

## Today's Readings

Exodus 17:3-7

Psalm 95:1-2, 7e-9c

John 4:5-15, 19b-26, 39a, 40-42

## Prepare the Meeting Space

In the worship area, on a table draped with a violet cloth, place:

- a Lectionary
- a battery-operated candle
- a cactus or dried-flower arrangement

For the Gathering activity you will need:

- a recorded Gathering song and music player
- pail of water
- an earthenware mug or metal soup ladle
- tabletop novelty water fountain or image of a water fountain
- today's Children's Leaflet or obtain online an artist's image of Jesus and the woman at the well (download from [sermons4kids.com/samaritan\\_woman\\_colorpg.htm](http://sermons4kids.com/samaritan_woman_colorpg.htm))

## Suggested Music

See page 64 for more information.

### GATHERING:

**"Saying Yes"** (*Seeds* VOL-2, Track #8) or **"CHOICES"** (*Promise & Good News* VOL-1, Track #16)

### GOSPEL ACCLAMATION:

**"Glory and Praise to You, Lord Jesus Christ"** (*Promise & Good News* VOL-2, Track #23)

# Jesus Is the Messiah

## PREPARATION

### Children's Leaflet

Have on hand copies of the Children's Leaflet for this Sunday. Distribute copies either at the start of the session or before the children return to the assembly.

## PREPARE WITH PRAYER

*The LORD is our God, and we are his people, the sheep he takes care of in his own pasture. (PSALM 95:7)*

## Scripture Background

Both of today's Scripture readings focus on the body's thirst for water, which readily symbolizes the soul's thirst for God. Just as physical life is not possible without a steady supply of water, so is spiritual fulfillment not possible without a constant outpouring of divine grace.

The First Reading presents one of many tests the Chosen People endured as they headed for the Promised Land following their enslavement in Egypt. On this particular occasion, their faith in God's plan for them wavers under the pain of their thirst with water nowhere in sight.

God finally gives instructions to Moses on where to find water. Although the people's fear has overpowered their faith and erupted into bitter complaining, God showers mercy on them nonetheless. How different is this from the pagan gods that always required exact payment for their favors!

Situational irony appears in the Gospel as well, when Jesus shares intimate knowledge about himself and his divine mission with someone who is not Jewish—and a woman at that. The people of Samaria differed from those of Judea and Galilee in that they worshiped the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in their own way, on their own mountain, Gerazim, instead of on Jerusalem's Temple Mount.

Both Jews and Samaritans shared a common bloodline, but during an earlier period of history, the Samaritans' faith had evolved differently following an Assyrian invasion. By the first century AD, Jewish people thought Samaritan people were apostates.



To the woman of Samaria, Jesus revealed that: (1) he was greater than Jacob or any other ancestor in the faith because he was the Christ through whom the Holy Spirit would be poured out upon the faithful; (2) the love of the Holy Spirit would prove more fulfilling to the woman than all the previous loves of her life combined; and (3) worship of the Christ one day would perfect and replace all forms of temple worship then familiar to Jews and Samaritans alike.

### **CHILDREN'S CONNECTIONS**

Water imagery fills today's readings, yet children who have never seen water drawn from a well with a pail might not be able to understand parts of today's Gospel. Equally puzzling might be Jesus' claim that he is a fountain of living water.

At age five, children start developing a natural curiosity about how things work, and they can understand a simple explanation. For these reasons, the Gathering Activity focuses on objects and pictures that will teach the children facts about wells and fountains.

What was the well like where Jesus met the woman? It was located on land purchased by the patriarch Jacob some 1,750 years earlier. Legend held that Jacob himself had dug the well, and indeed even today hand-dug wells can be found all over the Holy Land.

Explain to children that rainwater sinks only so far into the ground before it reaches a sheet of solid rock. Then water starts to collect in the area above the rock, which might consist of sand, gravel, or a layer of rock so full of holes that it looks like Swiss cheese. In that area, the water just keeps collecting every time it rains. If you dig a hole deep enough, you will eventually hit that layer of water-soaked ground, and the hole you are digging will start to fill up.

