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WOMAN CAUGHT IN ADULTERY BY HE QI

We, the people of Boonah Catholic parish,
acknowledge the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of this nation.

We acknowledge the traditional custodians of the lands on which our parish is located
and where we conduct our mission and ministry.

We pay our respects to ancestors and elders, past and present.

As a local community of faith within the Church of Brisbane,
we are committed to honouring Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples'
unique cultural and spiritual relationships to the land, waters and seas
and their rich contribution to society.

Lenten greetings to the members of the Boonah Catholic community and beyond on the Fifth Sunday of Lent.

1. REFLECTION ON THE SUNDAY WORD.

The **reflection** is written by Br. Julian McDonald CFC. Julian is a Christian Brother from Sydney.



We all have some familiarity with the psychology underlying the phenomena

of things like lynching and mob-violence. We are also aware of executions carried out by people blinded to justice because of their attachment to a fundamentalist attachment to law. We have seen how unbridled emotion takes over and reason and logic become casualties. Joan of Arc was burned at the stake when a group of Church leaders, riding on high emotion, labelled her as a heretic and a witch and handed her over for execution to English civil authorities. We have seen the psychology of mob-violence operating in fairly recent times in the death and mayhem

perpetrated by supporters of President Trump when they stormed the Capitol building in Washington. We have also seen high emotion driving violent demonstrations by anti-vaxxers across the United Kingdom (*Alpha Men Assemble*), and in places like Melbourne, and Alabama.

Today's gospel-reading describes Jesus in conflict with a group of Jewish men hell-bent on lynching a woman whom they allegedly caught in the act of adultery. Strangely, they make no mention of her male partner. Hypocritically, they stood in front of Jesus demanding that he agree to their adherence to the letter of the law which allowed for the stoning to death of the woman they had dragged before him. By pressuring Jesus to confirm their judgement of the woman, they were also putting him on trial.

In reality, like all people who consciously or unconsciously are intent on displaying their power and dedication to law, these men were really revealing their own insecurity. We see it again and again in those who seek to control through command, threat and direction the behaviour of those in their care. They merely demonstrate just how insecure they really are themselves.

Worthy of note is the fact that those who brought the woman to Jesus for confirmation of their decision to stone her had already made their plans to trap Jesus. They knew well what the Mosaic Law clearly stated in Leviticus: *If a man commits adultery with his neighbour's wife, both the adulterer and the adulteress shall be put to death* (20, 10). It is repeated in Deuteronomy: *If a man is discovered having relations with a woman who is married to another, both the man and the woman with whom he has had relations shall die* (22, 22). Although Jewish law was clear that both parties should die, there was no clause stating that they be executed at the same time and in the same manner. That might explain why the group confronting Jesus humiliated only the woman in front of him.

What's more, there was a parallel Roman law operating in Judea at the time of Jesus. To begin with, it forbade Jewish authorities from carrying out the death sentence. Moreover, it stipulated that an adulteress could be executed only if the offending man was also executed. So, while according to Jewish law the woman's execution was entirely justified and even required, according to Roman law, her execution was forbidden unless the guilty man was also executed.

Perhaps those challenging Jesus were hoping that Jesus might opt for the Roman law, and get trapped into sparing the offending man, thereby preventing the Jewish law from running its course. If he opted for the Jewish law, the woman could be stoned to death (with Roman approval) and her accusers might

conveniently forget to bring the man to justice. Jesus confounded the woman's accusers by choosing a third way - the way of mercy, compassion and forgiveness. At the same time, he challenged the self-appointed executioners by confronting them with their personal sinfulness: *Let the one among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her*. The group of men hell-bent on scapegoating the poor woman, with their emotions whipped up to fever pitch, would simply have been incapable of recognising that their show of forcefulness and self-righteousness was masking their insecurity.

As for the woman, we can only guess at what motivated her behaviour. Had she gone in search of affection or sexual gratification? Had she been forced to sell her body in order to survive? Whatever her motivation, there was no chance that her actions would have brought her lasting satisfaction or peace of mind and heart. Relationships without commitment are destined to destroy those who engage in them. In refusing to condemn her, Jesus opened for her an opportunity to move toward rehabilitation. In contrast, the men who one by one had drifted away ran the risk of being poisoned by their totally frustrated thirst for vengeance.



