



## PLEASE GIVE GENEROUSLY TO THE PONTIFICAL GOOD FRIDAY HOLY LAND COLLECTION

*Fifth Sunday of Lent:*

### HAVE YOU FELT THE MERCIFUL GAZE OF CHRIST?



*The Dome of the Rock on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem.*

Our Gospel this week begins on the Mount of Olives and finishes in the Temple, both important sites that pilgrims visit in Jerusalem. The Mount of Olives faces the Old City of Jerusalem and is the location of several Christian churches maintained by the Franciscan Custody of the Holy Land. Today, the Temple Mount is all that remains of the Temple of Jesus' time and is considered a very holy place by Jews, Christians, and Muslims alike.

We read in John's gospel that as Jesus arrived in the Temple area, He was confronted by a crowd bringing him a woman caught in the act of adultery. Her partner, also guilty of adultery and liable to stoning, is not mentioned at all. The woman was not really important, either, but for the Pharisees she was the bait in a trap to catch Jesus. If he said stone her, they could accuse him of not being merciful; and if he said let her go, they could accuse him of not fulfilling the law. But, once again, Jesus saw

their true intentions and turned the tables on their unscrupulous motives. St. Augustine described such a scenario when he wrote: "Notice how deceitful toward God the tongue is."

We see the same deceit today in ourselves and in others, everywhere in the world where there is strife and hatred. We want to accuse "the other guy" - "Look, there is the problem; there is the sinner" - and never confront the sin in our own heart that is part of the hatred that feeds fear and violence.

The Temple Mount is the site of some of the worst confrontations between the major religions in the Holy Land. The Christians in the Holy Land are today caught in the middle of the political, cultural, and religious conflicts in this region. The conflicts arise from the sins that make us critical of the other and blind us to the faults within ourselves.

Let us pray this Lent that we all will begin to follow Jesus' command to "Go and sin no more" (Jn 8:11) and to remember our Christian brothers and sisters who live with this strife and conflict on a daily, ongoing basis. We can all help preserve the Holy Sites and the Christian presence in the Holy Land by making a generous contribution on Good Friday to the Franciscan Custody of the Holy Land.



## Help for Holy Land Christians

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