Then, you reinforce the sides of your hole with stones or bricks to keep it from caving in, and over the top you build a small structure to make it easier to lower a pail into the hole with a rope. That is how you build a well.

What is a water fountain? It works a little like someone just below the surface of a pool, using a hose to shoot water into the air overhead. Only instead of a

### **More About ...**

#### **Jacob's Well, Then and Now**

In Jesus' day, the journey from Judea through Samaria to Galilee took three days. The village of Sychar, where the woman of today's Gospel lived, was situated a half-mile northeast of Jacob's well.

Wells were important in ancient life and cultures. Much as people today hold ribbon-cutting ceremonies upon opening a newly-erected building, the Jewish people ritually celebrated the completion of a new well. Wells served as places to socialize. Sometimes the ownership and use of a particular well became a source of noisy dispute. Poisoning a well was an act of war.

Jacob's well still exists on land belonging to a monastery. A Byzantine church was built over it in the sixth century AD. The well hole is the width of one man, and its depth is 135 feet. (For an approximate idea of that measurement, picture a "tower" made of 22 men, each 6' tall, standing on top of one another.)

person, there is a mechanical pump placed underwater, and it shoots the water upward.

### **THE CHILDREN'S LEAFLET**

The leaflet for this week helps children learn about the people in today's Gospel, through a prayer, a summary of the Gospel, and a creative activity.

If you distribute the leaflet now and time permits, you may wish to read with the children the summary of the Gospel in "The Word of God This Week" after you have read the Gospel. Point out the artwork and ask the children what is happening in the picture.

### Leaflet Activity

Families are asked to use water this week as a reminder of the many thirsts we experience, including a spiritual thirst. The activity is a word game about today's Gospel story. The solution is shown here for your convenience.

The people in today's Gospel

are Jesus and  
A J F E C S D U R S

a Samaritan  
L S T A N M B A X R L I Q T D A K N

woman. The events  
E W Y O E M B A R N

took place at the well.  
U W N E O L F L



## THE LITURGY OF THE WORD

### Gathering

Invite the children to be seated. Ask them if anyone knows how people obtained water in the days before they had faucets and sinks in their houses. Explain that a family member went to an outdoor well to draw a pail of water, then took it inside. Anytime someone got thirsty, that person dipped a mug or ladle into the pail and drank. People didn't know about germs, so everyone in the household drank from the same mug or ladle. If you wish, take a drink from the pail you have brought in the manner you have just described.

Explain that today's Gospel takes place at a well where Jesus and his Apostles stopped on their way from Judea to Galilee. Show the children images from today's Children's Leaflet or the downloaded image of Jesus and the woman talking beside Jacob's well. Using the "More About..." text, give them a simple explanation of how the well was built.

Mention that Jesus tells the woman in today's Gospel that he is like a fountain that gives living water to the people who come to him. Why is a fountain better than a well? You don't have to do any work lowering and raising a bucket to get the water. You just stand there and fill up your cup or pail with the water as it falls. Then show the children a downloaded image of a water fountain or, if you have one, point out the tabletop novelty water fountain.

Conclude by telling the children that water is a good symbol for God. Without water, your body dries up. Without God, your soul dries up.

### Collect

**LEADER:** Invite the children to close their eyes and bow their heads for prayer. We will keep a moment of

silence as we talk to God in our hearts. Let's think about all the times this week when we remembered to pray or forgot to pray. (*Pause for silence.*)

Let us pray. Lord, when we forget to drink water on a hot day, we make ourselves sick. Our souls get sick, too, if we forget to pray. You, O Lord, are the living water that keeps our spirits alive and growing. May you be praised forever and ever.

**CHILDREN:** Amen.

*Invite the children to be seated. Light the candle and begin the First Reading.*

### First Reading

**LEADER:** Our First Reading tells what God did one day for his Chosen People when Moses was leading them through the desert to the Promised Land.

