

LIVING THE GOSPEL
Third Sunday of Lent
March 08, 2026



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Theme: "Any one who drinks the water that I shall give will never be thirsty again."

Gathering Prayer

All: O God, author of every mercy and of all goodness, who in fasting, prayer and almsgiving have shown us a remedy for sin, look graciously on this confession of our lowliness, which we, who are bowed down by our conscience, may always be lifted up by your mercy. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

Exploring the Word

Gospel Reading: John 4:5-15. 19-26, 39-42

⁵ Jesus came to the Samaritan town called Sychar, near the land that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. ⁶ Jacob's well is there and Jesus, tired by the journey, sat straight down by the well. It was about the sixth hour. ⁷ When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, 'Give me a drink.' ⁸ His disciples had gone into the town to buy food. ⁹ The Samaritan woman said to him, 'What? You are a Jew and you ask me, a Samaritan, for a drink?' – Jews, in fact, do not associate with Samaritans. ¹⁰ Jesus replied: 'If you only knew what God is offering and who it is that is saying to you: Give me a drink, you would have been the one to ask, and he would have given you living water.'

¹¹ 'You have no bucket, sir,' she answered 'and the well is deep: how could you get this living water? ¹² Are you a greater man than our father Jacob who gave us this well and drank from it himself with his

sons and his cattle?' ¹³ Jesus replied: 'Whoever drinks this water will get thirsty again; ¹⁴ but anyone who drinks the water that I shall give will never be thirsty again: the water that I shall give will turn into a spring inside him, welling up to eternal life.' ¹⁵ 'Sir,' said the woman 'give me some of that water, so that I may never get thirsty and never have to come here again to draw water.'

¹⁹ 'I see you are a prophet, sir' said the woman. ²⁰ 'Our fathers worshipped on this mountain, while you say that Jerusalem is the place where one ought to worship.' ²¹ Jesus said: 'Believe me, woman, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. ²² You worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know; for salvation comes from the Jews. ²³ But the hour will come – in fact it is here already – when true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth: that is the kind of worshipper the Father wants. ²⁴ God is spirit, and those who worship must worship in spirit and truth.'

²⁵ The woman said to him, 'I know that Messiah – that is, Christ – is coming; and when he comes he will tell us everything.' ²⁶ 'I who am speaking to you,' said Jesus 'I am he.'

³⁹ Many Samaritans of that town had believed in him on the strength of the woman's testimony when she said, 'He told me all I have ever done,' ⁴⁰ so, when the Samaritans came up to him, they begged him to stay with them. He stayed for two days, and when ⁴¹ he spoke to them many more came to believe; ⁴² and they said to the woman, 'Now we no longer believe because of what you told us; we have heard him ourselves and we know that he really is the savior of the world.'

Gospel Notes

4-5. There were two normal routes for going from Judea to Galilee. The shorter one went through the city a Samaria; the other, which followed the Jordan, was longer. Jesus took the Samaria route, perhaps not just because it was shorter and busier but also to have a chance of preaching to the Samaritans. When he was approaching Samaria, near Sychar, the present-day El 'Askar, at the foot of Mount Ebal, he met this Samaritan woman.

Closing Prayer

All: Loving God, you provide us with everything we need-more than we can possibly expect and imagine. Hear our prayers today and answer to them according to your will, not ours, and help us remain open to your voice in our midst. We ask this through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Leader: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life.

All: Amen

by little he alludes to him even in his teaching of the multitudes, as when he reveals that his own flesh will be food for the life of the world.(Cf. Jn 6:27, 51, 62-63) He also alludes to the Spirit in speaking to Nicodemus,(Cf. Jn 3:5-8) to the Samaritan woman,(Cf. Jn 4:10, 14, 23-24) and to those who take part in the feast of Tabernacles.(Cf. Jn 7:37-39) To his disciples he speaks openly of the Spirit in connection with prayer(Cf. Lk 11:13) and with the witness they will have to bear.(Cf. Mt 10:19-20)

2560. "If you knew the gift of God!"(Jn 4:10) The wonder of prayer is revealed beside the well where we come seeking water: there, Christ comes to meet every human being. It is he who first seeks us and asks us for a drink. Jesus thirsts; his asking arises from the depths of God's desire for us. Whether we realize it or not, prayer is the encounter of God's thirst with ours. God thirsts that we may thirst for him.(Cf. St. Augustine, *De diversis quaestionibus octoginta tribus* 64,4:PL 40,56)

2561. "You would have asked him, and he would have given you living water."(Jn 4:10) Paradoxically our prayer of petition is a response to the plea of the living God: "They have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewn out cisterns for themselves, broken cisterns that can hold no water!"(Jer 2:13) Prayer is the response of faith to the free promise of salvation and also a response of love to the thirst of the only Son of God.(Cf. Jn 7:37-39; 19:28; Isa 12:3; 51:1; Zech 12:10; 13:1)

Sharing and Discussion

1. How would you define "spiritual thirst"?
2. What does the Samaritan woman's response tell about her search for truth?
3. What can we learn from Jesus' example about sharing the thirst quenching Living Water with others?

