

Daily Reading & Meditation

Sunday (March 15): **A spring of water welling up to eternal life**

Gospel Reading: *John 4:5-42*

5 So he came to a city of Samaria, called Sychar, near the field that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. 6 Jacob's well was there, and so Jesus, wearied as he was with his journey, sat down beside the well. It was about the sixth hour. 7 There came a woman of Samaria to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink." 8 For his disciples had gone away into the city to buy food. 9 The Samaritan woman said to him, "How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?" For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans. 10 Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water." 11 The woman said to him, "Sir, you have nothing to draw with, and the well is deep; where do you get that living water? 12 Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well, and drank from it himself, and his sons, and his cattle?" 13 Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will thirst again, 14 but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst; the water that I shall give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life." 15 The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water, that I may not thirst, nor come here to draw." 16 Jesus said to her, "Go, call your husband, and come here."

17 The woman answered him, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "You are right in saying, 'I have no husband'; 18 for you have had five husbands, and he whom you now have is not your husband; this you said truly." 19 The woman said to him, "Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet. 20 Our fathers worshiped on this mountain; and you say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship." 21 Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. 22 You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. 23 But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for such the Father seeks to worship him. 24 God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth." 25 The woman said to him, "I know that Messiah is coming (he who is called Christ); when he comes, he will show us all things." 26 Jesus said to her, "I who speak to you am he."

27 Just then his disciples came. They marvelled that he was talking with a woman, but none said, "What do you wish?" or "Why are you talking with her?" 28 So the woman left her water jar, and went away into the city, and said to the people, 29 "Come, see a man who told me all that I ever did. Can this be the Christ?" 30 They went out of the city and were coming to him.

31 Meanwhile the disciples besought him, saying, "Rabbi, eat." 32 But he said to them, "I have food to eat of which you do not know." 33 So the disciples said to one another, "Has any one brought him food?" 34 Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of him who sent me, and to accomplish his work. 35 Do you not say, 'There are yet four months, then comes the harvest'? I tell you, lift up your eyes, and see how the fields are already white for harvest. 36 He who reaps receives wages, and gathers fruit for eternal life, so that sower and reaper may rejoice

together. 37 For here the saying holds true, 'One sows and another reaps.' 38 I sent you to reap that for which you did not labour; others have laboured, and you have entered into their labour." 39 Many Samaritans from that city believed in him because of the woman's testimony, "He told me all that I ever did." 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 your words that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is indeed the Saviour of the world."

Old Testament Reading: *Exodus 17:3-7*

3 But the people thirsted there for water, and the people murmured against Moses, and said, "Why did you bring us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our cattle with thirst?" 4 So Moses cried to the LORD, "What shall I do with this people? They are almost ready to stone me." 5 And the LORD said to Moses, "Pass on before the people, taking with you some of the elders of Israel; and take in your hand the rod with which you struck the Nile, and go. 6 Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock at Horeb; and you shall strike the rock, and water shall come out of it, that the people may drink." And Moses did so, in the sight of the elders of Israel. 7 And he called the name of the place Massah and Meribah, because of the fault finding of the children of Israel, and because they put the LORD to the proof by saying, "Is the LORD among us or not?"

Meditation: Would you do a favour for someone who snubbed you or treated you like an enemy? Jesus did just that and more! He treated the Samaritans, the sworn enemies of the Jews, with great kindness and respect. The Samaritans who lived in middle region of Israel between Galilee and Judaea and the Jews who lived in the rest of the land of Israel had been divided for centuries. They had no dealings with one another, avoiding all social contact, even trade, and inter-marriage. If their paths crossed it would not be unusual for hostility to break out.

When Jesus decided to pass through Samaria he stopped at Jacob's well because it was mid-day and he was both tired from the journey and thirsty. Jacob's well was a good mile and a half from the nearest town, called Sychar. It wasn't easy to draw water from this well since it was over a hundred feet deep. Jesus had neither rope nor bucket to fetch the water.

When a Samaritan woman showed up at the well, both were caught by surprise. Why would a Samaritan woman walk a mile and a half in the mid-day heat to fetch her water at a remote well rather than in her local town? She was an outcast and not welcomed among her own townspeople. Jesus then did something no respectable Jew would think of doing. He reached out to her, thus risking ritual impurity and scorn from his fellow Jews. He also did something no strict Rabbi would dare to do in public without loss to his reputation. He treated the woman like he would treat one of his friends - he greeted her and spoke at length with her. Jesus' welcoming approach to her was scandalous to both Jews and Samaritans because this woman was an adulteress and public sinner as well. No decent Jew or Samaritan would even think of being seen with such a woman, let alone exchanging a word with her!

