

Lenten Reflection

Fifth Sunday of Lent, March 13, 2016

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Today's gospel, from John 8:1-11, is a powerful story. The story of the woman caught in adultery is also the story of the Pharisees' trying to catch Jesus in saying the wrong thing. But as I read this story again, I was left pondering, 'How does this woman go on with her life tomorrow?' After all the drama, after all the tears, after the accusations as well as the overwhelming mercy of Jesus, how does she go on with her daily routine again?

Isaiah tells us in the first reading:

*Remember not the events of the past,
the things of long ago consider not;
see, I am doing something new!*

And St. Paul tells us in the second reading:

*Just one thing: forgetting what lies behind
but straining forward to what lies ahead,
I continue my pursuit toward the goal,
the prize of God's upward calling, in Christ Jesus.*

Both of these readings seem to affirm that God is about allowing us to start over. Our daily routines may look the same from the outside, but inside each of us, God's loving mercy allows us to let go of the past--past hurts, disappointments, betrayals, failures--all of them healed in the mercy and forgiveness of Jesus. All of them healed in the patient wisdom that says we are not condemned by God, despite what others might say. This new beginning, although it might look the same as the day before, would feel strange to us because we are walking around in the same old skin, but with a new spirit. Our bodies house a new heart that is healed and forgiven, touched with compassion and mercy.

When we are touched by mercy, like the woman in today's gospel, we can go on to begin anew, no matter the past. We will keep our eyes focused on Jesus and share his mercy.