

Third Sunday of Lent

Reading 1

EX 17:3-7

In those days, in their thirst for water,
the people grumbled against Moses,
saying, “Why did you ever make us leave Egypt?
Was it just to have us die here of thirst
with our children and our livestock?”
So Moses cried out to the LORD,
“What shall I do with this people?
a little more and they will stone me!”
The LORD answered Moses,
“Go over there in front of the people,
along with some of the elders of Israel,
holding in your hand, as you go,
the staff with which you struck the river.
I will be standing there in front of you on the rock in
Horeb.
Strike the rock, and the water will flow from it
for the people to drink.”
This Moses did, in the presence of the elders of Israel.
The place was called Massah and Meribah,
because the Israelites quarreled there
and tested the LORD, saying,
“Is the LORD in our midst or not?”

Responsorial Psalm **PS 95:1-2, 6-7, 8-9.**

R. (8) If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts.
Come, let us sing joyfully to the LORD;
let us acclaim the Rock of our salvation.
Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving;
let us joyfully sing psalms to him.
R. If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts.
Come, let us bow down in worship;
let us kneel before the LORD who made us.
For he is our God,
and we are the people he shepherds, the flock he
guides.
R. If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts.
Oh, that today you would hear his voice:
“Harden not your hearts as at Meribah,
as in the day of Massah in the desert,
Where your fathers tempted me;
they tested me though they had seen my works.”
R. If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts.

Reading 2

ROM 5:1-2, 5-8

Brothers and sisters:
Since we have been justified by faith,
we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus
Christ,
through whom we have gained access by faith
to this grace in which we stand,
and we boast in hope of the glory of God.

And hope does not disappoint,
because the love of God has been poured out into our
hearts
through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.
For Christ, while we were still helpless,
died at the appointed time for the ungodly.
Indeed, only with difficulty does one die for a just
person,
though perhaps for a good person one might even
find courage to die.
But God proves his love for us
in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us.

Gospel

JN 4:5-42

Jesus came to a town of Samaria called Sychar,
near the plot of land that Jacob had given to his son
Joseph.
Jacob’s well was there.
Jesus, tired from his journey, sat down there at the
well.
It was about noon.

A woman of Samaria came to draw water.
Jesus said to her,
“Give me a drink.”
His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.
The Samaritan woman said to him,
“How can you, a Jew, ask me, a Samaritan woman,
for a drink?”
—For Jews use nothing in common with
Samaritans.—
Jesus answered and said to her,
“If you knew the gift of God
and who is saying to you, ‘Give me a drink,’
you would have asked him
and he would have given you living water.”

The woman said to him,
“Sir, you do not even have a bucket and the cistern is deep;
where then can you get this living water?
Are you greater than our father Jacob,
who gave us this cistern and drank from it himself
with his children and his flocks?”
Jesus answered and said to her,
“Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again;
but whoever drinks the water I shall give will never
thirst;
the water I shall give will become in him
a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”
The woman said to him,
“Sir, give me this water, so that I may not be thirsty
or have to keep coming here to draw water.”

Jesus said to her,
“Go call your husband and come back.”
The woman answered and said to him,
“I do not have a husband.”
Jesus answered her,
“You are right in saying, ‘I do not have a husband.’
For you have had five husbands,
and the one you have now is not your husband.
What you have said is true.”
The woman said to him,
“Sir, I can see that you are a prophet.
Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain;
but you people say that the place to worship is in
Jerusalem.”
Jesus said to her,
“Believe me, woman, the hour is coming
when you will worship the Father
neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem.
You people worship what you do not understand;
we worship what we understand,
because salvation is from the Jews.
But the hour is coming, and is now here,
when true worshipers will worship the Father in
Spirit and truth;
and indeed the Father seeks such people to worship
him.
God is Spirit, and those who worship him
must worship in Spirit and truth.”
The woman said to him,
“I know that the Messiah is coming, the one called the
Christ;
when he comes, he will tell us everything.”

Jesus said to her,
“I am he, the one speaking with you.”

At that moment his disciples returned,
and were amazed that he was talking with a woman,
but still no one said, “What are you looking for?”
or “Why are you talking with her?”
The woman left her water jar
and went into the town and said to the people,
“Come see a man who told me everything I have
done.
Could he possibly be the Christ?”
They went out of the town and came to him.
Meanwhile, the disciples urged him, “Rabbi, eat.”
But he said to them,
“I have food to eat of which you do not know.”
So the disciples said to one another,
“Could someone have brought him something to
eat?”
Jesus said to them,
“My food is to do the will of the one who sent me
and to finish his work.
Do you not say, ‘In four months the harvest will be
here?’
I tell you, look up and see the fields ripe for the
harvest.
The reaper is already receiving payment
and gathering crops for eternal life,
so that the sower and reaper can rejoice together.
For here the saying is verified that ‘One sows and
another reaps.’
I sent you to reap what you have not worked for;
others have done the work,
and you are sharing the fruits of their work.”

Many of the Samaritans of that town began to believe
in him
because of the word of the woman who testified,
“He told me everything I have done.”
When the Samaritans came to him,
they invited him to stay with them;
and he stayed there two days.
Many more began to believe in him because of his
word,
and they said to the woman,
“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.”

