

Third Sunday of Lent Year A

My beloved brothers and sisters, the Liturgical Law of the Church requires that whenever we are to receive new members into the Church on Easter, we must use the readings from Year A, hence the readings you just heard. All of us are to remember that we are on our religious pilgrimage to the Passion, Death and Resurrection of the Lord. We have joined Him on the Road to Jerusalem. It is along this road that we encounter the woman of Samaria with Jesus.

John's Gospel is very different from Matthew, Mark and Luke's Gospels. They tell the Story of Jesus; whereas, John's Gospel tells us the significance of Jesus' coming into the World. Today, we recall that before we ever encountered the Lord, God in His infinite love for us, was thirsting for us, and Lent is the time when we come to the Living Spring of Water, the Well that is Christ, in order to drink fully of the Life-Giving Water He wants to give us!

In the first reading, the Israelites are dying of thirst and fed-up with Moses and his expedition through the desert, they rebel against him and Moses is afraid for his very life. The question they pose is the perpetual question of hearts alienated from God: Where is God? It discloses not only their lack of faith, but also the greatest thirst of the human heart excluded by our own will from the Paradise God had intended for us. We thirst for more, and fail to realize: Only God can satisfy this deepest longing and thirst! Truly, the problem is not caused by God; rather, the problem is our lack of trust in God and our perpetual alienation from God because we fail to believe He is enough for us!

In the Gospel story, the Samaritan woman, like the Country and Western song, wa: "Looking for Love in all the wrong places..." of course, she will never find what she is looking for, until she encounters and accepts the Lord! The Samaritans accepted the 1st five books of Moses, the Torah, but they rejected the other books of the Bible, and they had intermixed pagan practices with their belief system. They were abhorrent to the Jews. Nonetheless, this woman knows the Law of God, and she has rejected it by her continual adultery. She also knows the rejection of her own community because of her lifestyle; nonetheless, in Jesus, she encounters the infinite thirst of God, who came to save us and to draw us into

the infinite well of His Divine Love for us! Notice, when Jesus confronts her sinful life, she is not repulsed, although she does try to change the subject; rather, this infinite well of God's thirst for her in Jesus has moved her heart. She has experienced in Him the Love that she has thirsted for all of her life! So will we, if we allow Him to slake our thirst! She has found true love, and now, in her excitement, she runs back to the town to announce the Good News of the Gospel to the people, who through her, also come to know the Good News!

What does Jesus want us to know today? Only our self-giving to the Divine Well of Mercy and love can bring us into the life for which all of us are truly thirsting- only Jesus can satisfy this greatest hunger and thirst! Only Jesus is sufficient to be our infinite reservoir of life-giving water and relationships; nothing else can! Only by allowing Jesus to encounter our lives at the depth of our lives and our sinfulness can I really know the Good News; otherwise, I will always be unhappy, and be a source of bad news and not the Gospel. We can only do this through abandoning ourselves and falling into the infinite well of His Goodness and Mercy!