

March 3rd, Third Sunday of Lent (John 4:5-42) - Christ is the living water.

“So, Jesus came to a town in Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of ground Jacob had given to his son Joseph. Jacob’s well was there, and Jesus, tired as he was from the journey, sat down by the well. It was about noon. When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, “***Will you give me a drink?***” (His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.) The Samaritan woman said to him, “You are a Jew, and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?” (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans. Jesus answered her, “If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water.” “Sir,” the woman said, “you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water? Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did also his sons and his livestock?” ***Jesus answered, “Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”*** (John 4:5-14).

For Jesus Christ to go from the territory of Judea to Galilee meant passing through a central territory called Samaria. Most Jews did everything they could to avoid traveling through Samaria. The reason goes way back into history.

After the Northern Kingdom, with its capital at Samaria, fell to the Assyrians, many Jews were deported to Assyria, and foreigners were brought in to settle the land and help keep the peace (2 Kings 17:24). The intermarriage between those foreigners and the remaining Jews resulted in a mixed race, impure in the opinion of the Jews who had lived in the southern kingdom. Thus, the pure Jews hated this mixed race, called Samaritans, because they felt that their fellow Jews who had intermarried had betrayed their people and the nation. Secondly, the Samaritans had set up an alternative center for worship on **Mount Gerizim** to parallel the temple at Jerusalem, but it had been destroyed 150 years earlier. While there was this long-standing prejudice between the Jews and the Samaritans, Jesus did not live by such restrictions. The route through Samaria was shorter, and that was the route Jesus took.

As a Jew, Jesus is not supposed to talk to this woman for several reasons: (1) she was a Samaritan, a member of the hated mixed race, (2) she was known to be living in sin, and (3) she was in a public place. No respectable Jewish man would talk to a woman under such circumstances. But Jesus did: The Good News is for every person, no matter what his or her race, social position, or past sins. We must be prepared to share this Good News at any time and in any place. Jesus crossed all barriers to share the Good News, and we who follow him must do no less.

Living water: In the Old Testament, God is called the fountain of living water, the fountain of life, here Jesus claims to be the Messiah. And only the Messiah could give this gift that satisfies the soul’s desire.

“***Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again,***” Jesus says to the woman. The “well” here indicates our human errant desires, our tendency to fill up the longing for God with transient goods of creation: money, pleasure, power, and honor. Archbishop Fulton Sheen said, “All the human satisfactions of the cravings of body and soul have one defect; they do not satisfy forever. They only serve to deaden the present want, but they never extinguish it. The want always revives again.” Here Christ neither condemns nor forbids these earthly streams; He said if we only restrict

ourselves to the wells of human happiness, we would never be completely satisfied". The only water that fully and truly satisfies is Christ himself, the living water.

The Samaritan woman became an evangelist to bring others to Christ: In the encounter between Jesus and a Samaritan woman, we learn that despite how the world must have treated the woman being sinful, Jesus saw in her the possible great dynamic apostle, to bring the people of town to Christ.

"They said to the woman, "We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Savior of the world." (John 4:42). She later shared her experiences with others, invited them to Christ, and they came out to meet Christ. No matter what our past looked like, our future is pure and spotless. Does anyone throw away his/her dirty clothes? The answer is – no. Neither does Jesus our Lord throw anyone away. Jesus loves you!

The word "water" is repeated several times in this passage. In certain parts of the world, we have water in abundance and must not have experienced what the scarcity of water is, like in parts of the world, where I grew up. Till today, the young ones still have to walk for about 15 miles to fetch water – for cooking, washing, bathing, and drinking. So, in today's gospel, as Jesus speaks about living water, **"Give me water to drink"**, this means a lot to me. **Is there someone that you can give 'a drink of water?**

The whole scene starts as an encounter between two strangers which evolves into a mystical transformation and missionary action from the side of the Samaritan woman. The Lord continues to reveal himself through simple day-to-day conversations if we listen to his voice. We all have a deep thirst for God. And God always takes the first initiative to come to us, and encounter us, even when He had to break all religious and political barriers to get to us.

The Stations of the Cross, the second station says, "Jesus takes His Cross". My Jesus, Lord I take my daily crosses. I welcome the monotony that often marks my day, discomforts of all kinds, the summer's heat, the winter's cold, my disappointments, tensions, setbacks, and cares. Remind me often that in carrying my cross, I carry yours with you. And though I bear silver cross only, of your cross, in return you carry all of mine. Jesus, I love you. Amen.

**Thank you and have a spirit-filled Lent.
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