

5 Lent C

April 3, 2022

St. Patrick's

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They said to Jesus, **“Teacher, this woman was caught in the very act of committing adultery.”**

Where was the guy? He had to be on the scene with the woman. What happened to him? As the Book of Deuteronomy says in cases of adultery, **“both the man and woman...shall die”** (Deuteronomy 22:22).

Once again, gender bias against the woman. They catch *her*, and the guy slithers off into hiding. Moreover, the woman becomes the pawn of the religious leaders, who are hoping to trap Jesus. They may well have wanted to prove this Jesus was soft on punishment and easy on mercy.

St. Patrick's: I want a Savior who is, indeed, soft on punishment and easy on mercy!

The sixteenth century artist Lucas Cranach brilliantly painted this Gospel scene in his work entitled *Jesus and the Fallen Woman*. It's shown on the front of the bulletin.

The painting freezes in time the moment when Jesus outwits the woman's accusers. He and she are at the center of the painting. The accusers are crowded around them. A man to Jesus' immediate left, with a menacing grin, holds a basket of stones. Jesus is speaking to them, calling the one without sin to cast the first stone. His right hand, however, is pointing to the woman beside him. She's beautiful, very young—eyes closed, and her head is slightly tilted toward Jesus' shoulder, and her left hand rests on his arm. What is stunning, though, is that your eyes are gradually drawn toward the lower right hand corner of the painting. There Jesus' left hand is entwined with her right hand: he's holding her hand. He's holding the hand of the one *they* want to stone (1).

Yes, Jesus shows that he's soft on condemnation, and easy on mercy. This woman, about to be stoned to death and surrounded by scary, frightening men—except for one. Jesus extends his left hand, and she takes it. They hold hands, and Jesus shows he's on her side.

St. Patrick's: I look at my hands, and they are rough. Too often I've picked up stones out of the basket and hurled them at another in gossip. Too often I've picked up stones in my hand, and in my heart's tribunal, thrown them at another in condemnation. My hands and my heart become rough. Still, Jesus extends his hand to me, an open hand, hoping I'll take it.

Are your hands rough?

Inching closer to the holiest nights of our church's year, this Sunday's Gospel gives us another lesson. Jesus truly is soft on condemnation and easy on mercy. He held out his open hand of love to that doomed woman. She took it and held his hand tightly. She experienced new life...and *her* Savior.

Friends: So close to Holy Week, will we—each of us, and all of us—really extend our rough hand, and allow Jesus to hold us—in mercy and love? He'll never throw the stone.

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(1) See John Donahue, S.J. "The Public Defender" in America (April 1, 2001) at [www.deaconsil.com](http://www.deaconsil.com).

*General Intercessions*

*April 3, 2022*

*5<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Lent*

**Break through all that tears the fabric of your peace and your call to forgiveness; we pray to you, O Lord—**

**This week we remember the martyrdom of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., carried out blocks from here. Lift up our voices and actions to end racism, together with the chasm separating the rich from the poor; we pray to you, O Lord—**

**Sustain and strengthen the Ukrainian people as war is unjustly waged upon them; we pray to you, O Lord—**

**Inspire nations and churches, as Pope Francis has called us, to greater concern and action on behalf of immigrants, migrants, and refugees; we pray to you, O Lord—**

**Bless the Muslim people as they begin their holy days of *Ramadan* this weekend; we pray to you, O Lord—**

**Give eternal rest and new life to those who have died in hope, especially Mary Gene Pearson; and also, all who have died by violence or war; we pray to you, O Lord—**

**Give patience and encouragement to those who care for the elderly,  
infirm, or those with special needs;            we pray to you, O Lord—**