

Homily 5th Sunday in Lent 2025

'Expect the Unexpected'

A man was walking along a very high cliff top when he slipped, Luckily, he was able to grasp a branch protruding from the cliff face preventing him falling to sure death below, Desperately, he called out, 'Help, is anyone up there?' He persisted three times more, 'Is anyone up there?' Suddenly, he heard a voice from God, 'My son let go.', to which he replied, 'Is anyone else up there?' The man wasn't quite prepared for the God of the unexpected, the God of surprises.

Isaiah in today's First Reading describes the God of the unexpected, of the unconventional, the God of surprises. This God, Isaiah proclaims, will make 'water flow in the wilderness, rivers in the desert' to quench the thirst of The Chosen People. St Paul considers 'everything as so much rubbish' if only he could have this God in the person of Christ. The Responsorial Psalm tells us of a God who sends his people out 'full of tears who will (unexpectedly) return full of song', full of joy. This God whom we worship has no limits, no boundaries and always delivers in ways which leave us amazed and even at times confused.

In today's Gospel, Jesus shows us that there are indeed no limits, no boundaries to God's love, his mercy, his compassion and demonstrates this in a way which was totally unexpected. This would have shocked The Pharisees and indeed the whole people. The woman, caught in the act of adultery should have been stoned by the conventional standards of The Law of Moses. She was 'a fallen woman' in the eyes of The Law (Torah) and had to be made an example of. The unconventional Jesus instead, for a moment calmly doodles in the sand, looks up and does the unexpected, by challenging the mob of men, 'Whoever hasn't sinned, cast the first stone.' Luke describes how from the ELDEST they walked away, tails between their legs no doubt. He then brings the woman back into communion with God and with God's People with the comforting words, 'These don't condemn you, neither do I condemn you. Go and (try your best to) sin no more!'

In our daily life, with all its joys and suffering, it's moments of happiness and sorrow, let us trust and be prepared to always expect the unexpected from our God! He will always deliver but not always in the way we might hope.