourages her to make her gift of forgiveness the starting point for a new life: "Go away, and from this moment on, sin no more". That's how Jesus is. Here, finally, is a man not conditioned by any oppressive law or power; a free, magnanimous individual who never hated or condemned, never returned evil for evil. In his defence of this sinner there is more truth and justice than in our resentful demands and name-calling.

Maybe we haven't yet managed to unpack all the consequences in Jesus' liberating action in the face of this woman's oppression. Working in a Church that is directed and inspired mostly by men, we often fail to be aware of all the injustices that women keep suffering in all areas of life. One theologian spoke a few years ago about the revolution ignored by Christianity.

We still live in a society where women often cannot move about freely without fear of men. Rape, physical abuse, humiliation aren't imaginary things. On the contrary, they form perhaps the most deeply rooted violence and the one that causes the most suffering. Doesn't the suffering of women need to echo more strongly and more concretely in our church celebrations, and have a more important place in our work of social conscience-raising? Above all, don't we need to be closer to each oppressed woman in order to denounce abuses, offer an intelligent defence and effective protection? [f A Pagola] associationofcatholicpriests.ie

The Cycle of Prayer

Survivors of Sexual Abuse

especially on Friday of 5th Week of Lent

Background: It was a survivor of clerical child sexual abuse who, in fact, first made the proposal to the Commission for a "Day of Prayer" for all survivors of abuse. The Members then tasked the Working Group on Theology and Spirituality with drawing up the proposal. The Members accepted the proposal at the February 2016, Plenary Assembly and submitted it to Pope Francis for his approval.

The Holy Father welcomed the initiative and has asked that each episcopal conference choose an appropriate day in their nation or territory to hold a "Day of Prayer" for the survivors of sexual abuse.

Prayer

Father, since your mercy has been revealed in the tenderness of your Son Jesus Christ, who said to his disciples: 'Suffer the little children to come unto me', we pray that your Church may be a secure home where all children and vulnerable adults are brought closer to your Beloved Son.

May all those who have been abused physically, emotionally and sexually by your ministers, be respected and accompanied by tangible gestures of justice and reparation so that they may feel healed with the balm of your compassion.

We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen Pontifical Commission