Homily -- 3rd Sunday of Lent (A)

She has a history... fears... wounds... and sorrows. Secrets too. The woman in the gospel today has a history-- she is a woman with a past. Some gospel commentaries will tell you that her past is generally seen as one of promiscuity. The evidence? Five husbands and now living unmarried with a sixth man. Looked at but not seen. Labelled yet nameless. She remains unknown to everyone. Everyone, that is, except Jesus.

How easily we forget that women of her day, and for that matter many women in our world today, had very little choice or control over their own lives. If she is divorced it is because the men divorced her; she had no right of divorce. If she's not divorced, then she has suffered the death of five husbands. Five times left alone, of no value, five times starting over. Maybe some divorced her-- maybe some died. We don't know. Either one is a tragedy for her life.

People like her, people like us, people with a past, often live in fear of being found out. It is not just the fear that another will know the truth, the facts, about us-- but that that they will do so without ever really seeing us and without ever really knowing us. We all thirst to be seen and to be known at a deep, intimate level-- to be accepted. We all want to pour our lives out to one who knows us-- to let them drink from the depths of our very being. That is exactly what Jesus is asking of this woman with a past when he says, "*Give me a drink.*" It is the invitation to let herself be known. To be known is to be loved... and to be loved is to be known.

To live life without being known is a dry, desolate existence. It leaves us to live a dehydrated life thirsting for a well to quench our thirst. Think of the variety of wells to which we turn in life to satisfy our thirst. For some, the well is relationships-- to be popular. For others, it is the well of financial success and material comfort. For many, it is the well of social status and influence, or power and control. For others, it is the well of physical fitness and "body beautiful." And for some, it is the well of alcohol and drugs. I have named just a few of the many wells that day after day, month after months, year after year, we go to drink. Many people have often drunk too long from wells that never satisfy.

There is, however, another well. It is the well that we know as Jesus Christ. This is the well that washes us clean of our past. This is the well from which new life and new possibilities spring forth. This is the well that frees us from the patterns and habits that keep us living as thirsty people.

And that is precisely the well that the Samaritan woman in today's gospel found. She intended to go to the same old well to which she had gone for years. But today is different. Jesus holds before her two realities of her life: the reality of what is and the reality of what might be. He brings her past to the light of the noontime day. "*You have had five husbands,*" he says, "*and the one you have now is not your husband.*" It is not a statement of condemnation, but simply a statement of what is. He tells her everything she has done-- she has been found out. But it doesn't end there. Jesus is more interested in her future than her past. He wants to satisfy her thirst, more than judge her past. In other words, he looks beyond the past and sees a woman dying of thirst: a woman thirsting to be loved, to be seen, to be accepted, to be included, to be forgiven, to be known. Her thirst will never be quenched in a satisfying way by the external wells of life. And I can say in a confident way: neither will ours.

Jesus proclaims to this nameless woman: "*Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty.*" This is the living water of new life, new possibilities, and freedom from the past. This living water is Jesus' own life. Christ satisfied her thirst and she left her water jar behind-- a striking detail in the gospel-- she left her water jar behind!

Jesus is calling not only this woman, but all sinners, to this same well. He knows our past, but is more concerned about our future. Most Christians probably think that we will be punished some day for our sins... but, to me, it makes more sense to recognize that we are punished by our sins. Jesus calls all sinners into deeper communion through love—and the sin that should really concern us is not found in our past, but in remaining ignorant or dismissive of the gift Jesus is trying to offer us now. Jesus invites us to leave our water jars behind and drink from the well that is him.

Until we come to the well of Christ's life within us, we will continue returning to the dry wells of our culture... and we will continue to live thirsty. So, think for a moment: from what wells do you drink? How much longer will you carry your water jar to the various wells of this world? There is another well, one that promises life, one by which we are known and loved. Come to the well of Christ's life, Christ's love, Christ's presence that is already in you. Come to the well that is Christ himself... and then drink deeply. Drink deeply until you become the one you have drunk.

Our sharing in the Eucharist each weekend is the most important way that we drink from that well as a community of faith. For several weeks, we are sacrificing that opportunity for the good of the wider community in the face of the Coronavirus. When we are able to return to our regular Eucharistic celebrations, may we appreciate the significance of this sacred time each week in our lives with greater clarity.

GENERAL INTERCESSIONS
Third Sunday of Lent – 15 March 2020

PRESIDER:

Coming to the source of abundant life, we lift up our prayers to God in trust as we join in the response:

Lord, Hear Our Prayer.

LECTOR/DEACON:

That, as members of the Church, we may more fully devote ourselves to following God's will, especially when it may not be our will, let us pray to the Lord:

That church leaders and civil leaders may, like Moses, lead their people with wisdom and compassion, seeking the guidance of God, let us pray to the Lord:

That through our Lenten almsgiving we may help many of our brothers and sisters move from need to fulfillment, let us pray to the Lord:

For all those affected by the spread of the Coronavirus around the world, and especially for those who have lost loved ones, we pray to the Lord:

For an end to discrimination and prejudice, in our own nation and around the world, especially when it is based on race, religion, or gender, let us pray to the Lord:

For all who have died (*especially Bessie Shores, _____*
_____)-- that they may find the fullness of life in the Kingdom of God, let us pray to the Lord:

That God will hear the prayers we now hold in the silence of our hearts (*pause...*), let us pray to the Lord:

PRESIDER:

Lord God, you know us better than we know ourselves and you know best what we need. Help us to differentiate between our wants and our needs, seeking that which will bring true fulfillment. We ask this through Christ our Lord. (Amen)