

Sunday, March 19, 2017

3rd Sunday of Lent

Meditation and Questions for Reflection or Group Discussion

Mass Readings:

1st Reading: Exodus 17:3-7

2nd Reading: Romans 5:1-2, 5-8

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

Gospel: John 4:5-42

Being Filled with the Living Water of the Holy Spirit

Come see a man who told me everything I have done. (John 4:29)

Nobody likes admitting their sins. Whether you have broken a window or gotten a speeding ticket, you know how embarrassing it feels when someone points out what you have done wrong.

That's why today's Gospel reading is so striking. When Jesus spoke to the Samaritan woman about her sin, she didn't respond in fear. She didn't even seem ashamed. Quite the opposite, when Jesus told her that he knew she has had five husbands and was living in adultery with a sixth man, she was in awe. Their conversation then compelled her to run to her neighbors and tell them all about him.

Why did she respond this way? She was touched by the mercy of Jesus and transformed. Let's look at how this happened.

First, Jesus reached out to her, and his love moved her heart. He knew everything about her, the bad as well as the good, and he welcomed her. He does the same for us. Before we even admit our sins, he knows them, but he never stops reaching out to us. He waits for us, just as he waited by that well.

Second, Jesus offered her living water. It's quite possible that this woman had been living in guilt and shame. She likely came to the well at midday to avoid meeting everyone else, who would draw water at a cooler hour. But Jesus saw her as a child of God who needed to be set free. He offered her his love and presence, the water of life that would fill her and change her. And it did—she left her water jar behind because her encounter with Jesus gave her a new source of life.

Jesus is ready to fill you with the living water of the Holy Spirit today. He is reaching out to you with compassion. Ask him to fill your heart and change your life.

“Jesus, thank you for welcoming me. Fill me with your Holy Spirit, and change me.

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Questions for Reflection or Discussion:

1. In the first reading, the Israelite people's response to thirst was grumbling against Moses. The Lord, in his great compassion, responded to the people's grumbling with these instructions to Moses: "Go over there in front of the people, along with some of the elders of Israel, holding in your hand, as you go, the staff with which you struck the river. I will be standing there in front of you on the rock in Horeb. Strike the rock, and the water will flow from it for the people to drink."
 - Why do you think the people, after seeing the many miracles God performed to set them free from slavery in Egypt, would still have no trust in God's love and care for them in difficult situations?
 - What about you? What is your heart like when faced with difficulties? Do you have a grumbling, complaining, and blaming spirit?
2. The responsorial psalm provides two contrasting ways we can come before the Lord. It begins with these joy-filled words: "Come, let us sing joyfully to the LORD; let us acclaim the Rock of our salvation. Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving." However, it then ends by harkening back to the events of the first reading, which occurred at the place called Massah and Meribah: "Harden not your hearts as at Meribah, as in the day of Massah in the desert, Where your fathers tempted me; they tested me though they had seen my works."
 - Why do you think there is such a difference between the first part of the psalm and the second part?
 - How can you incorporate into your Lenten practices more of the first part of the psalm and eliminate or reduce vestiges of the second part of the psalm?
3. In the second reading, St. Paul's words describe the greatness of God the Father's and Jesus' love and forgiveness: "For Christ, while we were still helpless, died at the appointed time for the ungodly. Indeed, only with difficulty does one die for a just person, though perhaps for a good person one might even find courage to die. But God proves his love for us in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us."
 - What impact has knowing and experiencing God's love and forgiveness had on your life?
 - What impact has God's love and forgiveness had (or should have) on your relationship with others?
4. In the Gospel, we return to the metaphor of water. Jesus promised living water to the Samaritan woman at the well: "If you knew the gift of God and who is saying to you, 'Give me a drink, ' you would have asked him and he would have given you living water." He further describes this "living water" with these words: "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again; but whoever drinks the water I shall give will never thirst; the water I shall give will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life."
 - How would you describe the meaning of Jesus' words regarding this living water?
5. After her encounter with Jesus, the Samaritan women ran to the townspeople so that they too could share in this "living water" and the result was that "Many of the Samaritans of that town began to believe in him because of the word of the woman who testified, 'He told me everything I have done'".
 - Why do you think Jesus' words had such an impact on the woman and the woman's words had such an impact on many of the townspeople?
 - Jesus is the fountain of life. What can you do this week to share the living water of Jesus with others?
6. The meditation ends with these words: "Jesus is ready to fill you with the living water of the Holy Spirit today. He is reaching out to you with compassion. Ask him to fill your heart and change your life."
 - How can you respond to these words?
7. Take some time to thank the Lord for all he has done for you through his Cross and Resurrection and ask him for a fresh infilling of his Holy Spirit. Use the prayer at the end of the meditation as a starting point.

"Jesus, thank you for welcoming me. Fill me with your Holy Spirit, and change me."

[The discussion questions were created by Maurice Blumberg, who is in partner relations for **The Word Among Us Partners**, (<http://www.waupartners.org/>); a ministry of **The Word Among Us** (www.wau.org) to the military, prisoners, women with crisis pregnancies or who have had abortions, and college students. He is also

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