This confrontation between Jesus and the group of men demanding vengeance calls to mind Jesus' appeal to all who would be his disciples to focus on the way of compassion: *Be compassionate, as your Father is compassionate. Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Pardon, and you shall be pardoned* (Luke 6, 36-37). That's

a message for all of us to heed. If we could look calmly at ourselves when we experience the urge to get even with those who offend us or who upset our sense of superiority and self-righteousness, we just might come to appreciate that insisting on vengeance and revenge poisons our spirit and embitters our capacity to relate to, or see the goodness in, others. If we can't see that in ourselves, we have only to read our newspapers or listen to radio journalists who conduct talk-back programs and incite their listeners to condemn those whom the law has seemingly dealt with too leniently. The shock-jocks and the virulently critical journalists end up poisoning themselves. Is there any international conflict in our world that is not driven by leaders who cannot contain their desire to get even or to exact revenge on those they say have offended them or reneged on an agreement? Deep down, we know that the desire for revenge poisons the human spirit.

Embedded in this gospel-reading is an invitation to us all to look at ourselves in the mirror that Jesus held up to the would-be lynching mob. It surely is a mirror for us to reflect on the motives that drive us to make cutting remarks to those with whom we live and work, to say things that suggest that we see ourselves as superior to others. Maybe our prayer this week might be that we grow in our readiness to forgive, to work at mending any of our relationships that have become broken, and to find within ourselves a determination to



refrain from judging and criticising those around us. There'll be no peace in our world until there is peace in our hearts.

God of power,
God of mercy,
you bring forth springs in the wasteland
and turn despair into hope.

Look not upon the sins of our past,
but lift from our hearts
the failures that weigh us down,
that we may find refreshment and life
in Christ, our liberator from sin.

(Year C: 5th Sunday of Lent, Alternative Opening Prayer)

A **second reflection** is from the *Catholic Women Preach* website. The preacher is Teresa Delgado, Director of the Peace and Justice Studies Program and Professor and Chairperson of the Religious Studies Department at Iona College (New Rochelle, NY).



One of the things that I decided to “give up” for Lent this year was social media. I’m not on *Instagram*, *SnapChat* or *TikTok* so that wasn’t so difficult, but I was a regular on Twitter and Facebook. My reasons had to do the way both platforms have become an open invitation for the “takedown”, of focusing on one thing, and rallying around a public shaming with the cleverest comeback in 240 characters. Of course, you could use it for staying in touch with family and friends, or learning about breaking news without turning on the television. Still, the temptation to participate in the downward spiral of negativity has often overshadowed its more positive uses, so I just shut it all down.

I share this because I couldn’t help but think about the way John’s Gospel story of the scribes and Pharisees trying to create a “gotcha” moment for Jesus has been read and re-read, interpreted and reinterpreted, as a story only about a woman taken in for adultery. This is one of those gospel stories that takes on a life of its own, with elements passed down that aren’t in the story, like Jesus writing the sins of all those gathered into the dirt with his finger, when only part of that – Jesus writing in the dirt with his finger – is actually in the text.

I’m struck by the way our interpretive imagination (or lack thereof) has assumed that what the scribes and Pharisees claim is true – this is a woman caught in the act of adultery – and she deserves the shame of being dragged to the temple, placed in the middle of a crowd of people, and condemned to the death.

And based on our belief in that assumption about this unnamed adulterous woman, we have read the story as one of human sinfulness and divine forgiveness, of the grace that transcends judgment and condemnation, a morality tale of what not to do – don’t commit adultery, don’t condemn others – of “go and sin no more.”

I hear something very different in this story.

I’m struck by the timing of this story, not long before Jesus – an innocent man – would be handed over to the Roman authorities on false pretense, to die a shameful death reserved for the “criminal” in a very public fashion, to terrorize others to stay in their place. He had just spent the night on the Mount of Olives before coming back to the temple in the early morning to teach the people.

I’m struck by the fact that the only ones who accuse the woman of adultery are the men – scribes and Pharisees – who are also trying to entrap Jesus with his response. Jesus is the object of their scorn and displeasure; the woman is the objectified means to a calculated end.

What if she were to speak earlier on in the story? Would she say that she had not done what she was accused of doing? Would she have been believed?

She was caught “in the act” but where was her partner who, according to the law, would be condemned to the same death?

As I consider these questions, the story is opened up to us as a radical reimagining of power and privilege, of women’s subjectivity against a world of objectification, and of Jesus’ accompaniment and solidarity.

In this telling, I can’t help but think about the women dragged into the square for a public shaming in our own day, based on assumptions of their sexuality, how women of colour, or trans women, for example, are hypersexualized in our society, portrayed in ways that underscore the supremacy and purity of white women to the inferiority and “sinfulness” of black and brown women’s bodies. And the extent our society will go to protect that dichotomy.

In this telling, I can’t help but think about women caught in the wars waged by men, used as objects to take other men down, in their vying for power. And we know how rape is often used as a weapon of war.

How is it scandalous to say that Jesus enacts no punishment, no condemnation, for an “adulterous” woman, that he just lets her go; yet not scandalous that the religious power structures of the time could have accused an innocent person, condemning her to death, just to prove a point?

