



## Who sinned and who was sinned against?

### The Fifth Sunday in Lent

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The Gospel for the fifth Sunday in Lent, John 8:1-11 tells a familiar story. Jesus is teaching in the temple, and a group of religious leaders brings to him a woman whom they say was caught in the very act of committing adultery and, according to the Law of Moses, ought to be stoned. Then they ask for Jesus' opinion. Jesus says nothing and begins to write on the ground. Finally, Jesus suggests that the one without sin cast the first stone. Gradually they begin to drift away until no condemner is left. Jesus tells the woman to go and sin no more.



I ask where is she to go as in this culture women belong to men, their fathers, their brothers, their husbands, their sons. The leaders have deprived her of protection and in effect put her out on the street. I like to think that the followers of Jesus, especially the women, invited her to shelter with them.

Such a scenario still happens today. A few years ago I received a call from a police officer that a woman was reported to be homeless on the streets of the town; and would I check it out. I found that I knew the woman and she was a member of our church. Her husband suffered severe depression and would neither work nor take his medication. Lucy supported him and their three children by working in a factory. There she met a man who was kind to her and over time a relationship developed during which she became pregnant. Someone told her husband's family that she had been seen with the man. One Monday morning after the children had gone to school, the brothers, all active churchgoers, came to the house and put her out on the street. Her husband merely watched. Fortunately, I was able to find a homeless shelter in another city to



take her and her children. The father of the baby stood by her and began to help support them all. Who sinned and who was sinned against sometimes becomes very mixed together. Jesus told the woman before him that he would not condemn her. He who was without sin did not cast a stone.

As we enter into the last weeks of Lent we are invited to look within and to lay down the stones we would cast at others. We can also give thanks to the generous people who provide a shelter in which the wounded can heal. As Isaiah reminds us of the words of the Lord: Remember not the events of the past; see I am doing something new.