6. The Gospels, particularly St John's, sometimes give us little bits of information which seem irrelevant but really are not. Like us, Jesus did get tired, he needed to take regular rest, he felt hunger and thirst; but despite his tiredness he does not waste an opportunity to do good to souls.

"Recollect yourselves and go over the scene again slowly in your minds. Jesus Christ, *perfectus Deus, perfectus homo*, is tired out from his travels and his apostolic work. Perhaps there have been times when the same thing has happened to you and you have ended up worn out, because you have reached the limit of your resources. It is a touching sight to see our Master so exhausted. He is hungry too: his disciples have gone to a neighbouring village to look for food. And he is thirsty [. . .].

"Whenever we get tired—in our work, in our studies, in our apostolic endeavours—when our horizon is darkened by lowering clouds, then let us turn our eyes to Jesus, to Jesus who is so good, and who also gets tired; to Jesus who is hungry and suffers thirst. Lord, how well you make yourself understood! How lovable you are! You show us that you are just like us, in everything but sin, so that we can feel utterly sure that, together with you, we can conquer all our evil inclinations, all our faults. For neither weariness nor hunger matters, nor thirst, nor tears . . . since Christ also grew weary, knew hunger, was thirsty, and wept. What is important is that we struggle to fulfill the will of our heavenly Father, battling away goodheartedly, for our Lord is always at our side" (J. Escriva,, *Friends of God*, 176 and 201).

7. Jesus has come to save what was lost. He spares no effort in this mission. The hostility between Jews and Samaritans was proverbial; but Jesus embraced everyone, he loved all souls and he shed his blood for each and every person. He begins his conversation with this woman, by asking a favour of her—which indicates God's great respect for us: here we have Almighty God asking a mere creature to do him a favour. "Give me a drink": Jesus makes this request not just to share his physical thirst but because his love made him thirst for the salvation of all men. When nailed to the cross he again said: "I thirst" (Jn 19:28).

9. The Samaritan woman's reply starts the dialogue and shows how well she is responding to the action of grace in her soul: her readiness to talk to Christ, who was a Jew, is the first stage in her change of heart. Later (v. 11), by taking a real interest in what Christ is saying, she opens up further to God's influence. Her religious feelings begin to revive ("our Father Jacob": v. 12). Jesus rewards her and she replies truthfully: "I have

no husband" (v. 17); and, seeing that Jesus has penetrated the intimacy of her conscience, she makes an act of faith: "I perceive that you are a prophet" (v. 19).

10. As in his dialogue with Nicodemus, Jesus makes use of common expressions, to get across teachings of a much deeper nature. Everyone knows from experience that water is absolutely necessary for human life; similarly, the grace of Christ is absolutely necessary for supernatural life. The water which can truly quench man's thirst does not come from this or any other well: it is Christ's grace, the "living water" which provides eternal life.

Once again, taking occasion of human interests and preoccupations, Jesus awakes a desire for things supernatural; in the same way as he led St Peter and others away from their work as fishermen to involve them in the apostolic work of being fishers of men, he leads the Samaritan woman away from her chore of drawing water from the well to the point where she desires to find this better water which wells up to eternal life (v. 14).

13-14. Our Lord's reply is surprising and really captures the woman's attention. Here is someone greater than Jacob, someone offering her water that will quench her thirst once and for all. Christ is referring to the change worked in every person by sanctifying grace, a share in God's own life, the presence of the Holy Spirit in the soul, the great gift which those who believe in him will receive.

We worry about the future, we are full of desires to be happy and at peace; a person who receives our Lord and remains united to him as a branch to the vine (cf. Jn 15:4-5) will not only slake his thirst but become a well of living water (cf. Jn 7:37-39).

16-19. Although the woman cannot yet realize the deep meaning of what he is saying, Jesus uses her growing interest to reveal to her his divinity, little by little: he shows that he knows about her life, the secrets of her heart; he can read her conscience. In this way he gives her enough to motivate her to make her first act of faith: "I perceive that you are a prophet". Her conversion has begun.

20. The origin of the Samaritan people goes back to the period of the conquest of Samaria by the Assyrians in the eighth century before Christ (cf. 2 Kings 13:24-31). They were foreigners who very quickly integrated

Second Reading — Romans 5:1-2, 5-8

¹ Through our Lord Jesus Christ by faith we are judged righteous and at peace with God, ² since it is by faith and through Jesus that we have entered this state of grace in which we can boast about looking forward to God's glory.

