

5th Sunday of Lent

Isaiah 43:16-21
Ps 126:1-6
Philippians 3:8-14
John 8:1-11

Monday April 4

Daniel 13:1-9,15-17,
19-30,33-62
Psalm 23:1-6
John 8:12-20

Tuesday April 5

Numbers 21:4-9
Ps 102:2-3,16-21
John 8:21-30

Wednesday April 6

Daniel 3:14-20,91-92,95
Dan 3:52-56
John 8:31-42

Thursday April 7

Genesis 17:3-9
Ps 105:4-9
John 8:51-59

Friday April 8

Jeremiah 20:10-13
Ps 18:2-7
John 10:31-42

Saturday April 9

Ezekiel 37:21-28
Jer 31:10-13
John 11:45-56

This Sunday's Gospel reading shows us a good example of how to treat someone who is, as Jesus says elsewhere in scripture (Matthew 25) "the least of these."

The recipient of Christ's compassion in this story was considered to be unworthy of life itself. She was first of all a woman, which in her society meant she was inferior to men. She was a sinner and deserved punishment. She was one single person facing a condemning crowd alone.

How much more of a "least" one could anyone be?

When have you felt alone and insignificant? Perhaps you've faced a condemning crowd. Then again, have you ever treated others as if they're not important? Yes, none of us can cast the first stone.

There are many in the Church who feel forgotten and neglected. We all know some of them. Their loneliness is usually hidden from us, and if we're busy with many important responsibilities, seeking them out and giving them attention feels too overwhelming. Their needs become too insignificant to warrant the expense of our time, the development of parish resources, and the sacrifice of our personal comfort.

Divorced Catholics often feel condemned, and many who could be receiving Communion stay away because



they've been misinformed about the Church's rules, and no one is reaching out to lead them back.

And although the Church has been focusing on stopping the abuse of children, often the sin of sexual activities between "consenting" adults and the lustful or abusive grooming of easily influenced adults is ignored, because

they are dismissed as "less vulnerable" -- they are of least concern.

Identifying the least among us and reaching out to them is a good Lenten exercise -- but only if the intention is to make it a year-round habit.

Reflect & Discuss:

1. Which persons are you neglecting because their situation makes you feel uncomfortable or inadequate?
2. Which members of your family or parish do you avoid because you like them "least" of all?
3. Begin to give them compassionate attention by praying for them, then discern if the Lord is inspiring you to do anything more.
4. Share the story of a time when you encountered – or were – one of "the least of these". Did anyone show compassion? How?
5. Where was Jesus? How was he helping?