

3rd Sunday of Lent A

First Reading Exodus 17:3-7

Tormented by thirst, the people complained against Moses. "Why did you bring us out of Egypt?" they said. "Was it so that I should die of thirst, my children too, and my cattle?" Moses appealed to the Lord. "How am I to deal with this people?" he said. "A little more and they will stone me!"

The Lord said to Moses, "Take with you some of the elders of Israel and move on to the forefront of the people; take in your hand the staff with which you struck the river, and go. I shall be standing before you there on the rock, at Horeb. You must strike the rock, and water will flow from it for the people to drink." This is what Moses did, in the sight of the elders of Israel. The place was named Massah and Meribah because of the grumbling of the sons of Israel and because they put the Lord to the test by saying, "Is the Lord with us, or not?"

Second Reading Romans 5:1-2.5-8

So far then we have seen that, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by faith we are judged righteous and at peace with God, since it is by faith and through Jesus that we have entered this state of grace in which we can boast about looking forward to God's glory. This hope is not deceptive, because the love of God has been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit which has been given us.

We were still helpless when at his appointed moment Christ died for sinful men. It is not easy to die even for a good man – though of course for someone really worthy, a man might be prepared to die – but what proves that God loves us is that Christ died for us while we were still sinners.

Gospel John 4:5-15.19-26.39-42

Jesus came to the Samaritan town called Sychar, near the land that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. Jacob's well is there and Jesus, tired by the journey, sat straight down by the well. It was about the sixth hour. When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink."

His disciples had gone into the town to buy food. The Samaritan woman said to him, "What? You are a Jew and you ask me, a Samaritan, for a drink?" – Jews, in fact, do not associate with Samaritans. Jesus replied: "If you only knew what God is offering and who it is that is saying to you: 'Give me a drink', you would have been the one to ask, and he would have given you living water." "You have no bucket, sir," she answered, "and the well is deep: how would you get this living water? Are you a greater man than our father Jacob who gave us this well and drank from it himself with his sons and his cattle?" Jesus replied: "Whoever drinks this water will get thirsty again; but anyone who drinks the water that I shall give will never be thirsty again: the water that I shall give will turn into a spring inside him, welling up to eternal life."

"Sir," said the woman, "give me some of that water, so that I may never get thirsty and never have to come here again to draw water." "I see you are a prophet, sir" said the woman. "Our fathers worshipped on this mountain, while you say that Jerusalem is the place where one ought to worship." Jesus said: "Believe me, woman, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know; for salvation comes from the Jews. But the hour will come – in fact it is here already – when true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth: that is the kind of worshipper the Father wants. God is spirit, and those who worship must worship in spirit and truth."

The woman said to him, "I know that Messiah – that is, Christ – is coming; and when he comes he will tell us everything." "I who am speaking to you," said Jesus, "I am he." Many Samaritans of that town had believed in him on the strength of the woman's testimony when she said, "He told me all I have ever done," so, when the Samaritans came up to him, they begged him to stay with them.

He stayed for two days, and when he spoke to them many more came to believe; and they said to the woman, "Now we no longer believe because of what you told us; we have heard him ourselves and we know that he really is the saviour of the world."

Meditation

It is noon at Jacob's well. Tired from the journey, Jesus stops to rest. The Word of God is hungry and thirsty. He calls a woman and her fellow citizens to faith. A Samaritan woman comes to the well at the hour when the sun is burning. Perhaps this woman of bad reputation comes at this hour

to avoid an encounter. But there is someone sitting by the well. Who is he? He is a Jew, and Jews do not associate with Samaritans. It is an old story of schism and fear of contamination.

In the eyes of Jesus, Samaria is like this woman who has five husbands. It has become a prostitute to the idols. But the Word of God is thirsty. He desires the faith of this woman. He begins playing a game of question and answer with her. By the questions he raises, Jesus breaks through to the heart of this woman. She cannot avoid the question, who is this man who is greater than Jacob?

Is he a prophet? Is he possibly the Messiah? Refreshed by the water of life, the Samaritan woman runs to the village, announcing the good news of the mystery of Jesus.

The hunger of the Word has now been satisfied. By introducing the woman to the life of faith, by bringing to God true worshippers, Jesus has begun to fulfil his mission. The Samaritans are already on the way. Their adherence to Jesus, the Saviour of the world, prefigures the fruitfulness of a gospel preached to the ends of the earth.