



14. March 2026
LENTEN SPIRITUAL RETREAT
Day 25: “Jesus and the sinful woman”

Today's long reading (Dan 13:1–9, 15–17, 19–30, 33–62) tells the story of Susanna, the wife of Joakim, whom God delivered from the hands of two evil judges who falsely accused her of a serious moral crime. The Gospel (Jn 8:1–11), which we will focus on today, recounts an event full of lessons.

How does Jesus deal with the guilt of someone who has committed adultery? The scribes and Pharisees brought Him a woman in these circumstances and said, *“Teacher, this woman has been caught in the act of adultery. Now in the law Moses commanded us to stone such. What do you say about her?”* (vv. 4–5).

Evidently, the accusers did not want to know what Jesus thought about it, but rather to trap Him in order to find a reason to accuse Him (v. 6). At first, Jesus did not give them any answer. However, in response to their insistence, He uttered that decisive phrase that should sink deep into our hearts and shape our entire lives and our way of dealing with similar situations: *“Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her”* (v. 7). He said this to those Pharisees and scribes who were waiting impatiently and demanding an answer. Upon hearing these words, they began to leave, one after another, starting with the oldest (v. 9). None of them dared to throw a stone.

Let us remember that adultery is a serious sin, and not only in the days of the Old Covenant. In fact, the sixth commandment of God's Holy Law says, “You shall not commit adultery.” If modern society no longer considers it as such, it is a sign that we are moving further and further away from God, apart from the serious wounds caused by marital infidelity.

Jesus is aware of the seriousness of sin. However, He did not come into the world as a judge, but as the Savior of humanity. He wants to free people from their guilt and guide them toward a life in accordance with God's order. His clemency toward this woman stems from that intention. The subsequent development of the scene makes this clear. When all her accusers had left, Jesus stood up and said to her, *“Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?”* She said, *‘No one, Lord.’* And Jesus said, *‘Neither do I condemn you; go, and do not sin again.’*” (vv. 10–11)

Without relativizing the transgression committed by that woman and, therefore,

without questioning the objective seriousness of her sin, Jesus clearly taught us how we should deal with the guilt of others. His final exhortation not to sin again preserves us from falling into a false mercy that no longer has the unconditional conversion of the person as its goal. Such an attitude can even lead us to think that we should leave them as they are and that they can live in communion with God without renouncing their sinful behavior.

The Lord's response protects us from two dangers in dealing with sinners:

The first danger is to "throw stones" at them, to reproach them again and again for their guilt, to highlight it whenever the opportunity arises, and thus to become their judges. This temptation can particularly affect legalistic people, who see only the objective transgression for which, in their opinion, the guilty party must be held accountable.

However, they risk losing sight of the fact that the sinner in question is a person whom God, rather than punishing, wants to save from their misery.

In order not to fall into this danger of a progressive hardening of the heart, it can be helpful to listen carefully to the words of Jesus: "*Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone*". If we internalize them and have a healthy knowledge of ourselves, we will quickly realize that our own lives are not so blameless—just as was the case with the Pharisees to whom Jesus gave this wonderful and unmasking lesson. This will make us more prudent and merciful, as we will try to contemplate the situation with the eyes and heart of the Lord.

The second danger, which I mentioned briefly above, is that of relativism. Currently, this tendency is spreading very intensely in the Church. It is believed that one is merciful when one "puts oneself in the sinner's shoes," when one feels compassion and understanding for him and, in a certain way, shows solidarity with him. However, there is a risk of neglecting the transcendental dimension, to the point of completely forgetting it or considering it irrelevant. In such a case, separation from God is no longer considered the great evil that must be fought with His grace. Thus, a change of perspective occurs and, over time, one no longer dares to call sin by its name. Confusion sets in and spreads.

The remedy to avoid this danger is found in the words of the Lord: "*Go, and do not sin again.*"

Therefore, Jesus did not dismiss that woman without first showing her the way that

leads to true peace. She had to return to obedience to God's commandments and not continue on the wrong path.

A "mercy" that does not direct this exhortation to people leaves them in their sin and therefore deceives them.

As the fruit of today's meditation, we ask the Lord to teach us to treat sinners as He does.

Meditation on the reading of the day: <https://en.elijamission.net/2021/03/13/>

Meditation on the Gospel of the day: <https://en.elijamission.net/2022/03/26/>