

Reflection Monday 5th Week Lent 2024

We encounter Jesus today in the precincts of the temple having two conversations. He first talks to the scribes and Pharisees, who were uncaring and lacked compassion for the woman caught committing adultery. In speaking to them Jesus puts an abrupt end to the unpleasant situation. The second conversation is between Jesus and the adulterous woman. Jesus treats her completely differently from the Pharisees. He does not condemn her; rather, he engages her and draws her near to him with compassion and forgiveness.

The religious leaders who brought the woman to Jesus had a very black and white view of things. As far as they were concerned, they were the good people and the woman represented the bad people. Furthermore, they believed the bad people needed to be eliminated to protect the good people. The accusers reminded Jesus that death by stoning was what the Jewish Law prescribed. Jesus was reluctant to engage these men in conversation but his brief comment cut through their primitive analysis and showed it up in all its inadequacy, *'Let him who is without sin cast the first stone'*.

Adopting a black-and-white view of people overlooks the complex nature of human behaviour, our motivations and the inherent fallibility that characterises our human condition. This perspective fails to account for the nuanced realities of our lives, where good and bad, strength and weakness coexist within us all.

Jesus realised that the accusers hid behind the law, wanting to catch Jesus out, not owning what they wanted him to do. By not casting a stone as the Law required, they were the ones breaking the Law they wanted to use against him. Jesus reveals a God who does not want us to be condemned, law or no law, but wants to help us sin no more.