*Read Exodus 17:3-7. Then say, "The word of the Lord."*

**CHILDREN:** Thanks be to God.

### Responsorial Psalm

The psalm may be either sung or spoken. Before beginning, sing or announce the response.

**LEADER:** If today you hear God's voice, harden not your hearts.

**CHILDREN:** If today you hear God's voice, harden not your hearts.

**LEADER:** *Read Psalm 95:1-2, 7e-9c.*

### Gospel Acclamation

Invite the children to stand. Sing the suggested Acclamation or another familiar one. If you choose not to sing the Acclamation, proceed to the proclamation of the Gospel.

## **Proclaim the Gospel**

**LEADER:** As you heard earlier, today's Gospel is about a meeting between Jesus and a woman at a well near her village.

The Lord be with you.

**CHILDREN:** And with your Spirit.

**LEADER:** A reading from the Gospel of John.

**CHILDREN:** † Glory to you, O Lord.

**LEADER:** *Read John 4:5-15, 19b-26, 39a, 40-42. Then say, "The Gospel of the Lord."*

**CHILDREN:** Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

## **Homily**

Base a homily on the following ideas and questions.

- We already talked about the water that our bodies need to live. Now, let's talk about food. Have you ever noticed that certain foods don't fill you up when you are really hungry? Cotton candy is one example. Can you think of others?
- What foods, on the other hand, really fill you up? When I have a great big appetite, for example, I like to eat \_\_\_\_\_. What do you like to eat when your stomach feels empty?
- In the same way that good food makes our bodies feel full, talking to God fills up our souls. Prayer time is the most important part of our day!

Let's review the times of day that are good times for prayer.

- When you first wake up in the morning, say, "Thank you, God, for this new day!"
- Before and after meals, say prayers of thanks.
- At night before you go to sleep, say "Thank you," "I'm sorry," and "Please." Thank God for the day's blessings, say you're sorry for the things you did wrong that day, and ask for blessings on all those you love.

## **Profession of Faith**

**LEADER:** Please stand for the Profession of Faith and respond to each question with, "I do." Do you believe in God, the Father almighty, who gave his Chosen People water to drink in the desert?

**CHILDREN:** I do.

**LEADER:** Do you believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who gave the woman at the well the good news that he was the Messiah?

**CHILDREN:** I do.

**LEADER:** Do you believe in the Holy Spirit, who was given to you at your Baptism and continually refreshes your soul on your journey of faith?

**CHILDREN:** I do.

## **Prayer of the Faithful**

**LEADER:** Aware that our Heavenly Father has poured out the Holy Spirit upon us through the saving work of Christ our Lord, let us lift up our hearts in prayer. Our response to each petition will be, "Hear us, O Lord."

That our Holy Father, the Pope, and all Church leaders will be led by the Holy Spirit in all they think, say, and do, we pray.

**CHILDREN:** Hear us, O Lord.

**LEADER:** That the wealthy nations of the earth will help the people in poor nations find the food and water they need for life and health, we pray.

**CHILDREN:** Hear us, O Lord.

**LEADER:** That the life-giving water of God's grace will strengthen the souls of all of us here, we pray.

**CHILDREN:** Hear us, O Lord.

**LEADER:** *Invite the children to pray their own petitions. Then pray:*

Heavenly Father, thank you for sending us your Son, Jesus, to tell us about the life-giving water that is ours. Help us be more faithful in prayer as we continue on our journey of faith throughout this third week of Lent. This we ask through Christ our Lord.

**CHILDREN:** Amen.

## **Return to Assembly**

The Liturgy of the Word ends with the Prayer of the Faithful. Prepare the children to return to the assembly in a respectful manner. If you haven't already done so, distribute the leaflets. Remind the children to take the leaflets home and share them with their families. Encourage them to watch this week's Gospel Reflection video and complete the Family Corner activities as a family.