

### Third Sunday of Lent – A

Think about the water you have used already today. It cleanses us, makes our coffee, boils the oatmeal, maybe heats the house. Lent is about Baptism, and Baptism is about water ... water that can both destroy and wash away, and water that sustains and brings forth life. Water is all over in John's Gospel. We start with John the Baptist by the Sea of Galilee and in the Jordan River. Water is turned to wine at Cana. Nicodemus is told that we must be born of water and the Spirit. The lame man is healed at the Pool of Bethesda. Jesus walks on the Sea of Galilee, and washes His disciples' feet at the Last Supper. On the cross, blood and water flow from His pierced side. And today, He satisfies the inner thirst of this unnamed woman ***at the well***, a symbol of the abundant life to which He gives access. "Give Me a drink," He says, as much later He will say from the Cross: "I thirst" – speaking of His desire, not for WATER, but His longing to renew our lives in grace and mercy. As surely as water is part of our daily routines, so surely does God's love visit us day by day. So we continue to learn from this encounter between Jesus and the woman at the well.

The account is a bit long, and that is true to life, for our journey towards new life in Jesus often takes time and proceeds in steps and stages. Jesus respects and loves this woman; what may seem to be a random meeting becomes a moment of life-changing grace. His patience softens a hardened heart, little by little, like water etches its way through granite; and her courage keeps her from running away as difficult truths start to emerge. Who is this thirsty stranger? John traces her gradual understanding: He is a Jew, a Rabbi, a Prophet; and then finally she understands that He is the promised One, the Messiah and Redeemer. Her acceptance of His love and lordship does not change the past, but it does give her a new future, a different life because she has a purpose, a goal, her dignity restored and a new path once again opened to her freedom. She realized that this Man of God – in fact, God made man – knew her, and loved her, and He Himself had come to talk with her. Valued by God, her life also had new value in her own eyes.

John tells this story not just as a record of a past conversation, but as an invitation for us, today. Each of us can make this Gospel come alive by asking: *if I sat down with Jesus at the well – perhaps by the waters of the Baptismal font where each of us first met Him, just like this woman – what would we talk about? What would Jesus want to say to me? For what does Jesus, Who knows all my secrets, thirst to happen in MY life?* No matter where we are in a relationship with Christ, there is always room for deeper trust and discipleship ... no sincere friendship settles for “good enough.” Because we are baptized, we are part of the life of Christ, and He is part of ours. No matter where life has taken us since those waters of rebirth, Jesus comes to talk with us, if we have the courage to stay and listen. Today, take some extra moments simply to sit with Him, pour out your heart to Him, and then listen to the same Jesus Who says: “I am He, the Redeemer, the One speaking with you.” Like overflowing water, the love of God has been poured into our hearts, as Paul says, and that love is about to be given to us again in the Eucharist. In Jesus, like this woman at the well, we too find a hope that does not disappoint. We will not change our past. But He does give us a new future, starting today.