

## Lent: Sunday Week 5C



### GATHERING RITES

Today's Readings reassure us that God is indeed on our side! Isaiah announces a path that opens up through the wilderness, through the 'messiness' of our lives, so that God can do something new. In Psalm 125, we joyfully sing of the marvels that God has already done for us. With St Paul we turn to Christ as the all-consuming desire of our soul. And Christ himself comes to us in the profound story of the woman he refused to condemn.

As we begin, we acknowledge our need for God's mercy ... .. (pause ...)

#### **Penitential Rite:**

**Presider:** Lord Jesus, you look on us with mercy and compassion.  
Lord have mercy ...

**All:** Lord have mercy.

**Presider:** Christ Jesus, you are for us the forgiveness of God.  
Christ have mercy ...

**All:** Christ have mercy.

**Presider:** Lord Jesus, you reveal to us the depths of God's love.  
Lord have mercy ...

**All:** Lord have mercy.

#### **Opening Prayer**

*The opening prayer is taken from the Missal and the Eucharist for Sunday 5C of Lent.*

**Presider:** 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.

*Where this liturgy is celebrated as part of a reconciliation rite or as a prayer service for a school the following prayer may be used.*

**Presider:** God of Gentle Acceptance,  
You do not condemn us when we lose our way.  
Your love transforms the shame of our sin.  
Break open our defences with your healing gaze  
that we may return to you in confidence with all our hearts.  
We ask this prayer in the name of Jesus your Son,  
and in the power of the Holy Spirit.

**All:** Amen

### LITURGY OF THE WORD

**First Reading:** Isaiah 34: 16-21

**Responsorial Psalm:** Psalm 125 (126) - The Lord has done great things for us.  
(or one of the Common Psalms for Lent)

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**Second Reading:**       Philippians 3: 8-14

**Gospel Acclamation:**   Sing a version of “Glory and Praise to You”

**Gospel:**                 John 8: 1-11

**Homily/Reflection**       **See Appendix I for reflection/homily notes by Fr Michael Tate**  
(This reflection is about how Jesus looks at the woman in the story and links to Pope Francis call to contemplate the gaze of mercy during this Year of Mercy.)

### **Prayers of the Faithful**

**Presider:**       Let us pray for our needs and the needs of the world ... (pause)

**Reader:**       That the Church will always stand up for those who are treated with injustice and disrespect.  
We pray to the Lord ..

**All:**             Lord, hear our prayer.

**Reader:**       That victims of violence and abuse will be protected and healed.  
We pray to the Lord ...

**All:**             Lord, hear our prayer.

**Reader:**       That those who are falsely accused will find justice and freedom.  
We pray to the Lord ...

**All:**             Lord, hear our prayer.

**Reader:**       That we may be kind-hearted and less harsh in our judgement of others.  
We pray to the Lord ...

**All:**             Lord, hear our prayer.

**Reader:**       That all those who have died may know the compassion of God.  
We pray to the Lord ...

**All:**             Lord, hear our prayer.

**Presider:**       O God of Deep Acceptance,  
You melt the hardness of our hearts.  
Heal our shame and clear our vision  
so that we may see the new deed that you will do in us,  
the new life you will give.  
We ask this prayer in the name of Jesus, your Son,  
And in the power of the Holy Spirit.

**All:**             Amen.

### **THE LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST CONTINUES AS USUAL**

One of the Eucharistic Prayers for Reconciliation may be used.

### **COMMUNION REFLECTION**

See Appendix II for post communion Reflection – Let your God Love you by Edwina Gateley

## **CONCLUDING RITES**

### **Blessing & Dismissal:**

**Presider:** May the God of all blessings fill us with joy.

**All:** Amen.

**Presider:** May Christ Jesus be the desire of our hearts.

**All:** Amen.

**Presider:** May the Spirit of God free and renew us.

**All:** Amen.

**Presider:** May almighty God bless us  
in the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

**All:** Amen.

**Presider:** Go forth from today, rejoicing in the abundance of God.

**All:** Thanks be to God.

## Appendix I –

### **Reflection for 5th Sunday of Lent: Year of Mercy**

#### **The Gaze of Jesus**

This story is all about 'eyes' and how you 'see' someone. The accusers of this woman make her 'stand there in *full view* of everybody.' She is surrounded by the hostile glare of eyes filled with blood lust – eyes full of condemnation and hate – eyes boring in on her dishevelled and distressed state – eyes which already see her as a mess of crushed skull and broken bones from the stoning they are anticipating.

Jesus *never* looks at the woman while she is being accused. It is only when the accusers have left in embarrassment that Jesus, who has been bent to the ground doodling in the dust, looks up at her.

Isn't that remarkable!

Jesus – the Lord of the Universe

Jesus – the human expression of the All Merciful does not tower over her –  
but '*looks up*'.

*He* is the one on the ground. He is the truly '*earthed*' one in this story.

He is so well grounded that he is quite content to adopt the posture of a slave.

Can you imagine that glance upwards of Jesus?

- not a condemning *glare*, but the *gaze* of love
- a look which sees her as God intended her to be
- a look which sees her potential
- which sees her as she could be if she gives up her current pattern of behaviour.

And then Jesus speaks to her! Up till now, *no-one* has spoken to this woman; she has been a mere object. Now, she is not only reassured by his eyes. She hears his voice. He is treating her as a human being worth speaking to. And what does she hear? That Jesus has a better way of dealing with sin than condemnation and punishment.

I am reminded of the story of a bishop in South America who severely criticised rigid priests in his diocese who had refused to baptise the child of an unmarried woman. He called them hypocrites, praised the young woman who had carried the baby to term, and lamented the fact that she had had to wander from presbytery to presbytery for the baptism of her child.

That bishop who acted in total harmony with today's gospel was elected Pope and is today Pope Francis.

Jesus' method is indeed pastoral. He looks at the woman, he talks to the woman, he looks and talks in a way which rescues us from the past and frees us to live a new sort of life in the future. Only then does he say: 'Go, sin no more.'

Yes, the challenge is given to me to give up some behaviour which may be harmful to another, and is always dehumanising for me. But the challenge only comes after Our Lord has affirmed that I am a person worth his looking at and talking with.

Don't you know from your own experience that a look, a glance, can change the future? Haven't you felt the power of a gaze when eyes lock, perhaps across a crowded room? Jesus looks at you, looks at me, that way.

This year Pope Francis invites us to contemplate Jesus, the face of God's Mercy. Do you have the courage to 'lock eyes' with Jesus, to take in that gaze of acceptance and live it out? (Adapted from Fr Michael Tate, <http://liturgyhelp.com.au/>)

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## **Appendix II – Post Communion Reflection**

LET YOUR GOD LOVE YOU

Be silent.

Be still.

Alone.

Empty

Before your God.

Say nothing.

Ask nothing.

Be silent.

Be still.

Let your God look upon you.

That is all.

God knows.

God understands.

God loves you

With an enormous love,

And only wants

To look upon you

With that love.

Quiet.

Still.

Be.

Let your God—

Love you.

(Edwina Gateley: Psalms of a Laywoman)