Jesus broke through the barriers of prejudice, hostility, and tradition to bring the good news of peace and reconciliation to Jews, Samaritans, and Gentiles alike. He demonstrated the universality of the gospel both in word and deed. No one is barred from the love of God and the

good news of salvation. There is only one thing that can keep us from God and his redeeming love - our stubborn pride and wilful rebellion.

What is the point of Jesus' exchange with the Samaritan woman about water? Water in the arid land was scarce. Jacob's well was located in a strategic fork of the road between Samaria and Galilee. One can live without food for several days, but not without water. Water is a source of life and growth for all living things. When rain came to the desert, the water transformed the wasteland into a fertile field.

The kind of water which Jesus spoke about was living, running, fresh, pure water. Fresh water from a cool running stream was always preferred to the still water one might find in a pool or reservoir. When the Israelites complained about lack of water in the wilderness, God instructed Moses to strike the rock and a stream of fresh living water gushed out (Exodus 17:6). Even though the Israelites did not trust God to care for them in the wilderness, God, nonetheless gave them abundant water and provision through the intercession of his servant Moses.

The image of "living water" is used throughout the scriptures as a symbol of God's wisdom, a wisdom that imparts life and blessing to all who receive it. "The teaching of the wise is a fountain of life" (Proverbs 13:14). "Living water" was also a symbol for the Jews of thirst of the soul for God. The water which Jesus spoke of symbolized the Holy Spirit and his work of recreating us in God's image and sustaining in us the new life which comes from God. The life which the Holy Spirit produces in us makes us a "new creation" in Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17). Do you thirst for God and for the life of the Holy Spirit within you?

Hippolytus (170-236 AD), an early Christian writer and theologian who lived in Rome, explains the significance of the Holy Spirit's work in us:

"This is the water of the Spirit: It refreshes paradise, enriches the earth, gives life to living things. It is the water of Christ's baptism; it is our life. If you go with faith to this renewing fountain, you renounce Satan your enemy and confess Christ your God. You cease to be a slave and become an adopted son. You come forth radiant as the sun and brilliant with justice. You come forth a son of God and fellow-heir with Christ." (From a sermon, *On the Epiphany*)

Basil the Great (330-379 AD), a great early Christian teacher and Greek bishop of Caesarea speaks in a similar manner:

"The Spirit restores paradise to us and the way to heaven and adoption as children of God; he instills confidence that we may call God truly Father and grants us the grace of Christ to be children of the light and to enjoy eternal glory. In a word, he bestows the fullness of blessings in this world and the next; for we may contemplate now in the mirror of faith the promised things we shall someday enjoy. If this is the foretaste, what must the reality be? If these are the first fruits, what must be the harvest?" (From the treatise, *The Holy Spirit*)

Psalm 95:1-2,6-9

1 O come, let us sing to the LORD; let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation!

2 Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving; let us make a joyful noise to him with songs of praise!

6 O come, let us worship and bow down, let us kneel before the LORD, our Maker!

7 For he is our God, and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand. O that today you would hearken to his voice!

8 Harden not your hearts, as at Meribah, as on the day at Massah in the wilderness,

9 when your fathers tested me, and put me to the proof, though they had seen my work.

A Daily Quote for Lent: *The Living Water of the Spirit*, by John Chrysostom, 347-407 AD

Sometimes Scripture calls the grace of the Spirit "fire," other times it calls it "water." In this way, it shows that these names are not descriptive of its essence but of its operation. For the Spirit, which is invisible and simple, cannot be made up of different substances... In the same way that he calls the Spirit by the name of "fire," alluding to the rousing and warming property of grace and its power of destroying sins, he calls it "water" in order to highlight the cleansing it does and the great refreshment it provides those minds that receive it. For it makes the willing soul like a kind of garden, thick with all kinds of fruitful and productive trees, allowing it neither to feel despondency nor the plots of Satan. It quenches all the fiery darts of the wicked one.

OPENING PRAYER "Lord Jesus, my soul thirsts for you. Fill me with your Holy Spirit that I may always find joy in your presence and take delight in doing your will." **Amen.**

CLOSING PRAYER:- **World Peace, .**

Lord, we pray for the power to be gentle; the strength to be forgiving; the patience to be understanding; and the endurance to accept the consequences of holding to what we believe to be right.

Help us to devote our whole life and thought and energy to the task of making peace, praying always for the inspiration and the power to fulfill the destiny for which we and all men were created. **Amen.**