

FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT

Fr Callistus Khathali - HOMILY: 5th SUNDAY OF LENT – C 3 April 2022

John 8:7

'Let the one among you who is guiltless be the first to throw a stone at her.'

The gospel of today (John 8:1-11) is the well-known story of the adulterous woman. What is not disputable here is that she was caught in the very act of committing sin. The sin she committed had a stipulated punishment of being stoned to death. There are also some disputable issues as we look at the mob that brought her to Jesus.

The sin she was caught committing is the sin she could have not committed alone. There was surely a man that in that immoral act of adultery she was caught doing. Did the crowd already decide to set that man free, and have the woman stoned to death?

Another injustice here was how she was humiliated publicly. The whole of that town must have known about this as she was taken through the streets and eventually to Jesus. We are also told that their reason was to test Jesus so as to find something against him. In the previous chapter 7 which we had in the past few days at mass we encountered failed attempts to arrest Jesus.

Was it fair for the scribes and the Pharisees to use the woman's sin as a way of testing Jesus?

Jesus was very sharp and wise in dealing with this. From the time I was young I heard the interpretation of his gesture of bending down and writing on the ground. It is said that he was writing the sins of those who had brought the woman to be stoned to death. I have never done any research on this gesture, but what Jesus said to the crowd surely gives credence to this. Jesus did not dispute the fact that she had sinned and that the punishment of being stoned to death was indeed a stipulated one in the Law of Moses. He effectively agreed with the crowd by asking that the first stone be thrown by the one among them without sin. They all left up until she was left with the sinless one, Jesus himself.

Jesus was justly the one who was worthy to throw the first stone at her. He did not do that as he was not part of the mob that wanted her to be stoned to death. He set her free by first exposing the injustices of those who had condemned her. As the just judge he did not condemn her to death even though the stipulated sentence of her sin called for it.

The attitude of Jesus here shows us the extent to which our Lord goes so as to bring us back to life. Even the worse sin committed publicly cannot take his immense mercy and unconditional love away from us. Even when everyone condemns us, and rightly so because of our sin, Jesus is prepared to remain the only one forgiving us, and giving us new lease of life.

**May Almighty God bless you, the Father and the son and the Holy Spirit'. Amen.
I will meditate on the Glorious Mysteries as I pray for your personal intentions.**

Fr Callistus