

Who doesn't like second chances? "Give me a second chance!"

This is a common request in probably every language on the face of the earth, simply because as a human race, each of us possesses a weak, fallen human nature that is inclined to sin and make mistakes. This universal human plea is borne out of a desire for mercy and new life.

And in today's Liturgy of the Word, we're reminded that our Heavenly Father is a God of mercy and new life—a God of second chances, Who in *this* life never stops offering us another chance to live in authentic freedom and happiness. Brothers and sisters, *mercy breeds new life*, and in *this earthly life*, our Heavenly Father is always offering us the mercy of a second chance, the mercy that saves our life from sin and death and gives us new life in great abundance.

In today's Gospel, we see God's mercy and His desire to give us new life on full display, as we hear of a dramatic encounter between our Lord Jesus Christ and an unnamed adulterous woman, who is caught in the act of adultery, which must've been extremely awkward and unpleasant. And the fact that *only she* is threatened with the death penalty by an angry mob while her male counterpart is nowhere to be

found, indicates that women were indeed treated and viewed as inferior in first century Roman Palestine and that men were seemingly not held to the same standard.

Whatever the case may be, Jesus' enemies use this situation to try to entrap Him and whenever you try to play "gotcha" with the Son of God, you're bound to "get burnt." And so the scribes and Pharisees question Jesus saying, "Teacher, this woman was caught in the very act of committing adultery. Now in the law, Moses commanded us to stone such women. So what do you say?' They said this to *test him, so that they could have some charge to bring against him.*"

You see, the Pharisees are not seeking legal advice from Jesus—rather here is the trap that our Lord's enemies set for him: if Jesus authorizes and supports the stoning, the Pharisees will report him to the Romans for criminal wrongdoing since the Jews were not permitted to administer capital punishment under Roman rule. *Or* if Jesus *forbids and opposes* the stoning, the Pharisees will accuse Him of being a false messiah who violates and contradicts the Law of Moses, for the Torah classifies adultery as a capital crime. So this trap is designed to

incriminate or discredit Jesus. Yet out of His divine genius, our Lord and Savior brilliantly “turns the tables” and exposes the Pharisees in their own hypocrisy saying: “Let the one among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her.” And just like that, our Lord vanquishes His enemies and we’re told that they “they went away one by one (almost reluctantly), beginning with the elders.”

We’re then told that, “Jesus...said to her, “Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?” She replied, “No one, sir.” Then Jesus said, “Neither do I condemn you. *Go, and from now on do not sin any more.*” Notice that our Lord Jesus does not *excuse or condone her grave sin of adultery*, but rather He says, “*Go, and from now on do not sin any more.*” With these words, our Lord Jesus avoids the two extremes: the one extreme being a relativistic desire to downplay the reality and seriousness of sin and act like there’s nothing wrong with adultery—and the *other* extreme being a harsh condemnation of this woman with an *absolute refusal* to show her any mercy.

Our Lord Jesus, Who is Truth and Love Incarnate, shows us the way. While Jesus does not condone her sin, He embraces her with great

mercy and *forgives* her sin, setting her free and giving her a second chance. Not only did our Lord Jesus quite literally save her life from the angry mob that was prepared to stone her to death, but He *gave her new life* and *essentially “re-created her.”*

Brothers and sisters, this is what happens when our Lord Jesus forgives our sins: He lovingly gives us a second chance and infuses us with *new life in Him, re-creating* us so that we can become the best version of ourselves. The all-powerful mercy of Jesus, poured out to us most especially through the Sacrament of Reconciliation, raises us from the dead of our own sinfulness and fills us with the glory of new life in Christ. Indeed, our Lord Jesus came to *give us life so that we might live life to the full, firmly grounded* in the infinite love of the Trinity. In God’s divine mercy, not only do we find the newness and fullness of life on this earth, but we find second chance upon second chance.

Brothers and sisters, God’s mercy is intended to liberate us from the sins, wounds, and evils of the past. Our Lord Jesus does not want us to be *consumed* by our sins, failures, and struggles of the past. While we shouldn’t *ignore* the past, our Lord doesn’t want us to be *enslaved*

by the past. While we should honestly *acknowledge and learn from the past*, we should never *live and dwell* in the past. While we should *grow* from the past, we should never *obsess* over the past, allowing it to control us and prevent us from recognizing our beautiful potential in Christ, Who is in our midst, *right now in the present moment*.

If we allow ourselves to be enslaved by the sins, failures, and wounds of the past, then we won't be able to enjoy the freedom, happiness, and peace that Christ wants to give us right now in the present! If we refuse to let go of the sins, wounds, and failures of the past and give them over to the merciful love of Christ, then our past will destroy us. Brothers and sisters, if we want to be free of our sins from the past, then we must seek God's mercy in the present! If we want to be healed of our wounds from the past, then we must seek God's healing love in the present! Our merciful Savior is so eager and ready to embrace us, forgive us, heal us, re-create us, and give us new life in Him so that we're not slaves of the past.

When *God forgives, He forgets*, and so He empowers us by His grace to persevere and move forward with great faith, hope, and love.

Our Lord's mercy has the power to re-create and make something new. This is why our Lord tells us today in the Book of the Prophet Isaiah: "Remember not the events of the past, the things of long ago *consider not; see, I am doing something new!*" And in the second reading from the Letter of St. Paul to the Philippians: "*forgetting what lies behind but straining forward to what lies ahead*, I continue my pursuit toward the goal, the prize of God's upward calling, in Christ Jesus." When our Lord forgives us, He re-creates us, giving us a new life and making us a new creation in Him! This is exactly what our Lord Jesus did for the adulterous woman in today's Gospel and what He wants to do for each and every one of us.

As we prepare to praise, thank, and receive our Lord Jesus in the Most Holy Eucharist, may we ask the God of second chances for the grace to always seek His mercy and love, which always renews us, frees us from our sinful and wounded past, gives us new life, and makes us a new creation in Him. Merciful Father of all hope, re-create us in Your Son Jesus and give us new life in Him! Amen.