Third Sunday of Lent 2023

 We all experience **two kinds of thirst** in life, and unless we **understand the difference** between them, we will always be **frustrated**.

The first kind of thirst is **horizontal thirst**.

* We thirst for, we **desire**, the **good things of this earth**: food, drink, companionship, fun, entertainment, a nice house, a good income, success at work or school.
* It's part of our **nature** to desire these things; there's nothing **wrong** with them.

But we also have **another** kind of thirst - **vertical thirst**.

* This is a **deeper** thirst, a deeper desire. It's a **desire for meaning and purpose**.
* This desire is **also** built into our nature.
* There is nothing we can do to **destroy** it, just as there is nothing we can do to destroy our natural desires for food and water.

But unlike horizontal thirst, our vertical thirst **cannot be satisfied** by our own efforts.

* **Only God himself** can satisfy it.
* And he created us like that **on purpose**.
* **constantly draws us towards him**, towards intimate, personal contact with his eternal, transcendent love.

This is why even when all of our **horizontal** thirsts are satisfied, when we have money, success, and pleasure, **we are still restless**.

* Our deeper, vertical thirst **can't be satisfied by things of this world**.
* As the Catechism puts it: "Man is made to live in **communion with God**, in whom he finds happiness" (#45).
* The meaning and purpose which **alone** will give us **true happiness** comes from **friendship with God in Christ**, **not** from worldly success, pleasures, and human relationships.

When we **forget** that, when try to satisfy our **vertical** thirst with **horizontal stuff**, we put ourselves on the road to **frustration, tragedy** and **disappointment**.

 That's what the **Samaritan woman** had spent her life **experiencing**.

* She had had **five husbands**, the Gospel tells us, and now she was living with **another** man, and hadn't even **bothered** to marry him this time.
* She was coming to the town well in the **middle of the day**, the Gospel tell us, the **hottest time** of the day, when **none** of the other women in the town would be coming to the well.
* She wanted to **avoid** them.

Here is a woman with **great spiritual sensitivity,** and yet, she is living a life of **frustration and alienation,**of**loneliness**and**inner turmoil**.

* She has been trying to slake her **vertical** thirst, which only God can satisfy, with **horizontal stuff**: human love, comfort, earthly pleasures.
* She has learned the **hard way** that that formula doesn't work.
* She has learned that she needs a **Savior**.
* She needs to find the "**spring of water welling up to eternal life**."
* She needs to find "**the gift of God**."
* She needs to discover **Christ**.

And she does - Jesus **reveals himself** to her, and her life turns around, **one-hundred-and-eighty degrees**.

She **runs** back to the village announcing the good news to **anyone** she can find.

And we know from the Gospel that Jesus and his disciples ended up spending **three days** there, and the **whole town** came to believe in him.

* She and the people of her town had been wandering through a **spiritual desert**, their souls slowly dying the death of frustration, boredom, and **meaninglessness**, even while they enjoyed **material** pleasures and prosperity.
* But Christ **changed** all that.

We need look no further for the secret to happiness; **Christ himself** is the rock and the water flowing in the spiritual desert of this fallen world.