



Things to Ponder

- [About the Author](#)
- [Order](#)
- [About the Book](#)
- [Reviews](#)
- [Readers' Comments](#)
- [News & Events](#)
- [A Prayer for the Day](#)
- [Things To Shout Out!](#)
- [Things to Ponder](#)
- [My Favorite Quotes](#)
- [FAQ](#)
- [Contact](#)
- [Home](#)

Fifth Sunday of Lent – April 7, 2019

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

One of the most scandalous gospels is that of the *woman caught in adultery* from John, Chapter 8 (today's Gospel). It is largely regarded as a later addition to the body of the *Gospel According to St. John*. Some years ago, there was a movie about a similar woman in a small Muslim town that was governed by *sharia law*. She had been falsely accused of having an adulterous affair. The movie displayed graphically how the men of the town bound her, placed her in a hole in the ground with her head just above the ground, and stoned her to death. Her body was taken outside the town where animals consumed her flesh. Such would have been the fate of Mary, had Joseph yielded hastily to anger upon the discovery of her pregnancy! The story told to us by John showed a woman in similar circumstances; but the elders thought to ask Jesus his opinion. He was silent at first and was writing in the sand. Some think he was writing down the sins of the woman's accusers. His ultimate response made them drop their stones: *Let the one among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her*.

Why is adultery so heinous a crime? It isn't so much because it is a sexual sin as because it is an act of infidelity. As many have noted, marriage is on the decline. People continue to cohabit and even start families. Some even get a *contract* from the state which is called *marriage*. Not as many actually make the commitment or covenant which is *sacramental marriage*. Is it fear of a permanent commitment?

The marital bond is the key biblical image of God's relationship with us. If God loves us so profoundly, why are we hesitant to respond accordingly? The *scandal* of this gospel is really the *scandal* of the cross: *God so loves the world!*

Yours in Christ,

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