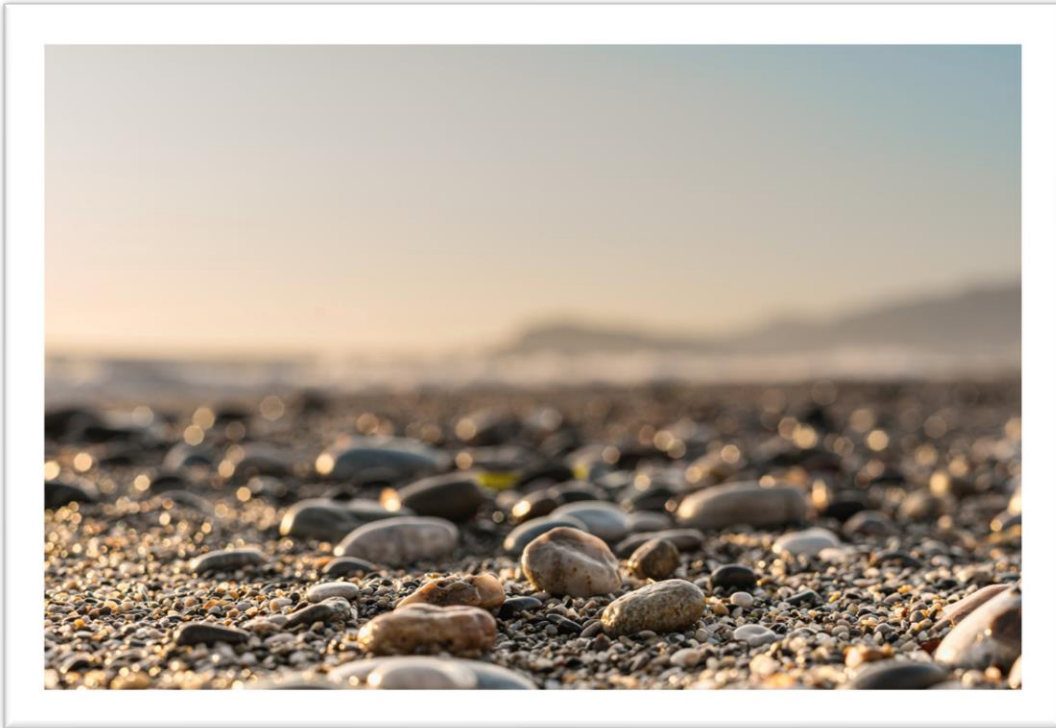


FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT – 6 APRIL 2025



COLLECT

By your help, we beseech you, Lord our God,
may we walk eagerly in that same charity
with which, out of love for the world,
your Son handed himself over to death.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.
Amen.

READINGS AND REFLECTIONS

The raising of Lazarus explores the rich symbol of new life and has for centuries been used in connection with Christian initiation. It is assigned to the Fifth Sunday of Lent in Year A but can always be chosen for this Sunday, especially if there are adults to be initiated at Easter. Year A texts are found at the end of the book.

The Year C Cycle offers us, however, a powerful story that we need to hear: the woman caught in adultery. In these days of internet and social media, everyone has a forum where they are able to express an opinion, and they do! Often their judgements are extremely prejudicial. Knowledge of the facts or the background of an event seems to be completely unnecessary. Innocent people are trolled mercilessly. The more unbalanced or outrageous an opinion, the more excitement and reaction it stirs up. We need to hear the humbling message: Let the one who is without sin cast the first stone.

Lent urges us to forgiveness and reconciliation and leads us to the Sacrament of Penance.

A reading from the prophet Isaiah 43:16–21

Thus says the Lord,
who made a way through the sea,
a path in the great waters;
who put chariots and horse in the field
and a powerful army,
which lay there never to rise again,
snuffed out, put out like a wick:

No need to recall the past,
no need to think about what was done before.
See, I am doing a new deed,
even now it comes to light; can you not see it?
Yes, I am making a road in the wilderness,
paths in the wilds.

The wild beasts will honour me,
jackals and ostriches,
because I am putting water in the wilderness
(rivers in the wild)
to give my chosen people drink.
The people I have formed for myself
will sing my praises.

