

3rd Sunday Lent – John 4:5-42

Woman at the Well

"Whoever drinks the water I shall give will never thirst; the water I shall give will become in him or her a spring of water welling up to eternal life."

Jesus doesn't condemn the Samaritan Woman. Instead, he treats her with dignity, gradually leading her from what she thinks she knows about herself toward something deeper: the ***well spring*** of life itself. The woman has been seeking satisfaction from wells that cannot quench her deepest *thirst*. We often do the same. We turn to social media for validation, material possessions, achievements—hoping they'll finally satisfy. These wells offer only fleeting relief. Maybe the woman was also seeking satisfaction with *the perfect husband*. There is no perfect relationship outside of Jesus Christ.

The First Scrutiny deals with the ***Living Waters*** that Jesus offers us through Baptism. One of our Candidates will be baptized at the Easter Vigil, and the others will be Confirmed. This passage is important in that through baptism all of us are offered that *Living Water* that we will never *thirst* again.

But what is that ***thirst*** that Jesus talks about with the Samaritan woman? Is it something the two disciples who met Jesus on the way to Emmaus as he described passages from scripture that pointed to him, and their hearts burned within? Or is it a desire for a deeper relationship with the Lord through the scriptures, as Jesus reminded us, "One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes forth from the mouth of God."

Our thirst and hunger are replaced by the burning desire to know Jesus more intimately through our ***Faith Community***, where two or three are gathered, through the ***Word of God***, and in ***Christ's Body and Blood*** that we receive each week. Our thirst and hunger for bodily satisfaction are replaced with spiritual fulfillment in Christ. This Lent, what wells are we drinking from? Jesus invites us to leave our empty jars behind and drink from the living water that never runs dry.

In the movie *Dead Man Walking*, the man on death row was moved to confess his heinous crime and to seek forgiveness on the strength of the testimony of faith of another woman—Sr. Helen Prejean. Over time, her words and witness even moved the father whose son had been brutally murdered to turn to prayer and to struggle to forgive the man who had committed that unspeakable crime.

This example is taken from Catholic Women Preach. At one point, another person I knew in a similar situation realized that she needed to personally meet and forgive the killers for their crime, before she could begin her own journey and theirs ***to find peace***. One episode featured on "60 Minutes" was about this point, that many realize they are ***just as imprisoned*** in their anger and hate as the criminals in their cells.

For the average person, what will it take to give up our imprisonment from social media, material possessions, or whatever our senses imprison us? Saint John of the Cross, the Carmelite saint, reminds us that a bird is still captured no matter whether it is a string or a chain. What it did take the disciples on the road to Emmaus was Jesus' death and resurrection. Our own imprisonment may not be as tragic or severe as the above examples. But after their Eucharist with Jesus that night their eyes were opened.

Thus began their long journey back to their own freedom and ours through the love of Christ for us, and eventually our love for others. And how their hearts burned within as Jesus explained the Scriptures to them.