Fifth Sunday of Lent

A thief is going to confess to the parish, and approaching the confessional sees that the priest has fallen asleep inside. The thief sees a beautiful watch on the priest's wrist, and without being able to resist it, removes it very carefully. Then he gently wakes him up:

-Father, I have come to confess... I happen to have stolen a watch. Do you want it? -Me? Not at all. You must return it to its owner. - But he said he doesn't want it. Well, in that case, keep it.

Dear Friends,

We are in the fifth Sunday of Lent reflecting about how to grow in holiness, in other words, to grow in deeper relationship with God.

Explaining how a merciful God forgives the sins of His chosen people, and leads them back from the Babylonian exile, the first reading reminds us that we too are forgiven. We are saved from our own sinfulness.

In the second reading, Paul presents himself as a forgiven sinner, who has been completely transformed by his Faith in Christ Jesus. His life is an example of the Gospel exhortation, "Sin no more." Paul loves Christ so much; he wants to share in His sufferings. Paul wants to even share in Christ's death, so that he may share Christ's Resurrection. He considered everything else rubbish so he could gain Christ.

In the Gospel today, Jesus gives a beautiful example of forgiveness and nonjudgement. The Pharisees and Sadducees on so many occasions, try to test Jesus in so many ways. They never won over it. Today they wanted to put Jesus in a dilemma. They caught a woman in adultery and brought her to Jesus. The question is whether to stone her to death or not. To answer their questions, Jesus most of the times turns the question around and makes them answer.

Today God teaches the virtue of forgiveness. His answer makes them realize their own lives and offer before God. He condemns sin. He hates sin. That's why he said to the woman, "Sin no more". He also taught them not to judge anyone, which obviously clarifies our roles in life. I quote Peter Kreeft's words, "Forgiveness is not indifference. Jesus does not say, there is nothing to forgive, there is. He does not say 'Don't worry about it. 'She must. He not only loves the sinner, but also hates the sin, precisely because he loves the sinner. He knows how harmful sin is, and how costly forgiveness is. He will have to pay for her sins, and he knows how costly that payment will be, on the cross."

Another point of thought came to me. There is a pattern of change in understanding God's love and mercy. In the Old Testament, we hear that God was compassionate, and at the same time, was very strict. You must be like this, and like that. But in the New Testament, Jesus portrays a God who is so loving and forgiving. He loved the sinner. He welcomed him/her. He went to Zacheus' house making a conversion of heart by loving him totally.

No one likes sin, but at the same time, let us realize that it is not worthwhile to judge someone in our minds and hearts.