



Homily – Third Sunday in Lentⁱ

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*Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels
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My dear sisters and brothers in Christ,

The beautiful Gospel story we have just heard is rich in symbolism and Old Testament salvation history .

Jesus reveals the truth that he is the Savior of the world. He shows us today that he has come for the salvation of Jews *and* Samaritans — and for every race and nation.

Our Lord teaches us today that true religion means believing that he is the Christ, the Messiah sent by God. It means receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit in the living waters of the sacraments. It means worshipping our Father in Spirit and truth, as we do today in this holy Eucharist.

But my friends, there is a more personal lesson intended for us in our Gospel this morning. The Church gives us these readings during Lent to call us to a deeper personal relationship with Jesus.

The woman at the well is us. She is you. She is me.

She is first of all a figure of those who encounter Jesus and come to believe in him, and who drink from the living waters of the Spirit in Baptism.ⁱⁱ That is why this reading is so beautiful for our brothers and sisters who are preparing to be baptized at Easter.

But this woman at the well also represents those of us who have already been baptized.

Jesus still comes to us, as he came to the Samaritan woman, in the ordinary moments of our days. When we are carrying out our daily duties.

He comes to us in the people we meet, in our ordinary conversations. He comes to us especially in the poor and the stranger, in those who ask us for something to drink, for hospitality.

Jesus thirsts for our love. He becomes thirsty in order to show us how thirsty we are — how dry our souls are without him.

As we need water to live physically, we need the waters of his grace to live spiritually.

But we can run dry sometimes. On our journey, the dust from the road can accumulate; it can cover over our natural thirst, our natural desire for God.

This is what happens to the Israelites in today's first reading. They run out of water, and they start to doubt God's care for them. They grumble, and they want proof: "Is the Lord among us or not?"

We understand their question. Many in the world right now are asking the same thing. Where is God when our brothers and sisters are suffering in Japan? Where is he amidst the violence in Libya? With all the sorrow and evil in the world, is he among us or not?

Sometimes it is hard to see God. And we continue to pray this morning for the Japanese people as they rebuild their lives. We pray for victims of the fighting in Libya, and for all those who have entered harm's way in an effort to make peace.

But we must never doubt God's love. Do not let your hearts be hardened. Always try to listen more closely for his call in your lives. You will hear his voice.

God is with you always! It is true!

He has proven his love for us. St. Paul tells us that in today's second reading. Though we are sinners, Christ suffered and died for us on the cross. What greater proof of his love could he show us? In giving up his life, he revealed how much God loves each of us.

Christ continues to thirst for our love. Though we stumble in sin, still he comes in search of us. He comes to raise us up.

We need to respond to his call — as the Samaritan woman does. We need to open our hearts to what he is saying to us. As she does, we need to ask him for the grace of forgiveness and conversion — the gifts of God that come to us through the sacraments of his Church.

We need to say: "Sir, give me this water, that I may not thirst!"

Now is a good time for us to change our hearts, to seek the living waters that God longs to give us.

Let us make a new act of faith in Jesus today, as the Samaritan woman does.

As she does, we need to leave behind the water jars we are carrying, all the different ways we have been seeking to fill up our emptiness and satisfy our thirsts.

Jesus alone satisfies our thirst for beauty, truth and goodness. He is the fountain of all holiness.

Our relationship with Jesus must always lead us to make the Church's evangelizing mission a reality in our lives.

As the Samaritan woman does, we need to tell others that we have found Jesus. It is a simple and beautiful thing — just to tell of the joy we have in knowing Jesus Christ.

So let us ask Our Lady of Guadalupe for her intercession, that God may stir within us the waters of our Baptism, that these waters might well up and fill us with a new desire to go deeper in our relationship with Jesus. Amen.

ⁱ Readings: Exod. 17:3–7; Ps. 95:1–2, 6–9; Rom. 5:1–2, 5–8; John 4:5–42.

ⁱⁱ 1 Cor. 12:13.