

FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT YEAR C

1. When choose to learn a new skill, there is a usually a five step process
 - a. First step is enthusiastic decision to learn skill whether bicycling or playing musical instrument
 - i. Decided you want to learn the skill so there is enthusiasm
 - ii. Ability level is low because you have to learn it
 - b. Second step is where many drop out
 - i. After trying the new skill for a number of times, the frustration level rises
 - ii. Enthusiasm goes down because it feels like you are not learning
 - iii. Remember in college when I took a class to learn to swim
 1. Quarter system, by time to register for second quarter, I did not because, I did not expect to pass
 - iv. This stage when encouragement and support can make a lot of difference
 - c. Third stage is when the skill starts coming together
 1. Ability level begins to rise, becoming more comfortable with skill
 2. Enthusiasm rises because finally feel like we get it
 3. But there may be setbacks since skill is just rising
 - d. Fourth stage is when become proficient in skill
 1. Enthusiasm gets high because we are comfortable using the skill
 2. we are reasonably good at the skill we have been trying to learn
 - e. Fifth stage is when the skill becomes sort of old hat
 1. Know we are good at it, may even get bored with it
 2. Enthusiasm may go down because there is no challenge
 3. Stage when we make choice
 4. look for another skill or find another way to develop our abilities
2. Use this process because spiritual life, relationship with God is a skill
 - a. Faith is a gift but it is a gift, that we either develop or we can lose
 - b. We can misinterpret our skills mistaking Faith for ritual and laws
 - c. the Pharisees and scribes were very skilled in living out the rituals and customs of their faith
 - d. Saw correctly that the Law was a gift to lead them to God and dedicated themselves to living it out to the utmost
3. Jesus raised a challenge to them, their skills in living out the law was not the same as developing a relationship with God, loving God with their whole heart
 - a. Distinction is bought to a head in today's Gospel
 - b. Catch a woman in adultery, decide to use her to test Jesus
 - c. Is He really a faithful teacher of their faith
 - d. Note Jesus does not challenge their interpretation of the Law
 - e. They are within the law in wanting to stone her
 - f. Interesting part is that Jesus simply says, the first one to throw a stone should be without sin
 - g. Somehow He is able to reach the hearts of these experts, so that they realize that though they are skilled at the law, they are not skilled in fidelity to God
 - i. They apparently recognize, that they too deserve punishment
4. The woman on the other hand probably feels like an utter failure
 - a. Not only has she failed to be live according to her religion but she has been condemned publicly
 - b. Jesus will not condemn her rather He offers encouragement
 - c. Go and sin no more, Not an order or a threat
 - d. Rather it is a statement, you can succeed, you can be faithful to God
 - e. He offers hope when all seemed lost.
5. In this act of forgiveness and encouragement Jesus also offering us support and encouragement
 - a. The goal of life, our very purpose is to love God with everything we have

- b. Heaven, eternal life, will be the fullness of that goal
 - i. We will see how all of Creation has been an image of God's love for us,
 - ii. An invitation to commit ourselves totally to Him in all the ways He reveals Himself to us
- 6. We could be at many stages along the way of reaching this goal of eternal life
 - a. Ideally in baptism we were first given the opportunity to meet Christ
 - b. If we remained faithful to our baptismal promises and saw the sacrament of Confirmation and Eucharist as moments of God reaching out to us, we probably are further along in the process of becoming one with God
 - c. For many, though, either they did not receive the sacraments or they remained empty rituals
 - i. Somewhere along the way some of these meet Christ in a deep way
 - ii. Have some kind of conversion experience
- 7. The real challenge comes in the next stage
 - a. Prayer will not always seem exciting, find it hard to commit ourselves to prayer
 - b. Rituals of faith become habits, harder to see God in them
 - c. Tempted to give up, some go looking for excitement elsewhere or decide God is not that important
 - d. Say I believe in God, go to church occasionally as insurance but it is not real
- 8. If we can remain faithful to God and the Church we will begin to see rewards
 - a. We can begin to see the effect and value of prayer in our life
 - b. Perhaps we can hear the words of God being spoken directly to us
- 9. Reach the fifth stage, think really good at prayer, God invites us to higher levels
 - a. If a habit of prayer feels dry, God may be inviting us to deeper contemplation
 - b. A few saints who have gone on to deep visions of God
 - c. But they had to go through similar process of learning new skills in seeing God
- 10. God is an infinite spring for us to drink from, we can never exhaust our knowledge of Him, He would love to have us be ever deeper in love with Him