

Have you ever seen the pure joy of a child receiving a gift?

One of my sisters saw this last Christmas

One of her nieces was opening Christmas gifts

As she opened each one, she exclaimed

This is awesome

How did you know what I wanted?

I've been waiting for this all my life; thank you!

That pure joy and simplicity is how God desires us to react

When we realize what it is He has done for us

When we realize that it is a pure gift of love and mercy

For us to look that gift in the face

And respond: I've been waiting for this my whole life

Thank you!

And God looks on this response with pure joy

Like the little girl's parents, aunts and uncles

Simply desiring to give all the more

In our reading from Isaiah, we see God offering a path of salvation

He is offering a way forward

You have been brought out of Egypt

You are no longer slaves

Remember not the events of the past

Faithful reverence to tradition is one thing
Desiring to return to Egypt, which the Israelite people often professed
Is quite another
God is showing them a way forward
See! I am doing something new
As a symbol of this path to salvation, Isaiah speaks of water
The water of the Red sea being split
So the Chosen People could pass through
This same water was the grave of the Egyptian army
In the desert, water flowed from the rock
Bringing life to the desert
For plants, animals and people alike
This also points to the water of our baptism
The water that opens our hearts and souls to God's salvation
St. Paul calls us to look forward as well
For his sake, I have accepted the loss of all things
I consider them as so much rubbish
That I might gain Christ and be found in him
The old way was the law
The new way is Christ
Laws set standards

You can then determine whether these standards have been broken

True righteousness depends on Christ

If we are living in that right relationship with Christ

It is not that we will be breaking the law

In fact we will be fulfilling it to an even higher degree

But out of love and in gratitude rather than fear

But union with Christ does not protect us from human suffering

It is not a spiritual Gnosticism that transports us into a spiritual realm

In fact, it sets us right in the midst of our daily struggles

It is not about already attaining a spiritual maturity

It is entering into the struggle

Forgetting what lay behind

Straining forward to what lies ahead

The goal, the prize are laid out there

We strive to attain what cannot be had in its entirety in this life

To what will be ours if we remain faithful

That goal is what the woman in our Gospel sought

She had broken the law

There was no doubt she was guilty

And by Moses' decree, she should have been stoned

Along with her partner

But that was not the objective of those opposing Christ

They wanted something they could use to discredit him

So they came up with what they thought was a perfect trap

Stone her, and lose credibility with the people

Refuse to stone her, go against Moses

Lose credibility with the people

Either way, Christ loses

But behold, I do all things new

But Jesus refuses to play their game

He ignores them

Bending down to write something on the ground

But they insist, so he stands up

The one without sin cast the first stone

And he bends back down to continue writing

Soon they move away

First the elders, followed by the others

Both those that were a party to accusing the woman

And the rest of the crowd that had gathered

The woman alone was left before Christ

Where are they?

Has no one condemned you?

No one, sir

Neither do I condemn you

Go, and from now on do not sin any more

Like the little girl I spoke of at the beginning

This woman has received a pure gift

And we can imagine her response being the same

Thank you! I have been waiting for this my whole life

How did you know?

Christ knows the human heart

He knows each one of us

He knows what each one of us desires

He knows what each one of us needs

As we enter into this last full week of lent

We still have time to prepare our hearts

We still have time to enter into the mentenoia we are called to

The conversion God desires for us

God's grace to do this is free

But it is not cheap

It comes at the cost of the very blood and death of Jesus Christ

It is there for every one of us to draw from

It comes to us through the Eucharist and confession

Through prayers and Sacred Scripture

Do we take advantage of it, or are we too busy?

Are we sprinting like St Paul?

Or meandering through the desert like the Israelite nation?

Like the woman, we find ourselves standing before Christ

Our sin is undeniable

How do we look back at him?

Do we approach him like the Pharisees and scribes?

Full of excuses for our actions

They were called out, and dropped their stones

But only for a time

They will return, not with stones

But with a cross

Do we stand before him with presumption in our hearts?

Yes, I am a sinner

But this is what I want

This is what I deserve

This is what I need right now

God will forgive me when I am ready

Then I will come to him and seek forgiveness

Or do we stand before him in honesty and sincerity?

Acknowledging our sinfulness

Considering all things of the past as rubbish

Our pride, our self-sufficiency

Our pettiness and meanness and malice

Whatever it may be

We can come to know Christ

The one that desires to do something new

And let that something new take place in our hearts

Allowing God's mercy flow from Christ's side into our hearts

Forgiving others

And forgiving ourselves

So we can go, and sin no more

Rejoicing in God's mercy and love

Saying thank you!

I have been waiting for this my whole life