

3rd Sunday of Lent - A
Exodus 17:3-7;
Romans 5:1-2, 5;
John 4:5-15, 19b-26, 39a, 40-42
Little Flower - 3/12/23

My Brothers and Sisters,

We know water is essential for all life. Water is at the center of today's Old Testament reading and today's Gospel. After their Exodus from Egypt, during their journey through the wilderness, the Israelites came to a place where there was no water to drink. In today's Gospel, at Jacob's well, Jesus promised living water to the Samaritan woman, water that will well up to eternal life.

Both the Old Testament reading and the Gospel offer us important lessons. In the reading from Exodus, the people grumbled against Moses when they did not have water. Moses himself became frustrated and cried out to the Lord. Throughout their journey through the wilderness, whenever there was any difficulty, the people grumbled and complained against God and Moses. As I mentioned last week, the faith that God asks of us is to entrust our lives and our futures to him and to his word of promise, Jesus Christ.

Today we are so like the people of Israel. We, and I include myself, grumble and complain whenever things do not go the way we want them to go or whenever we are inconvenienced. Besides being a sign of lack of faith, it is also a sign of lack of gratitude. All of us are so blessed. If we are alive and have reasonably good health, a reasonable quality of life, family and/or friends, we have everything that really matters. No matter how much or how little we have, we should be grateful. Above all, we should all be grateful for Jesus, God's greatest gift to us, the one who makes all love possible. Even though we are almost halfway through Lent, perhaps we should add to our Lenten resolutions to stop complaining.

In the Gospel, Jesus encounters a Samaritan woman at Jacob's well and enters into a conversation with her by asking for a drink. Because Samaritans and Jews detested each other, she was amazed that he even spoke to her. Jesus then took the conversation to a wholly different level. He told her if she knew who he was, she would have asked him for a drink, and he would have given her living water. As the dialogue continued, she moved from unbelief to belief. When she tells him that she knows the Messiah is coming, he reveals himself to her, "*I am he, the one speaking with you.*" The woman then went into town to tell everyone about him.

The first thing we notice is that the woman was interpreting her conversation with Jesus about water very literally. Jesus' response to her challenges us to always strive to see with eyes of faith. Today, because we live in a scientific and technological world, we have trouble with faith. Faith ultimately is about mystery and meaning. Eyes of faith enable us to embrace mystery and to find meaning in mystery. Second, she came to personal faith because she had a personal encounter with Jesus. We will only have a deep personal faith in Jesus by personally encountering him in his Word, in the sacraments, in his Spirit living within and among us, and in prayer. Finally, once she came to faith, she was impelled to share her experience of Jesus. Throughout the Gospels, when Jesus cured someone and told the person not to tell anyone, the person inevitably ran off to tell others. Maybe this should be another Lenten challenge for us. Do we have the kind of personal faith that impels us to share it with others?

My brothers and sisters, in John's Gospel, Jesus said, "*For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life*" [3:16]. Today's reading from Paul's Letter to the Romans offers us the most important proof of God's love for us: "*But God proves his love for us in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us.*" Therefore, with Paul, we can say, "*Hope does not disappoint.*"