

## Missionary Commentary

Fifth Sunday of Lent, Year C

## Sunday Readings

Isaiah 43:16-21

Psalms 126:1-6

Philippians 3:8-14

John 8:1-11

[USCCB Link to the Readings](#)

## Turn to Me and Be Saved – There is no Other

This Lenten season is quickly coming to a close. How do you feel about this? Are you satisfied with your Lenten journey so far? Are you beginning to feel guilty about practices that you wanted to do during Lent, but somehow the time rushed by? Or perhaps you have been very faithful to what you promised to do and now you feel good about these past five weeks. No matter how you are perceiving your journey so far, today's readings help us to put the real goals of Lent into a clearer perspective.

The word conversion in our Catholic tradition means turning around to God, turning back to God. Turning is a verb of movement. It is not a static state. To be converted means to understand where we have been and where we want to go (another verb of movement!). Where do you want to go? In the Scriptures God helps us to understand God's position before us. As the Creator God there is a plan for all of nature, but as we know, that plan is being challenged by our own misuse of creation. "See, I have made all things new!" See, we have jeopardized that plan by our actions and lack of changes to correct them. Turning back to God and God's plan is the solution, although a difficult action indeed.

In this week's reading, St. Paul says, "I consider everything as a loss because of the supreme good of knowing Christ Jesus." I recall that an older version of the Scripture used the word "garbage" instead of "loss". How powerful that was! Everything is garbage compared to the supreme good of knowing Christ Jesus. St. Paul was a great missionary, having made three missionary trips and suffering many trials and physical abuse, but he could do all this because he had turned completely to Jesus our Redeemer. His conversion involved a profound change in his beliefs, his attitudes and actions. His conversion led him to his Calvary but also to his eternal reward. In the first letter to the Corinthians in Chapter 13 he writes that he longs to know God as God knows him. Imagine! Knowing God as we are known...

As I reflect on the Scriptures, I go back to Philippians: "It is not that I have already...attained perfect maturity, but I continue my pursuit in hope that I may possess it." I imagine that this is your hope, too. I pursue this maturity of knowing, loving and acting as Jesus wants me to do; to contribute to the salvation of our world which is greatly in need of God's love and mercy. I pursue it in hope, especially during this Jubilee Year as Pilgrims of Hope, as a missionary who is aware of God's call to me in my surroundings but also as a missionary who does not lose sight of the whole human family.

In a few weeks Lent will end and we will celebrate the whole Pascal Mystery deeply grateful to Jesus for our redemption. That, too, will last 50 days, but our turning to God will always be our goal in life so that we may be instruments of God's love and mercy

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every day of our lives. The prophet Joel writes: “Even now, says the Lord, return to me with your whole heart; for I am gracious and merciful” (Joel 2:12-13) What a loving and compassionate God we have who calls us continuously and not just during Lent. Let us keep turning and turning, getting closer and closer. God waits for us with open arms.

## Notes on the Reading

### **First Reading: Isaiah 43:16-21**

This reading of the prophet Isaiah contains that most famous phrase that God says to the people: “...see, I am doing something new!” The prophet proclaims the words of God remembering God’s mighty deeds in saving the people from past enemies. Then promises a newness that God will do, reminding the people that it was God who formed them so that they might announce the praise of God to others.

### **Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 126:1-6**

The psalm continues the dynamic of the first reading but now it is the people who are remembering how God has saved them. Their plea to God is to restore the life that was once theirs as they continue to praise God for the mighty deeds God has done.

### **Second Reading: Philippians 3:8-14**

St. Paul writes so beautifully about his relationship with Jesus. He knows in the depth of his being that he owes his salvation entirely to Jesus who suffered, died and rose from the dead for all of us. Paul’s humility shines through this letter, too, as he realizes that although he has journeyed toward the Risen Lord, he still has far to go. Jesus calls him to keep moving forward.

### **Gospel : John 8:1-11**

The compassion and kindness of Jesus touched the heart of the woman caught in adultery, as it touches ours today. The gift that Jesus leaves with this woman is not only liberation from a horrendous death by stoning, but a restoration of freedom because she is forgiven. We don’t know what the scribes and Pharisees actually felt about her “getting off” without punishment according to the law, but we do know that Jesus forgave her and gave her a new life.

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