

Sunday April 3, 2022  
Fifth Sunday of Lent  
**Parishioner Reflection**

*By: Janice Lahti*

***Neither do I condemn you. Go your way, and from now on do not sin again.*** We are being judged, people have turned on us, we have broken faith with God, others, and ourselves. We become defensive, feel cornered, lash out to deflect our humiliation. A potential conversion moment is at hand. If we allow these feelings of humiliation and shame, and acknowledge our need for God, the slow movement of conversion unfolds. These awful moments of failure are paradoxically the moments that can deepen our conversion of heart. Being vulnerable, staying present, we can be touched by the One who brings mercy and hope.

Jesus doesn't focus on failings, too numerous to count, but gives us opportunity after opportunity to begin again. Being seen clearly in all our weakness, and yet loved so deeply is precisely what opens the possibility for us to not sin again. It's certainly not something we can do alone, under our own steam. Mercy and Love envelop us, and the experience of being deeply loved transforms us to release the pain of shame, judgment, and exclusion.

God is forgiveness and love in our lives, and in our world. Grace is God's action in our lives. And this constant and generous outpouring of grace, when we accept it and co-operate with it, gives us the strength, the resolve, the joy to pass it on – to forgive, to love and to heal.

We are not condemned; we are loved. Not a second should be lost to looking back. Let God's mercy move us forward. We can trust in God's love, release ourselves from our prison of self-judgment and judgment of others and extend this love out to support the needs of our families, communities, and all humanity.

***Do not remember the former things or consider the things of old. I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?*** When we stay immersed in remorse and pain, we completely miss the point. God is with us in our pain and shame and God is about to do a new thing in us! What is this new thing being born from our pain, suffering, failings, and regrets? ...a new heart, a new mind, a new and generous spirit, a new source of compassion and care for our hurting world.

Conversion is possible because of God's grace and our cooperation. Conversion is the only way to freedom and love. As love is planted and nurtured in us, we release and forget what lies behind and strain forward to what lies ahead.

Grace is generously poured out to water the seed of conversion in each of us. Our desire and longing for God is a gift of grace and this is truly good news. Our failings and missteps can shape a view of ourselves as broken and unworthy. We hide from Divine Healing and forget that God has done great things for us! Every single new next moment is a pure gift that when received, heals and opens us to a deepening of Love in our lives. ***The Lord has done great things for us; we are filled with joy***