

**Homily – Monday of the Fifth Week of Lent
MACC, Pastoral Visit – March 18, 2024**

In today's gospel, the woman caught in adultery faces an angry mob determined to stone her. In the end, she is met by the Lord's mercy. Speaking about this woman, Pope Francis has said: *"This woman represents all of us. We are sinners, meaning adulterers before God, betrayers of his fidelity. Her experience represents God's will for each of us: not our condemnation but our salvation through Jesus. (...) God does not nail us to our sin, he does not identify us by the evil we have committed. (...) He wants us to be free to convert from evil to good, and this is possible – it is possible! – with his grace."*

We struggle to trust in God's mercy. However, we often accuse ourselves against God's mercy. The dynamic of sin may seem as opposed to the dynamic of accusation and condemnation, but in fact they are two sides of the same coin. Those who judge and condemn the sinner are the sinners themselves. Despite our best efforts, we remain imperfect. The same happens to society; our laws are always perfectible. Human nature always finds the necessary loopholes for injustice. We falsely justify ourselves, and we condemn ourselves.

Justice, on the other hand, is always a work in progress, but above all, it is a gift. It is received through an effort shared with unwavering enthusiasm for the promotion of good, of the common good. As the condition for peace, justice is not merely the resolution of conflict, but the work of the Holy Spirit, who unties the knots in our hearts.

In the ancient Hebrew text of our first reading – from the Book of Daniel – we hear a forewarning to our modern world. To us, Susanna is a symbol for the harassment and false accusations against so many people in our world – you name them. It takes the lone, brave voice of Daniel to save her, to end the abuse and stop the death sentence. Again, it takes a lone voice, the voice of Jesus, to stop the madness and ask everyone present to look inward before they cast stones outward. There may have been times we have been on the receiving end of false accusations or even harassment. Lent is a good time to call to mind the times we have been part of “the angry mob.” Who do we condemn? Do we do it in the name of justice?

In some situations, it is difficult not to feel trapped, as Susana did. No matter what she said or did, she knew it would not go well for her. She decided to pray, earnestly, publicly, to God, and trust justice would be done. We must patiently endure difficulty and challenges to our projects, as we engage to secure the continuance of long-term processes. Our courage comes from the Lord. We pray for wisdom, which can make us truly creative, and for fortitude, which can make us persevere despite adversity. We pray for confidence in God’s plan and for hope in his mercy.

Jesus asks us to listen and forgive, seeking truth, justice, and peace, persevering with creativity. He asks us to trust wholeheartedly, as Susana did. It is often not easy or satisfying, but we must put our faith in God first.

Our Lady of Guadalupe, increase our trust in your Son.