

March 14, 2020 – 3rd Sunday of Lent



"MY SOUL THIRSTS FOR GOD, THE LIVING GOD – LIVING WATER"

The First Reading of today from the Book of Exodus tells us that God provided the Israelite people with 'living water from the rock.' Moses strikes a rock and water pour out. Once again everyone has the evidence that God is in their midst. Today's Gospel Reading from St. John echoes the First Reading from the Book of Exodus concerning the living water and tells us how God communicates His Divine life to believers. Jesus promised the unnamed Samaritan woman the living water that will become a spring of water gushing up to eternal life and the grace to recognize who he really is.

Initially, the woman, in common with all her people, saw Jesus as alien, 'you a Jew, me a Samaritan'. It is an all too human of seeing, 'us' and 'them'. However, Jesus, now risen Lord, sees no one as alien or foreign. He recognizes what we all have in common rather than what divides us. What we all have in common as human beings is our thirst for God. This deep spiritual thirst in our lives keeps us journeying towards the well of life. It also leads us to keep asking questions, the kind of question the woman asked her townspeople, 'I wonder if this man is the Christ?' The story of the Samaritan woman is not only a reflection on our thirst for God but also on God's thirst for us.

1. "Give me a drink." – God thirsts

The story of the meeting of Jesus and the woman at the well started with a simple request from Jesus, **"Give me a drink."** It was noontime. **Jesus was thirsty.** He surely needed water for his parched throat. But Jesus had a **deeper thirst** - his real thirst was for this woman's faith and salvation. It

suggests also not only his physical thirst but also his deeper thirst, God's thirst, to bring us all into an encounter with the living God. Later in this gospel of John, Jesus cries out from the cross, 'I thirst'. This physical thirst of a dying man again symbolizes God's thirst, God's desire that all of humanity would receive the living water of God's Spirit. God gave Jesus to the world to reveal God's thirst for us and also to satisfy our thirst for God. It has been said that prayer is the encounter of God's thirst with ours. The story of the Samaritan woman's faith journey can speak to our own faith journey in a whole variety of ways.

**1. "Sir, give me this water, so that I may not be thirsty." –
Samaritan woman thirsts**

Like Jesus, **the Samaritan woman was thirsty too.** That's why she came to draw water from the well. But in reality, her thirst was more than water and Jesus could see that. She needed some peace from the turmoil and chaos of emotions and relationships in which she lived. She needed forgiveness and release of the shame that she lived in. She needed the love that she so desperately sought but failed to find five times. She needed someone she could trust and believe in. She needed a Savior; a Messiah!

As they talked Jesus revealed that he knew her thirst. Their dialogue progressed from a simple request for a drink to a discussion about **living water**. Living water ordinarily meant water that flows from a spring rather than stagnant water from a well. However, in their discussion, it came to mean the **water of eternal life**. The woman's knowledge of Jesus also progressed, from a mere stranger who is a Jew to a Prophet, to a Messiah and Savior.

a. She thirsted for a genuine relationship.

Even among the outcast Samaritans, she was an outsider. She was a woman with a bad reputation. Everyone knew her past. She had had five husbands and was living with a man in sin. This was in a day when only men could divorce. She had been used and discarded again and again.

b. She also thirsted for God.

Once she realized that Jesus was more than just another Jew she asked him a question. The question basically amounted to 'Where do I find God?' She was thirsty, so she requested Jesus saying, **"Sir, give me this water, so that I may not be thirsty again,"** and Jesus offered her living water, the water of eternal life! **She was thirsty for a real relationship and for**

God. Jesus had a never-ending supply of what she needed. So, he offered her both.

The conversation between Jesus and the Samaritan woman shows us something of how the Lord relates to all of us. He meets us in the ordinariness of our daily lives. He engages with us as we are, in all our brokenness and frailty. He perseveres in reaching out to us, even when we resist his approaches. He perseveres with us because he has a precious gift from God to offer us, that living water which, when received, turns into a spring within us, welling up into eternal life.

2. "We no longer believe because of your word; for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is truly the Savior of the world." – People thirst

There were also **a lot more thirsty people in that village.** The Samaritan woman did realize this. As soon as she knew who Jesus was, she ran to the town to tell others. The amazing thing is that these are the very people who had shunned her and abused her. Some of them may have been her ex-husbands and men she had been in illicit relationships with. Yet, she ran right to these people to tell them that God's anointed one had arrived. Certainly, few of them trusted her and they came to see this man she spoke of. They came to Jesus because **they were thirsty too.** They yearned to know God. They came to him for living water, and their thirst was quenched! They were shunned and mistreated by the Jews and to hear that the Messiah had come was amazing. But even more, so that he had come to their well - to their town. Their thirst was greater than their mistrust. And in the end, they said, **"We no longer believe because of your word; for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is truly the Savior of the world."**

We also have a thirst like the Israelite people and the Samaritan woman. What is it that we are thirsting for? By our baptism we have been given the gift of faith and eternal life, but what steps do we have to take to live that life? Do we still thirst for material things, for bodily pleasures, for power or status? How can we let the waters that Jesus describes, quench that thirst in us? Jesus is the source of that water, and by going to Jesus we will find the help, the fullness, the refreshment we need.

During this Lenten Season then, let us come to the well and meet Jesus there. He will give us living water, which is water that does not run out because it grows from within, and it quenches our deepest thirst – the thirst for God - **"My soul thirsts for God, the living God!"** And this is the Good News of today.

Lent is a season when we are invited to get in touch with our own deepest thirsts, our own spiritual longings. We can easily lose touch with that deeper, spiritual, side to ourselves, as we get immersed in what is often the daily grind of life. Lent is a time when we are called to seek Jesus, to seek the Lord, as the one who, alone, can truly satisfy those deepest longings and quench that spiritual thirst. We need to find our own well where we can meet Jesus, our own place and time where we can put ourselves in the way of the Lord who is always coming towards us to meet with us. As with the woman, he may choose to meet with us in unexpected places, and at unexpected times. Wherever and whenever he meets us, all he asks of us is something of the openness that the Samaritan woman displayed.

Let us pray:

Lord Jesus, my soul thirsts for you. Fill me with your Holy Spirit that I may always find joy in your presence and take delight in doing your will. Just as the Samaritan woman let me experience the Living Water and be the witness to that Living water in my daily living

Jesus, I Trust In You