

**Readings Isaiah 43: 16-21; Philippians 3: 8-14; John 8: 1-11**



**Fr Michael says:**

### **The Woman caught in adultery**

A new way of living, is offered to the Jews in Exile, by Isaiah – a message of hope! Paul gives us an insight as to how we might live it, by developing our relationship with Jesus, as a lifelong process! God's love, mercy and compassion speaks of Luke's approach in Jesus' meeting with the woman caught in adultery. He avoids the trap the Pharisees laid for him and turns the tables on them, by His command: "Let he who is without sin, cast the first stone!"

As we get older, we usually find that we become more kind to others, regretting times in the past when we were not so. Kindness is an essential element of true justice, as Jesus shows in the Gospel today. We need to beware taking the high moral ground too quickly, as all of us fall short of what we should be doing. Jesus condemns the sin and not the sinner – His compassion is the over-riding feeling here (it is NOT a question of being liberal – saying anything goes. The closer we are to God, the closer we are to being compassionate and merciful. He does not forget the fault she committed and so concludes with the words of encouragement and guidance, we see in our spiritual works of mercy: "Go, sin no more!"

She took possession of what she had done and acknowledged her fault – she was responsible and did not seek to excuse what she had done. She is open then to receive Jesus' forgiveness and compassion, with no more remorse or despair. She is now free to change and to re-gain her self-respect. What goes for her – goes for us all too!

Our community needs to reflect the grace that we have of offering and sharing forgiveness with others, free from prejudice, open to mercy for all. A story is told of Napoleon who was faced by a mother who came to plead for her son, condemned to death for some serious crime. "I must uphold the law," he said, "Justice must be seen to be done!" She replied, "Sir, I have come to ask for mercy, not justice." "He does not deserve mercy" the Emperor replied. "It would not be mercy if he deserved it, she said." The young man was reprieved. Mercy is pure gift, we all need it and so should be something we share with others. One of the Beatitudes puts it this way: "Blessed are the merciful, they shall have mercy shown them."

The glorious words of Shakespeare's "Merchant of Venice" come to mind: "The quality of mercy is not strain'd; it droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven upon the place beneath. It is twice blest: it blesseth him that gives and him that takes. 'Tis mightiest in the mighty; it becomes the throned monarch better than his crown. It is enshrined in the hearts of kings. It is an attribute of God Himself and earthly power doth then show likest God's when mercy seasons justice. Therefore, though justice be thy plea, consider this – that in the course of justice none of us should see salvation. We do pray for mercy, and the same prayer doth teach us all to render the deeds of mercy."

May those words guide our coming week!