In today's Gospel I see 4 stories of conversion.

3 stories are obvious; one not so obvious.

Story one: Let us start with the Samaritan woman.

She is at the well by herself at noon.

Most women would draw water for washing clothes and food preparation

in the cool of the morning and be in the shade of their homes

during the heat of the day.

But she is here at noon.

Bible scholars believe this is because the woman

has had and even now has a sinful life.

She is not welcome in the social fabric of the community.

Jesus himself is aware of her past and present relationships

but does not condemn her. Jesus gathers her to himself.

He actually engages her in conversation.

The Samaritan woman is open and receptive

to this person Jesus sitting with her at the well.

Questions are flying out of her…

What is living water? How is it I will never thirst again?

Are you a prophet? What is Spirit and Truth?

Jesus is moving her from isolation… to faith…

and from faith to evangelization.

Jesus challenges her to think further about what he gives:

"a spring of water welling up to eternal life."

The woman is changed.

Her dignity is restored and she now leaves with her jar

to share her new faith with the townspeople.

The Samaritan woman shows us what can happen

when we engage in conversation and questions about our faith.

The Samaritan woman teaches us

that faith is about dialogue…growth…and change.

Story number two:

The 2nd story of conversion is with the disciples

that were with Jesus that day.

They had gone to Sychar to buy food.

Sychar was a Samaritan town.

Being Jewish in a Samaritan town

meant that Jesus' followers might not be welcome.

In Sychar the food they were buying

would not have been appropriate

according to Jewish customs…in other words…not kosher.

The town and food are important to this conversion story

because when the disciples came back to the well,

Jesus points to the fields

that will be ready for harvest in 4 months.

He tells the disciples…look up and see the fields ripe for the harvest.

Jesus is really creating a dialogue with the disciples

about the human crop of souls.

Jesus claims that the Samaritan people
are coming to know the truth
and Jesus is suggesting that his disciples
will be involved in their conversions.
The disciples are to gather the community to encounter Jesus.
Jesus is talking about who is the Sower and who is the Reaper.
Jesus had started a dialogue about the Samaritans
with his disciples.
The disciples were growing in faith in Jesus.
The disciples would eventually change
and work in Samaria among these non-believers.

Story three:

The 3rd story of conversion is about the people of Sychar
where Jesus sat by the well and visited with the Samaritan woman.
She actually went out and told the townspeople
about this Jesus and they listened.
This woman started the dialogue about Jesus.
Many more began to believe in him
because of his words to the woman.
The Samaritan woman becomes a disciple of Jesus.
Remember a disciple Believes...Grows...Gathers...Loves...and Leads.
She did all of this in one story of the Bible.
Scripture continues... "Many more began to believe in him
because of his own words, 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."
The people of Sychar engaged in dialogue,
their faith grew, and they too were changed.

And finally Story four:

The 4th story of conversion is about all of us. You and me.
We are this Gospel's story. Let me explain.
We have a thirst for God. That is why we are here.
In a sense we are here today at the well.
And at this well is the baptismal water that unites us all.
We are all disciples in our everyday life.
Just today you were greeted at the doors of this church
with a smile and "Good Evening/Morning".
And with those words a dialogue has started.
Today we grow in faith by listening to and feeding ourselves
with the Scriptures read here today…
the books of Exodus, Paul, and John…in hope of change.

During this Lenten journey, the Gospel invites us
to imagine ourselves sitting at that well with Jesus.
What would we say to Him?
What are the places in our lives where we feel thirsty?

Where do we need His grace…His mercy…His healing?

If we bring those things honestly to Him,

we will discover what the Samaritan woman discovered:

that Jesus already knows us completely and loves us deeply.

May this Lenten journey help us recognize our deepest thirst

and open our hearts more fully

to the living water that Jesus offers.