First Reading

Memory and hope are constantly interwoven in the scriptures and in the liturgy. This poetic reading is about new beginnings, in the past and still to come. Isaiah's prophetic words of hope are delivered to the exiles languishing in Babylon.

First is an invitation to remember the new beginning of the Exodus – crossing the Red Sea marks the end of oppression and a new future in a new land.

Then comes the climax of the poem, the central declaration: *See, I am doing a new deed, even now it comes to light; can you not see it?* The reader proclaiming the text should make this highpoint clear for the hearers.

In the second half of the reading, there is the promise of new beginnings to come – *paths in the wilds, wild beasts tamed, water in the wilderness.* And the people of God will sing praise!

Delivering this final sentence with a flourish, the reader will call forth in the assembly a sentiment of wonder at the greatness of God's 'new deed', forever taking place in our midst.

Responsorial Psalm

Ps 125

R. The Lord has done great things for us;
we are filled with joy.

When the Lord delivered Zion from bondage,
it seemed like a dream.

Then was our mouth filled with laughter,
on our lips there were songs. **R.**

The heathens themselves said: What marvels
the Lord worked for them!

What marvels the Lord worked for us!
Indeed we were glad. **R.**

Deliver us, O Lord, from our bondage
as streams in dry land.

Those who are sowing in tears
will sing when they reap. **R.**

They go out, they go out, full of tears,
carrying seed for the sowing;
they come back, they come back, full of song,
carrying their sheaves. **R.**

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 125/126 picks up from the first reading the sense of joy and wonder at God's mighty deeds. Delivered from bondage, we have songs and laughter on our lips. Yes, God has worked marvels for us!

The second half of the psalm recognises that sometimes life may be challenging. Remembering the great things God has done for us in difficult times will help us to come back with a song in our hearts.

This beautiful psalm is well-matched as a response to the first reading: the cantor/reader should display joy and hope in its proclamation.

Care should be taken with the two-part response, if it is spoken and not sung, so that the assembly does not break in too early.

**A reading from the letter of St Paul
to the Philippians 3:8–14**

I believe nothing can happen that will outweigh the supreme advantage of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For him I have accepted the loss of everything, and I look on everything as so much rubbish if only I can have Christ and be given a place in him. I am no longer trying for perfection by my own efforts, the perfection that comes from the Law, but I want only the perfection that comes through faith in Christ, and is from God and based on faith. All I want is to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and to share his sufferings by reproducing the pattern of his death. That is the way I can hope to take my place in the resurrection of the dead. Not that I have become perfect yet: I have not yet won, but I am still running, trying to capture the prize for which Christ Jesus captured me. I can assure you my brothers, I am far from thinking that I have already won. All I can say is that I forget the past and I strain ahead for what is still to come; I am racing for the finish, for the prize to which God calls us upwards to receive in Christ Jesus.

**A reading from the holy Gospel
according to John 8:1–11**

Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. At daybreak he appeared in the Temple again; and as all the people came to him, he sat down and began to teach them.

The scribes and Pharisees brought a woman along who had been caught committing adultery; and making her stand there in full view of everybody, they said to Jesus, 'Master, this woman was caught in the very act of committing adultery, and Moses has ordered us in the Law to condemn women like this to death by stoning. What have you to say?' They asked him this as a test, looking for something to use against him. But Jesus bent down and started writing on the ground with his finger. As they persisted with their question, he looked up and said, 'If there is one of you who has not sinned, let him be the first to throw a stone at her.' Then he bent down and wrote on the ground again.

When they heard this they went away one by one, beginning with the eldest, until Jesus was left alone with the woman, who remained standing there. He looked up and said, 'Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?'

'No one, sir,' she replied.

'Neither do I condemn you,' said Jesus 'go away, and don't sin any more.'

Second Reading

Before starting to prepare this text, recall the story of Paul's conversion. He was zealously persecuting Christians when, in a blinding light, he encounters Christ. Here in this text he is talking about what meeting and getting to know Christ has meant for him. He invites his hearers also to an encounter with Christ.

