

April 2 & 3, 2022

I notice these days that everyone wants my opinion. Every magazine I've ever subscribed to wants me to be on their opinion panel because "Your opinion is so valuable." Everything that I order online gets two requests: my opinion on what I purchased, and my opinion of how the delivery went. Was the delivery great or not so great? Almost everything I read online has a comment section, so people can throw their opinions around and it seems so clever.

All of this, we know, is only a sales gimmick. They want my opinion so they can sell me something else or use what I say to sell something else. Perhaps people don't realize that it's dangerous to ask for an opinion: they might get more than they bargained for.

"What do you think, Lord, about this woman we caught in adultery? Should we stone her to death or not? Now Jesus was just minding his own business, teaching people about the nature of God, and these religious leaders come up to bait him. They don't want his opinion; they want to catch him in a trap.

Jesus, however, shows them what a trap really looks like—the one they sprung on themselves. "Let the one among you who is sinless throw the first

stone, he says.” That is my opinion. “If you are so self-righteous as to demand me to be part of taking another’s life, then you should learn that I do not deal with opinions and games: I deal with the truth of your hearts. Do you want me to judge her heart? Let me judge yours first! Or, even better, judge your own hearts.”

“Behold, I’m doing something new,” the first reading says. What God is doing new is helping realize that religion is not a game we play with God, with others, or with ourselves. Religion is the risk we take to place our hearts openly before God—not the God of petty vengeance but the God of infinite mercy and love. Do we dare to measure our hearts according to that standard? Or do we use religion to hide from God because ultimately you cannot hide from divine love.

“Neither will I condemn you,” Jesus says to this woman who was shamed and used as a pawn in a religious power-game. “I will not participate in the sham of making my Father anything other than a God who desires not condemnation but ongoing transformation.”

As we come to the final weeks of Lent, maybe our final fast should be not giving up things or punishing ourselves, but rather, trying to strip off the masks we often use when approaching God, especially the “Now, I’m good

enough” mask. Lent should have taught us that none of us are good enough.

We really need to be good enough only to see how much we need God’s goodness, to make God’s grace the platform from which we live.

God doesn’t want our opinions; God, ultimately, wants our love as it responds to the vision of divine love that Jesus continues to reveal to us.

St. Paul realized that anything he knew apart from this revelation of love in Christ Jesus was, well, rubbish. Even our theological and religious games are rubbish. God wants more than rubbish for us.
