

So we're coming down to the wire. Today is the Fifth Sunday in Lent. Next Sunday is Palm Sunday, which is actually the sixth Sunday in Lent and the start of Holy Week. The last three days of the week, Holy Thursday beginning with the evening Mass, Good Friday, and Easter, which starts Saturday evening with the late vigil Mass, is a period of time referred to as the Triduum, which is Latin meaning a three-day period. In this case these three days end Lent, and during this time we recall the Passion, death, burial, and finally the resurrection of Jesus. *The Triduum is the most important time of the entire Christian liturgical year.* The events we recall during the Triduum explain the reason we are Christian. From the earliest times in the bible's Old Testament (you know, the Testament in the bible that took place before Christ was born), because God knew we humans were too imperfect to get into heaven on our own, He promised to send us a savior. That savior was and is Jesus Christ. You see, we are imperfect because we are all sinners. I'm a sinner. You're a sinner. Pope Francis would tell you that even he is a sinner. All humans are sinners. So Jesus came to suffer and die for our sins. Then He rose from the dead on Easter morning. This is the basis of our entire Christian faith, that Jesus, the Messiah, the Christ, the Son of God, came to earth, died for us, and rose from the dead so that we may have eternal life in heaven after we leave this life on earth. Without the Passion and resurrection of Christ, then Christianity is really nothing special. So the Triduum is such an important part of our year and an important time to try to get to church, not just on Easter, but also on Holy Thursday and Good Friday.

Today's first reading comes from the book of the prophet Isaiah. If we were meeting in person, I would now ask you what's a prophet. And your answer would be that a prophet has the special gift to hear the word of God and tell it to the Hebrews, and to *us* when we read the bible. Many times in the past months we have spoken about the time when the Jewish people were slaves in Egypt and how God led them out of Egypt with Moses out front, making a path right through the Red Sea. But I remind you of last week's second letter from St. Paul to the

Corinthians. Paul said, "Anyone who belongs to Christ is a new person. The *past is forgotten*, and everything is new." In other words, what happened in the past? *Fuhgeddaboudit!* So you answer the question. What happened in the past? *Fuhgeddaboudit!* Today's reading takes place at a time when the Hebrews were captive this time in *Babylon*. And God needed to lead them back to Israel yet again. Pay particular attention to what Isaiah says, especially the second sentence.

A reading from the book of the prophet Isaiah (Isaiah **43:18-21**)

The Lord, who opened the Red Sea to deliver you from slavery in Egypt, says this: *Forget* what happened long ago! Don't think about the past. I am creating something new. There it is! Do you see it? I have put a road in the desert and streams in thirsty land. Every wild animal honors me, even the jackals and owls. I provide water in the desert and streams in a thirsty land for my chosen people. I made them my own nation, so they would praise me. The word of the Lord.

So when God had Moses lead the Israelites out of Egypt, they crossed right through the middle of the Red Sea. Pretty amazing stuff, right? But then Isaiah tells us *fuhgeddaboudit!* It was a big deal, that crossing of the Red sea, wasn't it? But what does Isaiah say? He says, *fuhgeddaboudit!* Because this time God is going to provide water and streams in the desert. But the desert is a dry and sandy place. So God is telling the Jewish people through the prophet Isaiah that the escape from Egypt may have been really something else, but this next return to Israel is going to be even more special. And Isaiah is also hinting to *us* that what is really going to be special is *Jesus'* return when He is raised from the dead saving all of us from sin.

The Responsorial Psalm, Psalm **126**:

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

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

It seemed like a dream when the Lord brought us back to the city of Zion. We celebrated with laughter and joyful songs.

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

In foreign nations it was said, “The Lord has worked miracles for His people.” And so we celebrated, because the Lord had indeed worked miracles for us.

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

And now we have St. Paul’s reading to the people of Philippi in Greece. Here Paul also *forgets* about the past and concentrates on what is to come, on trying to take hold of the prize, the prize of Jesus’ calling.

A reading from the letter of St. Paul to the Philippians (**Philippians 3:12-14**)

Sisters & brothers: I have not yet reached my goal, and I am not perfect. But Christ has taken hold of me. So I keep on running and struggling to take hold of the prize. My friends, I don’t feel that I have already arrived. But I *forget* what is behind, and I struggle for what is ahead. I run toward the goal, so that I can win the prize of being called to heaven. This is the prize that God offers, because of what Jesus Christ has done. The Word of the Lord.

