



WEEKLY GOSPEL REFLECTION



3rd Sunday of Lent, Cycle A

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“...we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is truly the savior of the world.” John 4:42

In last Sunday's Second Sunday of Lent Gospel, Jesus ascended a high and Holy Mountain, bringing us, His inner circle of disciples with Him. This is a place where He and His Father are in loving Communion. This week we follow Jesus to an encounter with the Samaritan Woman at the Well of Jacob. Jesus asks for water from this well to quench His thirst. Jesus then offers the Water of Eternal Life. At first the woman is skeptical, until Jesus tells the story of her life, which I'm sure, made her very uncomfortable.

This Gospel has much to say about water and how important it is in our Christian life from the Exodus event and the Red Sea, to John the Baptist and the Jordan River; to our new spiritual life of grace through the regeneration process of the River of Life and the eternal waters of baptism.

This Gospel should inspire us, through the encounter between Jesus and the woman, to reflect on the deepest levels of our Christian life. Jacobs Well has water which temporarily quenches. But we are invited to explore the inner depths of living water. *“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.”*

While His disciples *“had gone into the town to buy food,”* we are invited to stay, where we will be offered the key to eternal life. As we listen to this Gospel, the centuries are stripped away as we feel the presence of Jacob and Jesus: Jacob -- the promise of a Messiah, and Jesus -- the Messiah. We can start to reflect how ordinary water is like worship in a mundane sense, whereas living water is like the deeper spiritual levels of genuine worship.

As we settle in to this long Gospel, we have a choice: to sit in unbridled restlessness, or intentionally enter into quietude where we can hear the whispered voice of the Lord. It is in quietude where we can sense anew a series of epiphanies of God's love and His plan for us through Jesus.

We ask the Holy Spirit at every Mass to give us a living encounter with Christ. But like the woman at the well, we might not be prepared for that encounter. It could make us really uncomfortable. But once we confront ourselves honestly, and listen to what Jesus has to say, as God the Father commanded on the Holy Mountain last week, the stress and guilt and darkness lift; we then seek the Waters of Eternal life. Jesus 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 should provoke in us the same request, *“Sir, give me this water, so that I may not be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water.”* Like this Woman, Jesus asks us to tell him about our sinful past. A sinful past he already knows. But he wants you to confess it. Courageously, so you will be freed and at last have no shame.

The women left her water jar and said to the people, *“Come see a man who told me everything I have done. Could he possibly be the Christ?”* We, too, are called to leave our worldly safety nets behind, and go tell everyone that will listen about this living water -- welling up to eternal life!

A Reading from the Holy Gospel according to John

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.

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 who is speaking with you.”

Many of the Samaritans of that town began to believe in him.
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.”