What responsibility do we have in undoing the systems and structures that make it all too easy to drag a vulnerable person to the middle of the square to be stoned for all to see and participate? Do social media platforms serve as our 21st century public venue where assaults and accusations abound?

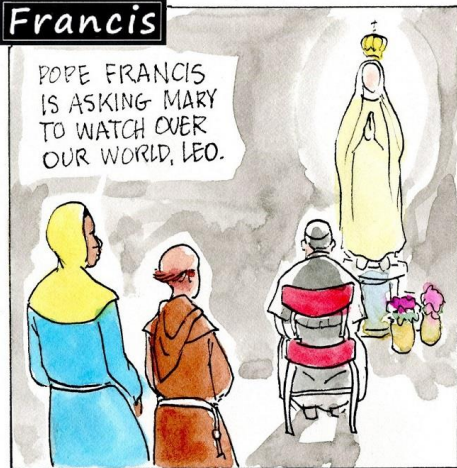
I worry that our shame about this story has been misdirected.

As we journey through these final days of Lent, I pray we have not become so desensitized to the harm done by powers and privilege, because we are so much more focused on shaming the “sinner” rather than dismantling the structures that make such shaming all too easy.

The words of Isaiah remind me that God makes possible the seemingly impossible; this is a God who, in the African-American spiritual tradition, “makes a way out of no way.” Our God refuses to participate in the shaming, objectification and trickery; our God honours the humanity of those who the world would shame.

Their stories are strikingly similar to me, Jesus and the woman accused of adultery. The scandal exists in the manner they were treated by men in power, so ready to be sacrificed for the supremacy of their systems, religious and legal. Maybe we, too, are complicit in the scandal if we choose to read from the story only Jesus’ response toward a “sinful” woman. In taking a step back, perhaps we can see the scandal of the bigger picture and, without judgment or condemnation, work toward the prize of God’s upward calling.

Francis



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29th March 2022

Francis



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31st March 2022

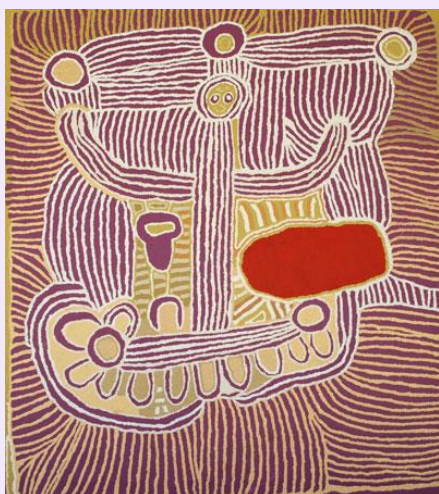
2. BOONAH PARISH HAPPENINGS . . .

*from commands to invitations,
from laws to ideals,
from threats to persuasion,
from coercion to conscience,
from monologue to conversation,
from ruling to serving,
from withdrawn to integrated,
from vertical and top-down to horizontal,
from exclusion to inclusion,
from hostility to friendship,
from static to changing,
from passive acceptance to active engagement,
from prescriptive to principled,
from defined to open-ended,
from behaviour-modification to conversion of heart,
from the dictates of law to the dictates of conscience,
from external conformity to the joyful pursuit of holiness.*

When these elements are taken in the aggregate, they indicate a model of spirituality. This, they say, is what good Catholics should look like and this is how they should behave. That means the elements indicate what the Church should look like and how it should behave. This is a significant model-shift. This is a teaching of the Second Vatican Council.

- Fr. John O'Malley SJ, 2006

Our **SUNDAY EUCHARIST** schedule for Palm Sunday only is:



Desert Eucharist,
Linda Syddick Napaltjarri (b. 1937)

Saturday

5.00pm **Boonah church**

Sunday

7.30am **Peak Crossing church**

9.30am **No 9.30am Mass this coming Sunday.**

(5th Sunday of the month: 6pm Sat night
Harrisville church & 9.30am Sun morning
Boonah church)

Our **WEEKDAY EUCHARIST** schedule for this week, the 5th Week of Lent:

Tuesday 5th April 5.30pm **Boonah** church

Wednesday 6th April 6.00pm **Peak Crossing** church *followed by dinner at The Peak Pub*

Thursday 7th April 10.00am **Boonah** church: **FUNERAL MASS** –*Lawrie Dwyer*
followed by Rite of Committal at Kalbar cemetery

7.00pm **Cathedral of St. Stephen** : **CHRISM MASS**

Webcast: <https://brisbanecatholic.org.au/multimedia/web-cast-schedule/>



Prayer for those affected by floods:

Compassionate God,
source of all comfort,
we pray for the people whose lives have devastated by rain and flood.
Bring them comfort.
Protect the vulnerable.
Strengthen the weak.
Keep at bay the spread of disease.
Have mercy on all those working to rescue the stranded and to feed the hungry.
May our response to their suffering be generous and bring you praise.
For we ask it in Jesus name.
Amen.



