

**22<sup>nd</sup> March 2021 Monday, 5<sup>th</sup> Week of Lent**

**1<sup>st</sup> Reading: Daniel 13:1-9,15-17,19-30,33-62**

**Gospel: John 8:1-1**

The Church has chosen these two readings to go together as they have a similar theme of so-called sexual crimes and the role of judgement.

The first reading is a well-told tale showing that God hears the prayers of the innocent and that we must not rush to condemn people at face value. In these days of tweets, Facebook and other social media outlets, it's easy to get drawn in and to believe everything that we hear or read. Also, it's very, very easy to say something to or about people that we would not say face to face, especially in public and shared groups. Let us pray for the wisdom when using social media to celebrate the good rather than use it as a place for criticism.

We are familiar with the Gospel account of Jesus rescuing the woman caught in adultery, from a certain death. This is a lovely humane passage which helps us to examine our own consciences before we condemn other people. Jesus' response to the scribes and Pharisees was that he who had not sinned should throw the first stone (v.7). Jesus does not minimise the sin but helps the men to examine their consciences first. By writing on the ground and not looking directly at them, He enables everyone present to examine their consciences. One by one, the men leave, the eldest first (presumably indicating that their seniority had given them more time to commit sins!). Jesus' comment to the woman at the end is worthy of a moment's thought; "I do not condemn you, go and do not sin again" (v11).

The Church has chosen this Gospel for us as it shows us what happens in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. In our case, we bring ourselves before the Lord, rather than are brought (although parents have the responsibility of bringing their children). Before the Lord, we tell Him our sins and show our repentance. In the same way that Jesus did not condemn either the men or the woman, He does not condemn us. In the Sacrament of Reconciliation, through the prayers of the ordained priest who absolves us of our sins, we are completely forgiven, wiped clean. And we leave, knowing that Jesus asks us not to sin again.

Let us pray:

*O my God, because you are so good, I am very sorry that I have sinned against you, and by the help of your grace, I will not sin again.*