

## Fifth Sunday of Lent



God is far more concerned with who we are becoming than with who we were when shaped by the chaos and wounds of a dysfunctional home. While we may feel stuck in shame or trapped by old survival patterns, God desires to free us from this familiar pain and lead us into a new way of living. This theme runs throughout this Sunday's Mass readings, beginning with the prophet Isaiah:

*Remember not the events of the past,  
the things of long ago consider not;  
see, I am doing something new!*

For many adult children of dysfunctional homes, the past can feel like a shadow that follows us – memories of neglect, emotional instability, or unmet needs can dominate our thoughts. In recovery, we are invited to progress spiritually rather than chase perfection. God meets us in the present, not to shame us for our past, but to walk with us into healing and wholeness. When we let go of perfectionism and practice honest self-awareness, we open the door to God's transforming grace.

Saint Paul echoes this invitation in the second reading:

*It is not that I have already taken hold of it  
or have already attained perfect maturity,  
but I continue my pursuit in hope that I may possess it,  
since I have indeed been taken possession of by Christ  
Jesus.*

*Brothers and sisters, I for my part  
do not consider myself to have taken possession.  
Just one thing: forgetting what lies behind  
but straining forward to what lies ahead,  
I continue my pursuit toward the goal,  
the prize of God's upward calling, in Christ Jesus.*

Many of us have spent our lives trying to “attain maturity” by being the responsible one, the peacemaker, or the perfectionist in our families. Paul's words remind us that it's okay not to have it all figured out. Our spiritual growth is not about mastering everything – it's about staying in the pursuit, one day at a time, trusting that Christ has already taken hold of us.

This Sunday's Gospel reveals Jesus' tender mercy through the story of a woman caught in adultery. Brought before Him by religious leaders eager to shame and condemn her, Jesus responds not with judgment but with compassion: "Let the one among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her."

One by one, her accusers walk away. Then:

*"Woman, where are they?*

*Has no one condemned you?"*

*She replied, "No one, sir."*

*Then Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn you.*

*Go, and from now on do not sin any more."*

For those of us who carry the hidden pain of growing up in dysfunctional homes, Jesus' words offer deep comfort. He sees the hurt behind our behaviors and the fear beneath our defenses. He doesn't shame us for the ways we've coped—He invites us into something new.

As we walk through Lent, we remember that Jesus didn't come to condemn us—He came to bear the weight we've been carrying for so long. He knows our struggles with control, codependency, anger, and self-doubt. He carried them to Calvary and, in doing so, set us free.

We are not defined by what we endured or how we coped. We are defined by the One who calls us to healing, freedom, and new life.

**FYZW]cb Ei Yg]cbg**

- What kind of short-term and long-term spiritual progress have you found as a result of your recovery?
- What practices help you find relief from self-criticism, judgment, and unreasonable expectations?
- How is God calling you to accept and embrace something new?

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**First Reading:** Isaiah 43:16-21

**Responsorial Psalm:** Psalm 126:1-2, 2-3, 4-5, 6

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

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