

5 Lent Monday
JN 8:1-11

Eight chapters into John's gospel and by this time, the Pharisees were regularly challenging Our Blessed Lord, putting Him to the test in every possible way. You can just hear the Pharisees laughing under their breath, posing questions like,

- ✓ "So in heaven, whose wife would she be? After all, all seven married her."
- ✓ "Is it lawful to pay tribute to Caesar?"

Our Blessed Lord turned the absurd, flippant questions into a personal affair, and saw the true motive of the Pharisees, which was not seeking the answer to a theological question, but to make Him look like a fool.

Let's put an end to Him once and for all, the Pharisees thought. Put Him between a rock and hard place, between politics and religion. "Now, in the Law of Moses, such women should be stoned. What do you say?"

Each time they attempted to trap Him, to put an end to Him once and for all, Jesus' solution was to gaze into their hearts, and turn their encounter into a personal affair.

He said nothing, and just stood there, and made these base men with a paparazzi mentality, feel the depths of their hearts which He laid bare.

And then He stoops, and with one hand, draws signs in the dust, as to say, “Your words are words written in dust.” They think they have finally cornered Our Blessed Lord. He’s trapped. There’s no out. They insist on an answer.

“He who is without sin, cast the first stone.” The silence that followed His words was a heavy silence. And again, He turns the encounter into a personal affair and throws the answer back on their freedom.

Again, Our Blessed Lord’s personal affair uses a ministry of presence, a ministry of deep penetrating presence and a deep penetrating gaze, as the Gospel is specific to say, “He was left alone with the woman before Him.”

The greatest miracle, which left a deep imprint on the disciples, every day, was not:

- ✓ the healing of crippled legs
- ✓ the cleansing of diseased skin
- ✓ or the restoration of sight to the blind.

No, the greatest miracle of all was worked each and every time. Our Blessed Lord used a personal affair, His ministry of

presence, His deep penetrating presence, with a deep penetrating gaze, which revealed man to Himself and was impossible to evade.

It happened to the Samaritan Woman (JN 4:1-42), who in a conversation at the well, heard Him tell her life story. It was precisely this that she relayed to her countrymen as a testimony to the greatness of Our Blessed Lord. “Come and see a man who told me everything I ever did!” Our Blessed Lord and His deep penetrating presence, with a deep penetrating gaze, grabbed hold of her heart and loved her for who she was.

This was the case with Matthew the tax collector (9:9-13), who was considered a public sinner because he served the Roman economic power. Our Blessed Lord simply said to Matthew, “Come” as He passed Matthew. And recognized, taken hold of, accepted, Matthew left everything and followed Him. Our Blessed Lord and His deep penetrating presence, with a deep penetrating gaze, grabbed hold of Matthew’s heart and loved him for who he was.

It happened to Zacchaeus, the senior tax collector, the most hated man in all of Jericho (LK 19:1-10). Zacchaeus, a small man, was curious and climbed a tree for a better look.

On reaching that tree, it was Our Blessed Lord who got a better look at Zacchaeus, stopped, fixed His gaze upon Him and cried, "Zacchaeus, I must stay at your house today." What suddenly struck Zacchaeus? He had been penetrated and captured by a gaze that recognized and loved him for who he was. Yes, the ability to take hold of the heart of a man is the greatest, most persuasive miracle of all. Our Blessed Lord is very much at home in the innermost self of others.

During this time of pandemic, in the silence of this pandemic, allow Our Blessed Lord and His deep penetrating presence, with a deep penetrating gaze, grab hold of your heart and love you for who you are. And like woman caught in adultery, the Samaritan Woman, Matthew and Zacchaeus, their lives became so much more peaceful with Jesus as their center.

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For those of us who have time, one question we may be asked during this pandemic is, "how did you spend your time?" I spent my time worrying, from the moment it started until the moment it ended. I know. In my deep penetrating presence, I was staring right at you with a deep penetrating gaze, and you

didn't even look at me. How much more peaceful that terrible time would have been if you only looked at me.

Our Blessed Lord could end this pandemic with a snap of His fingers. Like that. But there must be a reason He isn't. One reason is because most would just return to their unpeaceful way of life before the pandemic began. One reason is because we only learn the valuable lessons the hard way. Why? Because that's how we're wired. And why are we, who are made in God's image, wired this way? Because God is wired this way. Learning the hard way. Just look at the crucifixion.

Our Blessed Lord's greatest miracles were not signs and wonders. I'm sure the woman caught in adultery, the woman at the well, Matthew and Zacchaeus would agree Our Blessed Lord's greatest miracle is a personal affair, with His deep penetrating presence, with His deep penetrating gaze.