Paul realises that it is not what he can do that matters, only what Christ can do in and through him. He has been captured by Christ. He strives with the determination of an athlete to take and use the gift he has been given. It means making the pattern of Jesus' death and resurrection operative in his own life, so that he will be given a place in the glory of the resurrection.

Paul is manifestly passionate about his encounter with Christ. By a vigorous proclamation, the reader should try to communicate to the assembly the power which lies in our own encounter with Christ.

"Brothers" should be read as "brothers and sisters".

Gospel

In a story filled with drama, a woman stands publicly humiliated, the man nowhere to be seen, while the authorities are baying for her blood. In the end, self-righteous anger, prejudice and judgement are all undone by mercy, wisdom and compassion.

Jesus does not fall into the trap and does not buy into the question of the law. (In fact, in the case of adultery, the law required both parties to be put to death – Lev 20:10, Dt 22:22 – so the accusers' use of the law is partial at best.)

Jesus' response instead recalls his saying in Matthew's gospel: *Judge not lest you yourselves be judged* (Mt 7:1). Jesus neither excuses nor blames her. He simply refuses to condemn her. When her accusers slink away, Jesus dismisses her with a call to conversion.

Our engagement with Christ's mercy and compassion in this story might lead us to uncover our own judgemental prejudices and bring us to conversion of heart. As Lent draws to a close, we might then seek reconciliation and God's forgiveness.

CONCLUDING PRAYER

Prayer over the People (Fifth Sunday of Lent)

Bless, O Lord, your people,
who long for the gift of your mercy,
and grant that what, at your prompting, they desire
they may receive by your generous gift.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

And may the blessing of almighty God,
the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
come down on us and remain with us for ever.
Amen.

(Adapted from the Prayer over the People for the Fifth Sunday of Lent, Roman Missal p. 283)

An alternative translation of the scripture readings is given here from the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV). This may be particularly useful for those in parishes which use the NRSV Lectionary.

FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT

FIRST READING (NRSV)

A reading from the book of the prophet Isaiah 43:16–21

Thus says the Lord,
who makes a way in the sea,
a path in the mighty waters,
who brings out chariot and horse, army and warrior;
they lie down, they cannot rise,
they are extinguished, quenched like a wick:
Do not remember the former things,
or consider the things of old.

I am about to do 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 animals 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
so that they might declare my praise.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM (NRSV)

Psalm 126.1-2a, 2b-3, 4-5, 6 (R.3)

R. The Lord has done great things for us;
we are filled with joy.

When the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion,
we were like those who dream.
Then our mouth was filled with laughter,
and our tongue with shouts of joy. **R.**

Then it was said among the nations,
“The Lord has done great things for them.”
The Lord has done great things for us,
and we rejoiced. **R.**

Restore our fortunes, O Lord,
like the watercourses in the desert of the Negev.
May those who sow in tears
reap with shouts of joy. **R.**

Those who go out weeping,
bearing the seed for sowing,
shall come home with shouts of joy,
carrying their sheaves. **R.**

SECOND READING (NRSV)

A reading from the letter of Paul to the Philippians 3:8–14

I regard everything as loss because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.

For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and I regard 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 one that comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God based on faith.

I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the sharing of his sufferings by becoming like him in his death, if somehow I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

Not that I have already obtained this or have already reached the goal; but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own.

Beloved, I do not consider that I have made it my own; but this one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus.

GOSPEL (NRSV)

A reading from the gospel according to John 8:1–11

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 began to teach them.

The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in adultery; and making her stand before the people, they said to Jesus, "Teacher; this woman was caught in the very act of committing adultery. In the law, Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?" They said this to test Jesus, so that they might have some charge to bring against him.

Jesus bent down and wrote with his finger on the ground.
When the scribes and Pharisees kept on questioning him,
Jesus straightened up and said to them,
“Let anyone among you who is without sin
be the first to throw a stone at her.”
And once again Jesus bent down and wrote on the ground.

When the scribes and Pharisees heard what Jesus had said,
they went away, one by one, beginning with the elders;
and Jesus was left alone
with the woman standing before him.

Jesus straightened up and said to her:
“Woman, where are they?
Has no one condemned you?”
She said, “No one, sir.”
And Jesus said, “Neither do I condemn you.
Go your way, and from now on do not sin again.”