

SERMON: 3RD LENT

We characterized the Season of Lent as a journey and the Sundays in Lent as a series of stopovers in this journey. In these stopovers, we hear the stories of different encounters of our Lord as different life situations we meet along life's journey.

In the first Sunday in Lent, the first stop-over, we considered the encounter of our Lord with the Tempter, the devil (+3 temptations). Last Sunday, the second stopover, we talked about the encounter of Jesus with Nicodemus (+ being born again). Today, the 3rd Sunday/stopover, our gospel reading is about the encounter of Jesus with a Samaritan woman at the well of Jacob.

The story of this encounter is principally a story about water, and something closely associated with it – thirst. The gospel narrative starts with Jesus simply asking the woman for a drink of water. But then, Jesus steers the conversation to a deeper issue: a gift of a kind of water that quenches all kinds of human thirst.

The Samaritan woman in the story is no stranger to thirst. After all, she went to Jacob's well to draw water. But her encounter with Jesus revealed that she was not just thirsty for water. She would have had five husbands and the sixth she was living with was not her husband. She was indeed thirsty for a lasting and more durable relationship. She was really thirsting for direction and meaning in her life.

Jesus is also no stranger to thirst. After all, he asked the woman at the well for a drink of water. Jesus fully understood what it is to be thirsty not just for water but for something more. Remember the 5th of the 7 last words in the cross, where he cried: 'I thirst!' Note that it was towards the end of three hours of darkness (insult, pain, ingratitude), of forsakenness (his disciples fled, his friends were silent, the people he cured and taught and loved turned against him) – it was in this context that he cried: 'I thirst!'

Like the Samaritan woman, like Jesus, all of us have experienced thirst, have been thirsty. I am not just talking about 'I'd like a cold, cold lemonade' thirsty. I mean a kind of thirst that is breathless, parched lips – like Jesus 'I thirst' or the woman's appeal, 'sir, give me this water, that I may not thirst again.' A drink that completely satisfies.

I have a story: *One day, a poor boy who was selling goods from door to door to pay his way through school, found he had only one thin dime left, and he was hungry.*

He decided he would ask for a meal at the next house. However, he lost his nerve when a lovely young woman opened the door. Instead of a meal he asked for a drink of water. She thought he looked hungry so brought him a large glass of milk. He drank it slowly, and then asked, "How much do I owe you?" "You don't owe me anything," she replied. "Mother has taught us never to accept pay for a kindness." He said..... "Then I thank you from my heart."

As Howard Kelly(John Hopkins U division of gynecologic oncology) left that house, he not only felt stronger physically, but his faith in God and man was strong also. He had been ready to give up and quit.

Year's later that young woman became critically ill. The local doctors were baffled. They finally sent her to the big city, where they called in specialists to study her rare disease.

Dr. Howard Kelly ! was called in for the consultation. When he heard the name of the town she came from, a strange light filled his eyes. Immediately he rose and went down the hall of the hospital to room. Dressed in his doctor's gown he went in to see her. He recognized her at once. He went back to the consultation room determined to do his best to save her life. From that day he gave special attention to the case. After a long struggle, the battle was won.

Dr. Kelly requested the business office to pass the final bill to him for approval. He looked at it, then wrote something on the edge and the bill was sent to her room. She feared to open it, for she was sure it would take the rest of her life to pay for it all. Finally she looked, and something caught her attention on the side of the bill. She read these words with tears in her eyes..... "Paid in full with one glass of milk"

That is that kind of drink – that satisfies all the bills to be paid, that satisfies all thirst.

Jesus offers us this drink, the same offer he made to the Samaritan woman: it is an offer of living water. What does he mean by the 'living water'? First what it is not: It is not that kind that one drinks and then will thirst again. What it is: that kind which when one drinks, one *"will never thirst again."*

Wow. This indeed is our kind of drink. It will make our journey a lot easier and lighter. But what if not just drink but food, when we eat it we will never be hungry again. Now this sounds familiar.

As the gospel story continues to unfold, in chapter 6, after feeding the multitude --- and they came to Jesus for more, Jesus says: *Yes, I will give you food which you eat, and never be hungry, and drink that will never make you thirsty again."*

Give this to us always! *"whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me shall never be thirsty.moreover, the bread which I give is my own flesh, ... and drink is my own blood /..... For the life of the world."*

APPLICATION:

What is our THIRST today? In the face of the crisis of the corona virus For healing, for cure For an end of this crisis. So let us ask the Lord, GIVE US THIS WATER ALWAYS! GIVE US THIS HEALING AND CURE!

Not just for us but for others as well. Remember what happened in the Gospel reading about the woman in the well. So the woman left her water pot, and went into the city and said to the men, [29] *"Come, see a man who told me all the things that I have done; this is not the Christ, is it?"* [30] *They went out of the city, and were coming to Him. 40 So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them, and he stayed there two days. 41 And many more believed because of his word. 42 They said to the woman, "It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is indeed the Savior of the world."*

The woman finds Jesus – the living water. Then she shares the news and invite others into the same experience. WE ASK NOT FOR OUR SELVES ONLY, WE ASK THIS WATER OF HEALING FOR ALL. This is beautifully expressed by this letter of our Archbishop Foley:

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

The President of the United States has called the nation to a day of prayer regarding the coronavirus this Sunday, March 15.

As a Province, let us join in this effort, whether from Canada, the U.S., or Mexico.

This Sunday, let's pray and fast for our nations:

- repenting of our sins and asking God's forgiveness
- asking God's intervention to stop the spread of this virus
- asking God for healing for those who are sick
- asking God to use us, his people, as agents of love and compassion
- asking God to draw people to himself through the saving power of Jesus on the cross.

Let us remember the words God gave to Solomon:

"If my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land." 2 Chronicles 7:14 (ESV)

In Christ Jesus,
Archbishop Foley.