

Homily 5th Sunday of Lent: Cycle C: 2022: Is 43: 16-21; Ps 126; Phil 3: 8-14; Jn 8: 1-11

“God’s desire to re-create us in holiness in the image and likeness of Jesus”

1. As we move into the final week and a half of Lent, and then move into the Sacred Triduum, it is a time of special graces. As we hear in the 1st reading from Isaiah this weekend, ***“Remember not the events of the past, the things of long ago consider not, see I am doing something new. Now it springs forth, do you perceive it?”*** What is being said by the Prophet Isaiah? He is reminding the Israelites and we his hearers that God wants to create us anew; the Lord doesn’t want us to be paralyzed in our sins, to let past wounds either caused by ourselves, or other people, or the circumstances of life in this imperfect world to prevent us from getting a new start with Him. The **gift of the Sacrament of Reconciliation/Confession** that Jesus will give to the Catholic Church later after His Resurrection is a fulfillment of this promise of God in a special Sacramental way, in which we receive the very life of the Trinity by sanctifying grace - as we receive forgiveness, healing, and spiritual strength in this Sacrament of Mercy to turn away from our sins. On this **Sunday afternoon at 4 p.m. for our Lenten Penance service** there will be 5 priests here, as the instruments of God’s grace in bringing about this new creation in the depths of our soul – if we take advantage of this graced opportunity. Remember Confession often begins the process of change for the better over time. It’s not magic, but it’s a huge help in our journey of Christian discipleship.
2. **By God’s grace we can come to see the sorrows and difficulties of life and dealing with difficult pp as a golden opportunity to become more like Jesus.** As the psalmist says today, *“Those who sow in tears will reap rejoicing.”* Only in the light of the beauty of our Catholic faith can we truly see this truth. This is a particular challenge in our time because our increasingly secular world which hammers away at us outside of the Church, and then we know sadly of some members of the Church, both clergy and lay who have not lived the faith with integrity in recent decades. If we want to be created anew in the Lord we have to get pass those big stumbling blocks to see the beauty of the life of Christ, of the Blessed Mother, and of the saints who all were pillars of God’s light and love shining in our often spiritually dark world. **St. Paul is a beautiful example of someone created anew in God’s grace.** As he says in the 2nd reading this weekend, *“I*

*consider everything as a loss because of the supreme good of knowing (not just knowing about) Christ Jesus our Lord; ... Always depending on faith to know Him and the power of His Resurrection, **and** the sharing of His sufferings by being conformed to His death, if somehow I may attain the resurrection from the dead.”* Is this our hope? Are we living in such a way that we are allowing the Holy Spirit to change us and take us through the Cross with Jesus to the glory of His Resurrection, the prize of God’s upward calling in Christ Jesus? That was **the secret of the saints** and why they had such a deep inner peace and joy in their life – despite the sufferings they, like us, have to endure here on earth.

3. **Jesus tries to win us over to His way, by showing such incredible love and patience with us sinners.** As was shown last week by the Prodigal Son parable and today in how He deals with the woman caught in the grave sin of adultery, **the Lord has such incredible love for each person** and wants us to know our dignity as a human being created in God’s image. Despite our sins, He loves us more than we can ever imagine! The Lord always strikes the balance: *He never justifies sin as a good thing on any level, but by His tender love and mercy tries to get us to turn away from sin and to see that His way of holiness is the better way to live.* And if we embrace His teaching made known to us thru our Catholic faith, it is the path to peace and to everlasting happiness. Humans tend to be **scandalized** by how Jesus deals with sinners: *wanting him to condemn the sinner and the sin, but NO He never condemns the person, but draws them to a better way of living.* Jesus never says what the Prodigal son did was good, or that the woman caught in adultery was doing a good thing. **No sin is bad - especially mortal sin, but Jesus doesn’t define us by our sins, but makes every attempt to love us into repenting and turning away from the sins that destroy who we are called to be in Him.** Remember the beautiful image Pope Francis used for the Church a few years ago? **It is a field hospital** to help modern people discover God’s love and their dignity as sons and daughters of God. *To love the sinner, but hate the sin is what we are all called to do in our own life and in dealing with others.* Pray for that grace to have the holy balance of the Lord Jesus in loving sinners into turning away from sin and to the path of holiness, whatever the sin(s) may be, esp. mortal sins, and always take advantage of the gift of Confession which gives us the grace and strength to be more like Jesus. God bless you.