

Fifth Sunday of Lent – March 13, 2016

God makes a way where there is no way – through the sea, in a desert. If we dare to walk on a path that God opens before us, we can let the past go, and move forward into a freedom that only God can provide.

All the people addressed in today's Scriptures – the Israelites and the Ephesians, the Pharisees and the unnamed woman – are being asked to accept the challenge of this new freedom. "See, I am doing something new! Now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?" "Forgetting what lies behind but straining forward to what lies ahead, I continue my pursuit toward the goal... the supreme good of knowing Christ Jesus, my Lord." "Has no one condemned you? Neither do I condemn you. Go, and from now on do not sin anymore." God makes a way for the Israelites, for St. Paul and his community in Ephesus, for the unnamed woman in today's gospel. God's love and mercy are so vast that there is always time, always room for a new way. We are always free to turn from our old ways and follow the new path that God sets before us.

So, who is this God who wants to open new paths for us, to do something new? Turn your sights back to the Gospel for a moment and perceive.

Notice that Jesus doesn't just save one woman's life. He wants a multiple rescue. He knows that sinners most often conceal themselves in a judgmental crowd. So Jesus rescues the woman not by removing her from the crowd, but by pointing out that she is simply one of the crowd. All are sinners. Jesus wants everyone to own up, so he can rescue everyone.

Then, too, notice that Jesus' attitude toward this unnamed woman was part of his total embrace of all human beings, without reference to their class, race, or gender. Each person is a special, unique, never-to-be-repeated, child of God. Jesus walked through all barriers as if they were mere wisps of cloud. Indeed, he was doing something new.

And finally, notice that most of us at some time or another find ourselves in need of a future. Our God is a God of promises. WE are promised a future, and we are bid to strain after it. The God of our Lenten days desires nothing more than that we learn better how to offer a future to other pilgrims too, in imitation of Jesus.

The grace and mercy of God has transformed many lives. I would like to think that God's grace and mercy transformed that one woman's life. I would like to think that God's love and mercy can even now transform you and me as well. God is indeed doing a new thing. Do we not perceive it?