

March Reflection

"Go and sin no more" – John 8:11

The Gospel of John 8:10-11 reads *"He looked up and said, 'Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you? No one, sir' she replied. 'Neither do I condemn you,' said Jesus 'go away, and don't sin any more.'" (The CTS New Catholic Bible).*

Caught in the act of adultery, the Pharisees and people of that time wanted Jesus to judge and condemn her, but Jesus' actions and words would bring about a better solution for her life from that day onwards. His words and actions were of restitution, compassion, full of love, mercy and forgiveness.

"Go away, and don't sin any more". Jesus is prescribing a new way to live, to be in companionship with him, to remain close to him and his love, to seek him and his help often in each day. He reconciled her to himself, he bringing her back to her true identity (what she was created for), to be a child of God.

Jesus offers us all these same gifts and graces, his forgiveness, mercy and love, whatever our walk in life. This option to turn back to him, look towards him with a broken spirit – a willingness to recognise what we have done wrong and a desirous heart to be forgiven to become renewed.

I work with young men and adult men who are either awaiting sentencing or have been sentenced and so are "doing their time" for what they have been caught doing wrong, or found guilty of doing wrong. But God is with them also, and from time to time I encounter individuals who sincerely seek out God for the way forward. They step forward in the faith they have, to pursue and engage in what they hope for, a new beginning a better direction for their future.

In order to address their wrong(s) or confront their wrong(s) trust in God is essential, desiring his grace to help the changes come about and to help them remain leaning on him in their everyday living. This takes a lot of courage, the individual needs to be in "that place", to enter into the struggle of the process of change and put all in God's hands, trusting in God's providence, being determined to do their part and to cooperate within the limits of themselves and the environment they find themselves in.

Some of the men I have worked with in prison, have chosen faith as a means to help address turning their lives around, for example, choosing the sacrament of Baptism: An individual discerned that Baptism would be the means for him to have a fresh start spiritually and be more ready to commit himself to his responsibilities on release from prison, so I worked one to one with him going through a short course.

Another man; together we looked at bereavement taking the Beatitudes as the focus, combined with a book which took the beatitudes to help relay true events of real people who experienced grief and loss in a variety of ways. And the importance of prayer in these circumstances when we are most vulnerable. (Sometimes for men in prison several consecutive deaths in a short period of time of significant people in their lives, has been the catalyst or trigger to their offending behaviour).

Men have actively sought opportune times to talk to me about their damaged relationships, wanting to discuss forgiveness or to inform me they have asked for forgiveness from their partner or family member and how this action has made them feel different, more hopeful, putting them back on track in the right direction towards healing, renewal of friendship, trust and love. All this has come about because they chose to call on God, in some instances for the first time, others, after a long period of time in keeping God at a distance. Repentance – reconciling ourselves to God, returning to God and his benefits is the call and teaching of the Church at all times and for all times, but especially during the season of Lent.

Whenever you pray, please keep in mind prisoners. There is a designated week within the Church's calendar to pray for prisoners, their families, the victims and all those who work in prisons and with ex-offenders. **Prisoners' Week** begins the second Sunday in October and lasts for one week. Maybe you could **consider praying the Divine Mercy Chaplet** not only for prisoners but for anyone or any situation you may be concerned about. This is where we encounter the risen Lord who is victorious because by his Passion, death and Resurrection has defeated all sin, even death itself.

An example of a prayer you could pray

St. Faustina's Prayer for Sinners

O Jesus, eternal Truth, our Life, I call upon You and I beg Your mercy for poor sinners. O sweetest Heart of my Lord, full of pity and unfathomable mercy, I plead with You for poor sinners. O Most Sacred Heart, Fount of Mercy from which gush forth rays of inconceivable graces upon the entire human race, I beg of You light for poor sinners. O Jesus, be mindful of Your own bitter Passion and do not permit the loss of souls redeemed at so dear a price of Your most precious Blood. O Jesus, when I consider the great price of Your Blood, I rejoice at its immensity, for one drop alone would have been enough for the salvation of all sinners. Although sin is an abyss of wickedness and ingratitude, the price paid for us can never be equalled. Therefore, let every soul trust in the Passion of the Lord, and place its hope in His mercy. God will not deny His mercy to anyone. Heaven and earth may change, but God's mercy will never be exhausted. Oh, what immense joy burns in my heart when I contemplate Your incomprehensible goodness, O Jesus! I desire to bring all sinners to Your feet that they may glorify Your mercy throughout endless ages. (Diary of Saint Maria Faustina Kowalska, 72).

You expired, Jesus, but the source of life gushed forth for souls, and the ocean of mercy opened up for the whole world. O Fount of Life, unfathomable Divine Mercy, envelop the whole world and empty Yourself out upon us.

(Repeat three times)

O Blood and Water, which gushed forth from the Heart of Jesus as a fount of mercy for us, I trust in You!

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