What does Paul say about what is behind us? *Fuhgeddaboudit!* Struggle with what’s ahead. Work for the prize that God is offering us, the risen Jesus. He told it to the Corinthians last week. He tells it to the Philippians this week. He told it to *us* both weeks; twice he told us. The past, what’s behind? *Fuhgeddaboudit!* So it must be important.

Last week some of you may also remember the parable, the story Jesus told about the wealthy man’s son who ran away and lost all of his money, and then returned home to his father. Does anyone remember

what his father did when he saw his son? He forgave him and threw a big party. The point of the story was forgiveness. He *forgot* about the wrong his son did and forgave him. The returning son's brother was upset about the big party for his brother after all the wrong he had done. What does the father tell his upset son? Again, *fuhgeddaboutit!* It's in the past. It's done. Forgive your brother. Well, this week we have another story of forgiveness. Only this time it's not just Jesus telling a story. It's He who is doing the forgiving.

Glory and praise to You, Lord Jesus Christ.

*Glory and Praise to You, Lord Jesus Christ.*

With all your heart turn to me, says the Lord, for I am tender and compassionate.

*Glory and Praise to You, Lord Jesus Christ.*

A reading from the holy gospel according to John (**8:1-11**).

Jesus spent the night on the Mount of Olives. Then early in the morning he arrived in the temple area. The people came to him, and he sat down and started to teach them. Then the Pharisees and the teachers of the Law of Moses brought a woman to Jesus who had been caught in bed with a man who was not her husband. They made her stand in the middle of the crowd. Then they said, "Teacher, the Law of Moses teaches that a woman like this should be stoned to death! What do you say?" They asked Jesus this question because they wanted to test Him and bring some charge against Him. Jesus simply bent over and started tracing on the ground with his finger. The crowd kept on asking Jesus about the woman. Finally He stood up and said, "Let him who is without sin cast the first stone." He meant, "Let any of you who have *never* sinned go ahead and throw the first stone at her." Once again He bent over and began tracing on the ground. The people left one by one. Finally, when everyone else had left, only Jesus and the

woman remained there alone. Jesus stood up and asked her, "Where is everyone? Isn't there anyone left to accuse you?" "No sir," said the woman. Then Jesus told her, "I am not going to accuse you either. You may go now, but don't do this sin anymore." The gospel of the Lord.

So Jesus came down from the Mount of Olives and went right to the temple area, where he started to teach. Then this crowd appeared led by the Pharisees. They wanted to test Jesus. And they brought with them a woman who had been unfaithful to her husband. They wanted to know what Jesus thought should happen with this woman. So here's the test. If Jesus had said let the woman go, then He would be going against the Law of Moses. If He said go ahead and stone her, which is what the Law of Moses said to do, then the Pharisees could get Him in trouble with the Romans.

But remember, girls and boys. Jesus is the Son of God. That means He was a pretty clever guy; this wasn't His first rodeo. Surprise! He didn't pick either of those two wrong choices. He stood up from tracing in the sand, and He said, "Let any of you who have *never* sinned go ahead and throw the first stone at her." Of course, no one had *never* sinned, so no one could throw the first stone. And in frustration, because Jesus had outsmarted everyone in the crowd, they all lost interest and went away, leaving the woman alone with Jesus. And what did Jesus do? He forgave the woman. He *forgot* about the woman's past. And in last week's parable of the prodigal son, what did the father do? He forgave his son. He *forgot* about his son's past, even though he had lost all his money on bad living. And what does God do with all our sins? He forgives them. All we have to do is be sorry and ask for forgiveness.

Let's think back to a time when your brother or sister or classmate hit you. You probably can all remember when something like that happened. And it hurt, right? I'll bet it did. And you became angry. You really wanted that boy or girl who hit you to get punished, right? But what would Jesus do? He would forgive the hitter. He would say,

“Turn your other cheek,” so it can be hit also. In fact, when He was hanging on the cross about to die, He said, “Father, forgive them, for they don’t know what they are doing.” That’s what’s important from today’s gospel, and last week’s gospel, too. Forgiveness. Forgive people. And more importantly, remember that no matter what you do, God will always forgive you. The past, girls and boys? What do you say? *Fuhgeddaboudit!* How does that prayer go? “Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.” What prayer does that come from? Of course, the Our Father. “Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us” means forgive our sins as we forgive those who sin against us, at least that’s what we’re supposed to do. How do you forgive if you hold a grudge, if you keep remembering the wrong which was done? Ya gotta do what? *Fuhgeddaboudit!* Forgive our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. God does it, and we have to do it.

And that, girls and boys, is the lesson in today’s readings and last week’s readings and one of the most important lessons in all of Christianity.

Fifth Sunday of Lent, 2022  
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