

Sunday, March 15, 2020

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

Allowing Jesus to Fill You with His Living Water

Give me a drink. (John 4:7)

Jesus and his disciples had been walking all morning. Now the sun was high in the sky and burning down on them. They were hot, dusty, and thirsty. As Jesus sat down next to Jacob's well, he was probably looking forward to a cool drink of water.

But when he asked a Samaritan woman who had come to the well to give him a drink, more was going on than Jesus just looking to quench his physical thirst. As St. Thérèse of Lisieux wrote, "When he said, 'Give me a drink,' it was the love of his poor creature that the Creator of the universe was seeking. He was thirsty for love."

We might wonder why. Why would Jesus desire the love of someone who was not only a Samaritan but who had a checkered past and was living with a man who wasn't her husband? Because that's who Jesus is. Like the Father and the Holy Spirit, Jesus loves each one of us. No matter who we are or what our sins, he who is love cannot help but seek after our love. He thirsts for all of us.

So how do we quench Jesus' thirst? By spending time with him. Don't think of it as an obligation or duty, something you "owe" to God. Think of it instead as a time when you are letting Jesus get his fill of you. He loves you so much that he can't get enough of your undivided attention. He loves you so much that he wants you to put aside all the other demands in your life for a time, go to a quiet place, and sit with him.

So give Jesus the "drink" he asks for. Even if you feel no differently while you are praying, believe that you are delighting Jesus by your presence. Remember, he enjoys being with you! Believe too that as you sit with him, he is giving you the "living water" that will fulfill your deepest needs and desires, the water that is "welling up to eternal life" (John 4:10, 14).

"Jesus, may I thirst for you as you thirst for me."

(Many thanks to *The Word Among Us* (www.wau.org) for allowing us to use meditations from their monthly devotional magazine. Used with permission.)

Sunday, March 15, 2020

Questions for Reflection or Discussion:

1. The first reading opens with these words: *In those days, in their thirst for water, the people grumbled against Moses, saying, "Why did you ever make us leave Egypt? Was it just to have us die here of thirst with our children and our livestock?" So Moses cried out to the LORD, "What shall I do with this people? a little more and they will stone me!" The LORD answered 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 grumble and still have no trust in God's love and care for them *in their thirst for water*?
 - What about you? When faced with difficulties, what causes you to have a grumbling, complaining, and blaming spirit? What causes you place your trust in the Lord's great love and compassion for you?
2. The responsorial psalm 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. Come, let us bow down in worship; let us kneel before the LORD who made us. For he is our God, and we are the people he shepherds, the flock he guides.* It ends with these words: *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 beginning and ending words of the psalm?
 - How can you incorporate into your Lenten practices more of the first part of the psalm and eliminate or reduce vestiges of the ending words of the psalm?
3. The second reading opens with these words: *Since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith to this grace in which we stand, and we boast in hope of the glory of God.* It ends with these words: *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.*
 - In what ways does St. Paul's words describe the greatness of God the Father's and Jesus' love and forgiveness?
 - What does it mean to you to be *justified by faith* and *have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ*?
 - What impact has knowing and experiencing God's love and forgiveness had on your life, especially in knowing that *God proves his love for us in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us*?
 - What impact has God's love and forgiveness had (or should have) on your relationship with others?
4. In the Gospel, Jesus speaks these words 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*?
 - Why do you think Jesus' words had such an impact on the woman?
 - Jesus is the fountain of life. What can you do this week to share the *living water* of Jesus with others?
5. The meditation is a reflection on the Gospel reading and these words: *Give me a drink* (John 4:7). It ends with these words: "So give Jesus the 'drink' he asks for. Even if you feel no differently while you are praying, believe that you are delighting Jesus by your presence. Remember, he enjoys being with you! Believe too that as you sit with him, he is giving you the 'living water' that will fulfill your deepest needs and desires, the water that is 'welling up to eternal life' (John 4:10, 14)".
 - Do you believe when you come to Jesus in prayer: "you are delighting Jesus by your presence" and "he enjoys being with you"? Why or why not?
 - How can you better respond to these words from the meditation?

Take some time to pray and ask the Lord to increase your thirst for the *living water* Jesus desires to give you? Use the prayer at the end of the meditation as a starting point.

"Jesus, may I thirst for you as you thirst for me."

[The discussion questions were created by Maurice Blumberg, who is currently a member of the board of directors of the ChristLife Catholic Ministry for Evangelization (www.christlife.org), a member of the National Service Committee Council of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal (www.nsc-chariscenter.org), and a board member of The Love of Christ Foundation. Prior to this, Maurice was the founding executive director of the National Fellowship of Catholic Men, a chairman of the board of *The Word Among Us* (www.wau.org), and a director of partner relations for The Word Among Us Partners ministry. He can be contacted at mblumberg@wau.org or mblumberg@aol.com.]