



# Our Parish Community

**April 3, 2022**  
*Fifth Sunday of Lent (C)*  
Is 43:16–21  
Phil 3:8–14  
Jn 8:1–11

## Dear Padre,

**If God is so forgiving, why can't I just ask for his forgiveness directly? Why do I need to go to confession and ask a man, a priest, to have my sins forgiven?**

**I**t's ironic that some claim a man cannot forgive sins. That same accusation was leveled against Jesus himself when he forgave the paralyzed man (see Mark 2:5–7). But Jesus clearly told his apostles they were to be instruments of his forgiveness. When he appeared to them in the upper room after his resurrection he said: "Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained" (John 20:23).

James the Apostle also endorses the concept of humans administering God's forgiveness: "Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed" (James 5:16).



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Baptism, another sacrament administered by a person, starts our discipleship with Jesus. It cleanses us of all sin—including original sin. But even as Jesus' disciples, we are sometimes unfaithful and need to ask forgiveness. It's not surprising, then, that Jesus has given us another sacrament—again administered by a person—for the forgiveness of sins after baptism: the sacrament of reconciliation.

God is forgiving—so forgiving that when people killed Jesus, his Son, he did not punish and destroy the world. Rather, he used the death of Jesus to demonstrate just how patient and forgiving he is. Our gravest sins—murder, adultery, a life lived apart from God—require the intervention of the sacrament of penance. But even confessing smaller sins is useful. If nothing else, it keeps us humble enough to remember that all of us need forgiveness because all of us sin.

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### A WORD FROM *Pope Francis*

*Going to confess is not like going to the dry cleaner's to have a stain removed....If there is no love in the sacrament, it is not as Jesus wishes it to be. If it is functional, it is not how Jesus wants it to be. Love....toward the brother and the sister who are forgiven sinners. This is the fundamental relationship.*

ADDRESS TO APOSTOLIC PENITENTIARY, MARCH 12, 2021



## "Do Not Sin Any More."

**A**t first reading of today's Gospel, one might think that those who brought the adulterous woman to Jesus were concerned about observance of the law. Halfway through the story, this error is corrected: "They said this to test him" (John 8:6). They thought that any answer he would provide would anger his audience. If he directed them to stone her, his teaching about mercy and forgiveness would sound hollow, and people would turn away from him. If he spoke against stoning, he would appear to be setting himself above the law, which required that particular punishment for adultery. They must have thought they had Jesus cornered.

Not to be undone by them, Jesus traced his finger on the ground. Was he listing the sins of the woman's accusers? Was he using silence to make them feel uncomfortable? Was he choosing his words carefully? Was he simply doodling? We don't know. But his words

cut to the core: "Let the one among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her" (John 8:7). Who would dare step forward to execute the sentence? They left, beginning with the elders because the custom was to throw the stones according to age—eldest first.

Had Jesus undermined his teaching about mercy and forgiveness? No. Had he denigrated the law? No. Did he leave the woman with the impression that her sin was not serious? No. He left her with this admonition: I will not condemn you to death, but you have to change your life.

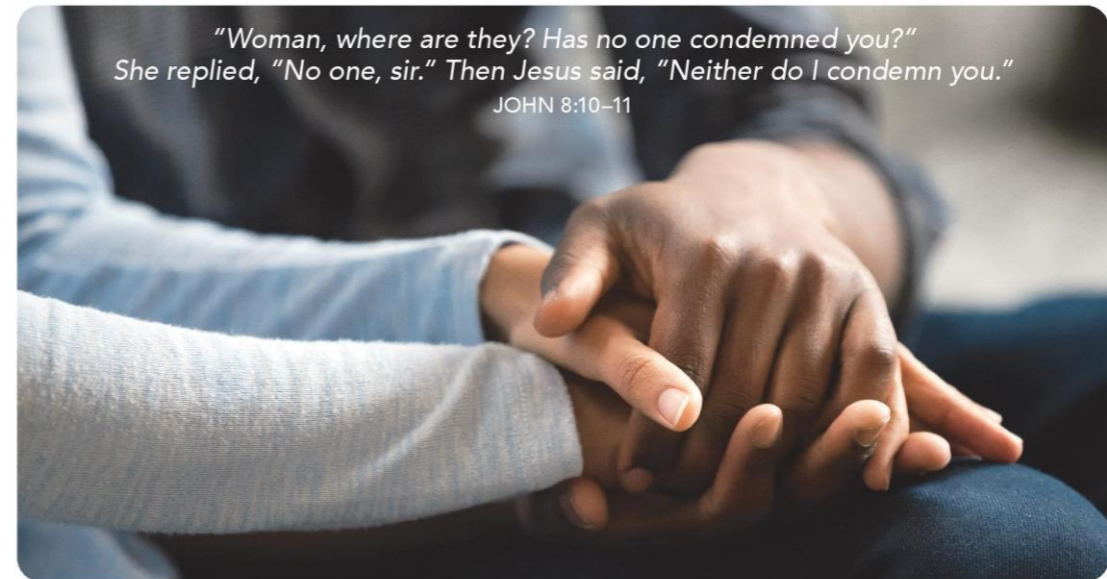
*Sr. Dianne Bergant, CSA*

### FOR *Reflection*

- ★ *How quick are you to point out the failings of others? What good comes from it?*
- ★ *What in your life do you know you have to change? Why can't you do it?*

*"Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?"  
She replied, "No one, sir." Then Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn you."*

JOHN 8:10–11



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