

Fr. Romeo Evangelista Homily
Sunday, April 6, 2025
Fifth Sunday of Lent
Cycle C

I had a strange dream some years ago. It was so vivid, that is why I could still remember it. In that dream, I found myself in front of the door of a house which has this message: "Leave your PAST before you enter." I was so glad as I entered the house, even though I did not know exactly what that message meant. Inside the house, I was greeted by a man who asked me what I wanted to change in my life and he promised to help me. He would help me to make a "better tomorrow." He told me to paint or draw what I wanted to happen. But I was not able to paint anything because I just found myself crying. It was then that I awoke – with tears in my eyes.

I did try to reflect on it and pray about it, particularly about the message: "Leave your PAST before you enter." I realized that at that time I had been thinking and dwelling too much on the past. I had been entertaining a lot of regrets and disappointments. I had been feeling guilty and sorry about a lot of things. I consider it now to be a moment of grace, for I realized that my dream was God's way of telling me to allow myself to experience what I needed then: God's loving mercy and forgiveness. I went to confession... and I experienced God's forgiving love.

All three readings for today's liturgy "look forward" – they speak of new beginnings. They have a common message for us: Do not dwell on the past. Do not be imprisoned in the guilt and shame of the past. According to Martin Luther, classical philosophy – the philosophy of Socrates, Plato and Aristotle – is concerned with the *being of things*: essence, substance, existence. Or in simple terms, it is concerned with what *are* things.

Biblical religion, however, is much more concerned with the future of things – of what things will be or will become under the influence of God. We have a God who makes all things new. And it is in it that we find hope.

Today's first reading is taken from the 43rd chapter of the Book of the Prophet Isaiah. It was written at the time of the return of the Israelites from captivity – or what historians call "the Babylonian exile." It was the worst trauma in the Jewish history. Their captivity was blamed by their prophets and sages, quite rightly, on their sinfulness. Because of the sinfulness of its people, Jerusalem was destroyed, the temple was burned down, the people were carried off to exile. It was as though God had abandoned his people. And the Israelites saw this as God's response to and punishment for their sins.

But now, as the Prophet Isaiah is telling the people of Israel: God is doing something new. Through the ministration of Cyrus, the king of Persia who conquered Babylon, Israel is being freed. And this is a fresh start for God's people – start of God doing something new. This is what God says through

Prophet Isaiah: “Remember not the events of the past, the things of long ago consider not; see, I am doing something new.”

In today’s second reading, St. Paul says: “I continue my pursuit toward the goal, the prize of God’s upward calling, in Christ Jesus.” Paul is somehow telling us: “*Why bother with the past? Why worry excessively what came before? Do not get preoccupied with your past sins. God is much more interested in your future.*”

In today’s gospel reading we hear this great one-liner from Jesus – addressed to the woman caught in adultery: “Neither do I condemn you.” “Go, and from now on do not sin anymore.” How rich is that two-letter word: GO. There is a “forward looking” into it. What is emphasized here is not the past but the future.

It is the same as saying as: “*Move on.*” “Do not get stuck in the past. Move on.” We need to take this message to heart. Jesus, the Lord who can redeem our past, is bringing us God’s mercy and forgiveness, offering us a bright future and new life.