

03/13/16 5 Lent C

...Forgetting what lies behind but straining toward what lies ahead, I continue my pursuit toward the goal, the prize of God's upward calling, in Christ Jesus.

-- Golfers know what it's like to get a mulligan on the course. Two weeks ago, professional golfer Jason Bohn got what he described as the "ultimate mulligan." No, he didn't get to replay a shot without a penalty.

-- After Friday's round in a PGA tournament in Florida, he was not feeling good. He went to the medical trailer, thinking he'd get this checked out and then return to his hotel to rest. After doing an EKG, he was put on a stretcher and immediately taken to the hospital.

-- It turned out he'd had a heart attack without knowing it. He's a healthy 42 year old man, but it happened to him, and the doctors probably saved his life. Talk about an ultimate mulligan!

-- The woman in the gospel probably caught a similar break when Jesus came on the scene. She was caught in the act of adultery. Mosaic Law prescribed a punishment of death by stoning, though it called for that punishment for both parties. Funny, though, the man wasn't there. It smelled of a setup.

-- Hearing this gospel in our day, we may recall scenes in Saudi Arabia or in ISIS-controlled territory in Iraq or Syria where videos have come out of executions of women by stoning. The executioners would hearken back to old Islamic Law that paralleled the Mosaic Law on adultery.

-- There too, often it is only the woman who is punished. So much for literal interpretation of the Law, which calls for the same punishment for both the man and woman. Hypocrisy knows no time boundaries.

-- Jesus not only exposes hypocrisy. He gives the woman a second chance. He does not condemn her, but he doesn't condone her sin, either. He gives her another chance to make it right.

-- Jesus does the same thing for us. The mercy of God overflows from his goodness. The Church celebrates this sacramentally, especially in the sacraments of the Eucharist and Reconciliation (Penance).

-- These allow us to leave our past failures behind and press forward in God's work. We can take on the attitude of St. Paul, who left his past behind, straining toward what lies ahead.

-- In that sense, Jesus gives us the "ultimate mulligan." When we screw up and do something wrong, he bails us out. He also gives us the strength to go forward and avoid those sins in the future.

-- But we must take advantage of this grace. We need to use the sacramental means he gives us to be renewed in spirit. Just as Jason Bohn had to walk into that medical trailer, we need to visit Jesus, the spiritual physician.

-- The opportunity is there. We have the gift of the Eucharist which we will soon receive. In the next couple of weeks, we have additional times to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

-- The question we have to answer is this: Will we take advantage of the ultimate mulligan our Lord and Savior offers us?