

## Lent 5C

*Holy week will soon be here where we recount the events of the trial, passion and death of Jesus. His trial, however, is not simply confined to the short period following his arrest in Gethsemane. It is going on in a protracted way long before that. We have a good example of it in today's gospel.*

The Pharisees and Scribes were envious of Jesus's popularity with the ordinary people - even some of their own were changing sides. So they approach Him with a hidden agenda. If he opts for leniency for the woman he'll be accused of rejecting the Mosaic Law but if he goes for stoning, he'll be labelled as being cruel and inhuman. Jesus wrong-foots them, however, by suggesting they take a long hard look at themselves.

To expose any wrongdoing on the woman's part in order to trap Jesus in something he might say, shows the deviousness of the leaders. To use the sins of another as a pretext for setting someone else up is what's happening here. Have we ever used the sins of a family members or individuals within an institution as a pretext to blacken the name of the whole institution or a person's wider family? Then we're no different from those who tried to use the woman's sins to further their own evil end.

Shortly before Jesus is arrested, Judas tried to humiliate Mary, the sister of Martha, when she anointed the feet of Jesus with very expensive ointment suggesting that the money spent on the ointment should have been given to the poor instead. It was not because he cared about the poor – he actually used help himself from the common purse. Remember, Jesus was betrayed by him for thirty pieces of silver. Jesus sees through his hypocrisy and comes to her defence as he does Mary of Bethany.

The Scribes and Pharisees were not interested in the woman's welfare. In exposing her sin they subject her to a kind of psychological abuse. Have we every used the vulnerabilities of

another to further our own tainted agenda with scant regard for the person's overall welfare?

Sadly I've heard of situations in a marriage breakup where the reputation of the estranged partner is sullied by the other party often in front of children or grandchildren with the sole aim of making themselves look good at the expense of the estranged partner. That's a sort of emotional exploitation of young minds. Much to the exasperation of Jesus, the Pharisees seem to be playing that game in today's gospel.

In not condemning the woman, and sending his accusers packing, Jesus further inflames the hostility of the Jewish leaders towards himself. The full force of their anger will soon be vented during His trial and coming passion. Jesus doesn't point the finger at anyone. On the contrary when we acknowledge our guilt and seek His forgiveness He comes to our defence, as he did the woman in today's gospel.

In His upcoming passion all the guilt and shame of our sins is transferred on to Him. The fingers pointed at the woman will soon be pointed at Him, the sinless One. No one will come to his defence. He will feel abandoned by all until he's vindicated and raised to life on Easter morning.