We pray with and for those who are sick in our parish and beyond: all across the globe infected with COVID-19; all who are dying during war, especially in Ukraine; Chris Healy, Paul White, Arthur Devin, Liliana Toohill, Libby Shields, Marko Babic, Max Gardiner, Trish Merlehan, Bernadette Pinchin, Simon Greatrex, Cate Mitten, Bernice Brault, Paula Ebrington, Fletcher Casey, Jill Archer, Louisa, David Mitchell, Lorraine and sick members of parish families and those beyond our parish boundaries.

We also remember those in our parish who have died recently:

Soon after daybreak on Sunday morning, **Lawrie Dwyer** died. We extend our sympathy and condolences to his wife, Helen, and their many children and their respective families. Lawrie and Helen have extended family in the region so we remember their family bond with so many. Lawrie's funeral is to be celebrated this Thursday at 10am in the Boonah church.

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- The parish **Liturgy and Music Preparation Team** met on Sunday to prepare Palm Sunday and the liturgies for the Easter Triduum. Thanks to Mary, Noela, Angela and Sharon for their time.

Next Sunday, we will be inviting liturgical ministers who are willing to serve from Holy Thursday night to Easter Sunday morning, to mark their availability. Final decisions will be made after Palm Sunday. The schedule is the same as 2021. *Thanks.*

- **NEXT SUNDAY, PALM SUNDAY.** Fr. Harry Chan is the presiding priest for next Sunday. Harry is a Franciscan friar and ministers in the chaplaincy team at Australian Catholic University, Banyo. Harry can assist us with two Masses only next Sunday: **Sat 5pm and Sunday 7.30am.** I thank parishioners for making this adjustment to the regular timetable on this weekend. We thank him for being with us. *Please make Harry very welcome.*



- **Every Sunday** when we gather for the Sunday eucharist, there are baskets (of some kind or another) at the entrances of our churches. We are invited to bring a gift of non-perishable food or goods for people seeking help from our local St. Vincent de Paul. *The local conference very much appreciates our weekly support.*

- **Thank you** to all who support the weekly Sunday collection. Your gifts enable the parish to meet its expenses and to function like an everyday household. If you would like to give weekly or monthly in a planned way (electronic giving), please see me.

- **Celebrating the Sacrament of Reconciliation.** The 1st Rite for Reconciliation (formerly known as Confession) may be celebrated anytime. Please phone 5463 1057 to make a suitable time. Alternatively see me before Mass (if there is plenty of time) or after Mass (once the majority of people have left the church).



- Last Sunday at the 9.30am Mass, we celebrated the Christian initiation of Lindy Reinholdsson and Lyndie Panitz. Both women have been members of our faith community for more than a few years and have received much formation with us and in the churches of their birth.

We celebrated the Rite of Reception, Confirmation and Eucharist. Thanks to Eva Judge for being Lyndie's sponsor and to Maureen Hancock for sponsoring Lindy. We warmly welcome them into the Catholic community and look forward to their full participation in the Three Days of Easter this year.



Lydie Panitz (centre left) and Lindy Reinholdsson (centre right)



- **WORKING BEE** to clean Boonah church for Easter liturgies **SATURDAY 9TH APRIL 9am**. *All welcome!*



Next Saturday we are having a working bee to prepare the church for Easter.

Jobs that need to be done: clean the pews, remove cobwebs from under pews, mop the floor of the church and sanctuary, sweep the paths around church, vacuum inside carpet, mop the entrance area of the church and around the font, toilets near the hall – both please, vacuum and clean music area, dust down piano, clean all windows. *Many thanks!*

3. Fr. Joe Komonchak has been a leading voice on the theology of the Church for decades. An emeritus professor of theology and religious studies at The Catholic University of America, where he taught for 32 years, he is the English-language editor of the five-volume *The History of Vatican II*.

In 2015, the Catholic Theological Society of America presented him with its highest honour, the John Courtney Murray Award, for distinguished achievement in theology.

Now 82 years old, he gave an interview which was published in *America: the Jesuit Review*. It is an excellent reflection:

https://www.americamagazine.org/arts-culture/2022/03/31/komonchak-woodward-vatican-council-interview-242658?utm_source=piano&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=20023&pnespid=pOM6WTZGLb4D1aCRoC7pAsKd5h7_Cpp2Nu2.0PF38ABm2.yzj0iiduADN_W4q3UF0shHIJjh



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[Click here](#) to visit the Stopline website

John

pastor
Boonah Catholic community