⁵ This hope is not deceptive, because the love of God has been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit which has been given us. ⁶ We were still helpless when at his appointed moment Christ died for sinful men.

⁷ It is not easy to die even for a good man – though of course for some one really worthy, a man might be prepared to die – ⁸ but what proves that God loves us is that Christ died for us while we were still sinners.

Catechism of The Catholic Church

544. The kingdom belongs *to the poor and lowly*, which means those who have accepted it with humble hearts. Jesus is sent to "preach good news to the poor"; (Lk 4:18; cf. 7:22) he declares them blessed, for "theirs is the kingdom of heaven." (Mt 5:3) To them - the "little ones" the Father is pleased to reveal what remains hidden from the wise and the learned. (Cf. Mt 11:25) Jesus shares the life of the poor, from the cradle to the cross; he experiences hunger, thirst and privation. (Cf. Mt 21:18; Mk 2:23-26; Jn 4:6 1; 19:28; Lk 9:58) Jesus identifies himself with the poor of every kind and makes active love toward them the condition for entering his kingdom. (Cf. Mt 25:31-46)

694. Water. The symbolism of water signifies the Holy Spirit's action in Baptism, since after the invocation of the Holy Spirit it becomes the efficacious sacramental sign of new birth: just as the gestation of our first birth took place in water, so the water of Baptism truly signifies that our birth into the divine life is given to us in the Holy Spirit. As "by one Spirit we were all baptized," so we are also "made to drink of one Spirit." (1 Cor 12:13) Thus the Spirit is also personally the living water welling up from Christ crucified (Jn 19:34; 1 Jn 5:8) as its source and welling up in us to eternal life. (Cf. Jn 4:10-14; 7:38; Ex 17:1-6; Isa 55:1; Zech 14:8; 1 Cor 10:4; Rev 21:6; 22:17)

728. Jesus does not reveal the Holy Spirit fully, until he himself has been glorified through his Death and Resurrection. Nevertheless, little

making each one a spring from which others who thirst may drink.

Old and New Testament links

First Reading — Exodus 17:3-7

³ Tormented by thirst, the people complained against Moses. 'Why did you bring us out of Egypt?' they said. 'Was it so that I should die of thirst, my children too and my cattle?' ⁴ Moses appealed to the Lord. 'How am I to deal with this people?' he said. 'A little more and they will stone me!' ⁵ Yahweh said to Moses, 'Take with you some of the elders of Israel and move on to the forefront of the people; take in your hand the staff with which you struck the river, and go. ⁶ I shall be standing before you there on the rock, at Horeb. You must strike the rock, and water will flow from it for the people to drink.' This is what Moses did, in the sight of the elders of Israel. ⁷ The place was named Massah and Meribah because of the grumbling of the sons of Israel and because they put the Lord to the test by saying, 'Is the Lord with us, or not?'

Responsorial Reading — Psalm 95:1-2, 6-9

R: O that today you would listen to his voice! 'Harden not your hearts.'

Come, ring out our joy to the Lord; hail the rock who saves us. Let us come before him, giving thanks, with songs let us hail the Lord. **(R)**

Come in; let us bow and bend low; let us kneel before the God who made us: for he is our God and we the people who belong to his pasture, the flock that is led by his hand. **(R)**

O that today you would listen to his voice! 'Harden not your hearts as at Meribah, as on that day at Massah in the desert when your fathers put me to the test; when they tried me, though they saw my work.'
(R)

with the Israelites in the region. After the Babylonian captivity they tried to ally themselves with the Jews for political reasons and to contribute to the rebuilding of the temple, but the Jews would have none of them. From that time onwards the Jews and the Samaritans were always hostile to each other (cf. Ezra 4:1ff; Jn 4:9).

On this occasion, the Samaritan woman, now fully aware that she is speaking to someone of authority, asks our Lord one of the key questions affecting the religious life of the two peoples: where was the right place to offer worship to God; the Jews held that only Jerusalem would do; whereas the Samaritans claimed that the shrine erected on Mount Gerizim was also legitimate (they based their claim on some passages in the Pentateuch: cf. Gen 12:7; 33:20; 22:2).

21-24. Jesus not only answers the question but takes advantage of it to confirm the value of the teachings of the prophets and thereby reaffirm revealed truth: the Samaritans are in the dark about many of God's plans because they do not accept any revelation not found in the first five books of Sacred Scripture, that is, in the Law of Moses; the Jews, on the other hand, are much nearer the truth because they accept the whole of the Old Testament. But both Samaritans and Jews need to open themselves to the new Revelation of Jesus Christ. With the coming of the Messiah, whom both peoples are awaiting, and who is the true dwelling-place of God among men (cf. Jn 2:19), the new, definitive, Alliance has begun; and neither Gerizim nor Jerusalem count any more; what the Father wishes is for all to accept the Messiah, his Son, the new temple of God, by offering him a form of worship which comes right from the heart (cf. Jn 12:1; 2 Tim 2:22) and which the Spirit of God himself stirs people to render (cf. Rom 8:15).

