

**Lent V March 21-Sunday: IS 43: 16-21; Phil 3: 8-14; John 8: 1-11**

In his book, *A Forgiving God in an Unforgiving World*, Ron Lee Davis tells the true story of a priest in the Philippines, a much-loved man of God who carried the burden of a secret sin he had committed many years before. He had repented but still had no peace about it. In his parish was a woman who deeply loved God and who claimed to have visions in which she spoke with Christ. The priest, however, was skeptical about that. To test her he said, "The next time you speak with Christ, ask him what sin I committed while I was in the high school." The woman agreed. A few days later the priest asked, "Well, did Christ visit you in your dreams?" "Yes, he did," she replied. "And did you ask him what sin I committed back in high school?" "Yes." "And what did he say?" She smiled and answered, "Christ said, 'I don't remember.'"

In the Gospel today, we see Jesus perfectly understanding the secret intentions of her self-righteous accusers and the helplessness of the repentant sinner, Jesus gave his verdict: *"Let the one among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her."* Thus, Jesus turned the accusers' attention back on themselves and made them realize that they too were sinners. St. Augustine puts Jesus' stand as follows: *"Let this woman be punished, but not by sinners; let the law be applied, but not by its transgressors."*

If we look into ourselves, sometimes we too are judgmental about others; the unmarried mother, the alcoholic, the drug addict and the shoplifter, ignoring Jesus' advice: *"Let the one among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her."*

Today's Gospel asks us to examine our own lives. Are we people who happily throw stones at other people? Do we regard ourselves as righteous, and others are rubbish? Do we demand that others dance to our tune? On the other hand, can we tolerate difference? Can we cope with other's failings? Can we deal fairly and patiently with one another?

The work of salvation asks us to be gentle, kind and merciful. This will involve suffering on our part. But, this is a price worth paying. It is part of the mystery of knowing Christ Jesus, and, as St. Paul discovered for

himself, there is nothing that can outweigh the supreme advantage of knowing the carpenter of Nazareth.