

Homily 5th Sunday of Lent; C 2019

You may remember a place in the Gospels where Jesus instructs us to
"Be wise as serpents and harmless as doves."

Sometimes people get confused between MERCY and LENIENCY.

Now today's Gospel story is not so much about whether or not the death penalty is ever justified.

The story is about drawing on God's wisdom when people are trying to trip you—relying on the Spirit.

St. Augustine reflects on the end of the story.

He says, "Two remained behind: the miserable woman,
and Mercy (in the person of Jesus)."

Then Jesus raised his eyes, and with a gentle look he asked the woman:

"Has no one condemned you?" She replied: "No one, sir."

And he said, "Neither will I condemn you."

Augustine imagined Jesus' followers (us) saying,

"What is this, Teacher? Are you giving approval to immorality?
in effect aren't you saying,

'Neither will I condemn you. Go and live as you please;
you can be sure that I will acquit you. However much you sin,
I will release you from all penalty.'"

Not at all.

Take note of what he says finally, "Go and sin no more."

You see Jesus does indeed pass sentence,
but it is SIN he condemns, not people.

In effect Jesus says,

"Neither will I condemn you; you need have no fear of the past,
but beware of what you do in the future.

Neither will I condemn you: I have blotted out what you have done;
now observe what is commanded,
in order to obtain what is promised."

In today's second reading St. Paul urges that we allow ourselves
to be taken possession of by Christ.

Isaiah, in the first reading proclaims:

"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."

- It's literally true that **YOU** are no less holy than **ANYONE** else in the whole world. That's not your own doing. It's pure gift.
- It's literally true that you are as **BRILLIANT** as **ANYONE ELSE** in the world. Each of us is different in our brilliance.
- It's literally true that together, we are powerful enough to change the whole world.