

LENT III SUNDAY A 3/12/2023

Today's readings are centered on baptism and new life. Today's liturgy makes use of the symbol of *water* to refer to our relationship with God. It represents God's Spirit which comes to us in Baptism. The Spirit quenches our spiritual thirst. Just as water in the desert was life-giving for the wandering Israelites, the *water* of a true, loving relationship with Jesus is life-giving for those who accept him as Lord and Savior. We are assembled here in the church to share in this *water* of eternal life and salvation. The Holy Spirit of God, the word of God and the sacraments of God in the Church are the primary sources for the *living water* of divine grace.

The passage chosen from Exodus tells of the Jews' complaining about their thirst, a figure of human longing for God and spiritual satisfaction. The rock which Moses strikes represents God who gives the *water* (God's own life), essential for our spiritual life. This reading shows us a time when God's people literally thirsted, and God satisfied them. Now their new leader, Moses, was telling them that their ancient Lord had at last heard their cries, and was now leading their escape from Egypt back to their homeland. Moses asked them to have faith in God. The physical thirst of the Israelites in the desert is assign pointing to a greater thirst, our thirst for God himself. David puts it this way; As a deer longs for flowing streams, so long my soul for you, O God, my soul thirsts for God, for the living.

The real thirst for the Israelites, whether they knew it or not, was for the God himself.

In the second reading St. Paul speaks of being "Justified by faith. We know that justification is a fruit of Baptism (1 Peter 3:21). But for Baptism to be effective, it must be received in faith. Baptism is a participation in the love that goes to death; "Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? This leads us to the gospel, the story of the woman at the well.

In the gospel we see the Samaritan woman first did not believe the words of Jesus but slowly she stated having faith in his words.

This Samaritan woman seemed unwanted by her own people. Since she had had five "husbands," and was living with a sixth "lover," she seems to have been considered by fellow villagers a social leper, and she seems to have been driven from the common well of the town by the decent women.

The Samaritan woman must have unburdened her soul to this stranger because she had found one Jew with kindness in his eyes instead of an air of critical

superiority. She was thirsting for love that would last, love that would fill her full and give purpose to her life.

Jesus always has a way of coming into our personal lives. When Jesus became personal with this woman and started asking embarrassing questions about her five husbands, she cleverly tried to change the subject and talk about religion.

She didn't want Jesus to get personal. But Jesus wanted to free her, forgive her, shape her life in a new direction, and change her. He wanted to offer this woman *living water*. At the end of the long heart-to-heart conversation Jesus revealed himself to her as the Messiah, which in turn led her to faith in him. This growth in understanding on the part of the woman moved through several stages: first, she called him a Jew, then Sir or Lord, then Prophet, and finally Messiah.

When the Samaritans came to hear Jesus because of her testimony, the affirmation of faith reached its climax as they declared that Jesus was the Savior of the world. Step-by-step Jesus was leading her in her faith journey. This marginalized woman's enthusiastic response, powerful personal testimony and brave witnessing stand in dramatic contrast to Nicodemus' hesitance (3:9), the crowd's demand for proof (6:25-34) and the Pharisees' refusal to acknowledge the hand of God in the healing of a blind man (9:24-34).

Life messages: 1) We need to allow Jesus free entry into our personal lives. A sign that God is active in our lives is His entering in to our personal, "private" lives. Jesus wants to get personal with us, especially during this Lenten season. Christ wishes to come into that "private" life, not to embarrass us, not to judge or condemn us, not to be unkind or malicious to us. Rather, Christ comes into our "private" personal life to free us, to change us and to offer us what we really need: *living water*. The *living water* is the Holy Spirit.

The *living water* is the Spirit of Jesus and his love. We human beings are composed of four parts: mind, body, emotions and spirit. When we let God's, Spirit come into us and take control of our thinking, our physical activity, our emotions and our spirit, He can bring harmony to the way we live with all four parts of our humanity. We can find this *living water* in the sacraments, in prayer and in the holy Bible.