This is why the Church's solemn Magisterium teaches that through Baptism we become true worshippers of God: "By Baptism men are grafted into the paschal mystery of Christ; they die with him, are buried with him, and rise with him. They receive the spirit of adoption as sons 'in which we cry, Abba, Father' (Rom 8:15) and thus become true adorers such as the Father seeks" (Vatican II, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 6).

25-26. This is the last stage in the Samaritan woman's conversion: she has come from acknowledging her sins to accepting the true teaching about worshipping the Father in spirit and truth. But she still has to recognize Jesus as the Messiah; on this subject she simply confesses her

ignorance. Seeing that she is favourably disposed, Jesus explicitly reveals that he is the Messiah: "I who speak to you am he".

These words of our Lord are especially significant: he declares that he is the Messiah, and he uses words—"I ... am he"—which evoke the words Yahweh used to reveal himself to Moses (cf. Ex 3:14) and which on Jesus' lips indicate a revelation not only of his messiahship but also of his divinity (cf. Jn 8:24, 28, 58; 18:6).

39-42. This episode shows a whole evangelization process at work, beginning with the Samaritan woman's enthusiasm. "The same thing happens today with those who are outside, who are not Christians: they receive tidings of Christ through Christian friends; like that woman, they learn of Christ through the Church; then they come to Christ, that is, they believe in Christ through this report, and then Jesus stays two days among them and many more believe, and believe more firmly, that he indeed is the Saviour of the world" (St Augustine, *In Ioann. Evang.*, 15, 33).

Gospel Focus

In this gospel reading, Jesus shares the "good news" not by preaching to a crowd or working great miracles, but by encouraging a Samaritan woman in conversation. She draws water during the heat of the day, hoping to avoid the sneering glances of others in her community. Instead, she encounters the loving gaze of Jesus. In seeing Jesus for who he is, the Son of God, the Samaritan woman comes to know herself more truly. The Word of God reveals to her and to each of us our own deepest identity as beloved children of God. Despite our sins, fear, and shame, God sees in us his own image, perfected by grace in Christ Jesus. Carried by this truth, she reveals Jesus to her whole community, who come to believe, Jesus desires to offer his "living water," his own Holy Spirit. In receiving this Spirit into our hearts, we ourselves become "wells" of living water for others.

Gospel Reflection

Today's gospel account opens with a tired and thirsty Jesus asking a woman of Samaria for water. Like millions of women who even today spend hours of their day collecting water, the Samaritan woman comes, perhaps for a second time that day, to draw water. Most women would come to the well early in the morning, not at the hottest part of

the day.

Most likely the Fourth Evangelist intends the noontime detail to be taken symbolically. In this gospel, light signifies the coming to belief, while darkness corresponds to unbelief. In contrast with the preceding story of Nicodemus, who came to Jesus at night, and who is unable to believe, the woman of Samaria comes at the brightest part of the day and will come to full belief. Jesus and the woman enter into a deep theological conversation, laden with symbolism. As often happens in the Fourth Gospel, the two are cast as representative characters for the whole of their people. They begin by speaking of their thirsts, their shared human need, and this enables a conversation by which they can begin to break down the enmity between the two peoples. Elsewhere in the gospel, Jesus speaks of his thirst to draw all people to God through himself (12:32) and of his desire for all to be one (17:21).

Step by step Jesus and the woman reveals themselves more deeply to each other. They speak of some of their deepest thirst: for worship, salvation and the search of truth. They listen intently and allow their perceptions of the other to shift, just as we may need to change our former impressions of the Samaritan woman. The focus of the dialogue is not on her marital history nor is she said to be a sinner. Jesus does not tell her to go and sin no more, as he does to the man at the pool of Bethesda who had been paralyzed (John 5:14) or to a woman caught in adultery (John 8:11).

The woman's understanding of Jesus progresses from the simple observation that he is a Jew to pondering whether he is greater than Jacob. Another step is her recognition of him as a prophet when he uses the marital metaphor favored by Hosea to speak of the peoples' relationship with God. Finally, she arrives at the conclusion that Jesus is the Messiah, which she shares with her townspeople in question form, so that they too can enter into the process of discovery that will culminate in faith.

This encounter illustrates a process by which enmity can be transformed into friendship. The two start by focusing on common thirsts that spring from their shared humanity. They had to let go of their ingrained stereotypes of the other. They had to be willing to stay in the conversation and not give up when they stumbled over their differences. They had to be willing to overcome the objections of some of their own people. As the waters of understanding wash away ignorance and fear, the gift of living waters wells up within them,