

**Have you ever seen the pure joy of a child receiving a gift?**

**One of my sisters saw this last Christmas**

**One of her nieces was opening Christmas gifts**

**As she opened each one, she exclaimed**

**This is awesome**

**How did you know what I wanted?**

**I've been waiting for this all my life; thank you!**

**That pure joy and simplicity is how God desires us to react**

**When we realize what it is He has done for us**

**When we realize that it is a pure gift of love and mercy**

**For us to look that gift in the face**

**And respond: I've been waiting for this my whole life**

**Thank you!**

**And God looks on this response with pure joy**

**Like the little girl's parents, aunts and uncles**

**Simply desiring to give all the more**

**In our reading from Isaiah, we see God offering a path of salvation**

**He is offering a way forward**

**You have been brought out of Egypt**

**You are no longer slaves**

**Remember not the events of the past**

Faithful reverence to tradition is one thing  
Desiring to return to Egypt, which the Israelite people often professed  
Is quite another  
God is showing them a way forward  
*See! I am doing something new*  
As a symbol of this path to salvation, Isaiah speaks of water  
The water of the Red sea being split  
So the Chosen People could pass through  
This same water was the grave of the Egyptian army  
In the desert, water flowed from the rock  
Bringing life to the desert  
For plants, animals and people alike  
This also points to the water of our baptism  
The water that opens our hearts and souls to God's salvation  
St. Paul calls us to look forward as well  
*For his sake, I have accepted the loss of all things*  
*I consider them as so much rubbish*  
*That I might gain Christ and be found in him*  
The old way was the law  
The new way is Christ  
Laws set standards

**You can then determine whether these standards have been broken**

**True righteousness depends on Christ**

**If we are living in that right relationship with Christ**

**It is not that we will be breaking the law**

**In fact we will be fulfilling it to an even higher degree**

**But out of love and in gratitude rather than fear**

**But union with Christ does not protect us from human suffering**

**It is not a spiritual Gnosticism that transports us into a spiritual realm**

**In fact, it sets us right in the midst of our daily struggles**

**It is not about already attaining a spiritual maturity**

**It is entering into the struggle**

**Forgetting what lay behind**

**Straining forward to what lies ahead**

**The goal, the prize are laid out there**

**We strive to attain what cannot be had in its entirety in this life**

**To what will be ours if we remain faithful**

**That goal is what the woman in our Gospel sought**

**She had broken the law**

**There was no doubt she was guilty**

**And by Moses' decree, she should have been stoned**

**Along with her partner**

**But that was not the objective of those opposing Christ**

**They wanted something they could use to discredit him**

**So they came up with what they thought was a perfect trap**

**Stone her, and lose credibility with the people**

**Refuse to stone her, go against Moses**

**Lose credibility with the people**

**Either way, Christ loses**

***But behold, I do all things new***

**But Jesus refuses to play their game**

**He ignores them**

**Bending down to write something on the ground**

**But they insist, so he stands up**

***The one without sin cast the first stone***

**And he bends back down to continue writing**

**Soon they move away**

**First the elders, followed by the others**

**Both those that were a party to accusing the woman**

**And the rest of the crowd that had gathered**

**The woman alone was left before Christ**

***Where are they?***

***Has no one condemned you?***

**No one, sir**

**Neither do I condemn you**

**Go, and from now on do not sin any more**

**Like the little girl I spoke of at the beginning**

**This woman has received a pure gift**

**And we can imagine her response being the same**

**Thank you! I have been waiting for this my whole life**

**How did you know?**

**Christ knows the human heart**

**He knows each one of us**

**He knows what each one of us desires**

**He knows what each one of us needs**

**As we enter into this last full week of lent**

**We still have time to prepare our hearts**

**We still have time to enter into the mentenoia we are called to**

**The conversion God desires for us**

**God's grace to do this is free**

**But it is not cheap**

**It comes at the cost of the very blood and death of Jesus Christ**

**It is there for every one of us to draw from**

**It comes to us through the Eucharist and confession**

**Through prayers and Sacred Scripture**

**Do we take advantage of it, or are we too busy?**

**Are we sprinting like St Paul?**

**Or meandering through the desert like the Israelite nation?**

**Like the woman, we find ourselves standing before Christ**

**Our sin is undeniable**

**How do we look back at him?**

**Do we approach him like the Pharisees and scribes?**

**Full of excuses for our actions**

**They were called out, and dropped their stones**

**But only for a time**

**They will return, not with stones**

**But with a cross**

**Do we stand before him with presumption in our hearts?**

**Yes, I am a sinner**

**But this is what I want**

**This is what I deserve**

**This is what I need right now**

**God will forgive me when I am ready**

**Then I will come to him and seek forgiveness**

**Or do we stand before him in honesty and sincerity?**

**Acknowledging our sinfulness**

**Considering all things of the past as rubbish**

**Our pride, our self-sufficiency**

**Our pettiness and meanness and malice**

**Whatever it may be**

**We can come to know Christ**

**The one that desires to do something new**

**And let that something new take place in our hearts**

**Allowing God's mercy flow from Christ's side into our hearts**

**Forgiving others**

**And forgiving ourselves**

**So we can go, and sin no more**

**Rejoicing in God's mercy and love**

***Saying thank you!***

***I have been waiting for this my whole life***