

Sunday 3rd (A) of Lent

Gospel text (Jn 4,5-42): Jesus came to a Samaritan town called Sychar, near the land that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. Jacob's well is there. Tired from his journey, Jesus sat down by the well; it was about noon.

Now a Samaritan woman came to draw water and Jesus said to her, «Give me a drink». His disciples had just gone into town to buy some food. The Samaritan woman said to him, «How is it that you, a Jew, ask me, a Samaritan and a woman, for a drink?» (For Jews, in fact, have no dealings with Samaritans.) Jesus replied, «If you only knew the Gift of God! If you knew who it is that asks you for a drink, you yourself would have asked me and I would have given you living water».

The woman answered, «Sir, you have no bucket and this well is deep; where is your living water? Are you greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us this well after he drank from it himself, together with his sons and his cattle?». Jesus said to her, «Those who drink of this water will be thirsty again; but those who drink of the water that I shall give will never be thirsty; for the water that I shall give will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life». The woman said to him, «Give me this water, that I may never be thirsty and never have to come here to draw water». Jesus said, «Go, call your husband and come back here». The woman answered, «I have no husband». And Jesus replied, «You are right to say: ‘I have no husband’; for you have had five husbands and the one you have now is not your husband. What you said is true».

The woman then said to him, «I see you are a prophet: tell me this:

Our fathers used to come to this mountain to worship God; but you Jews, do you not claim that Jerusalem is the only place to worship God?». Jesus said to her, «Believe me, woman, the hour is coming when you shall worship the Father, but that will not be on this mountain or in Jerusalem. You Samaritans worship without knowledge, while we Jews worship with knowledge, for salvation comes from the Jews. But the hour is coming and is even now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for that is the kind of worshippers the Father wants. God is spirit and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth».

The woman said to him, «I know that the Messiah, that is the Christ, is coming; when he comes, he will tell us everything». And Jesus said, «I who am talking to you, I am he».

At this point the disciples returned and were surprised that Jesus was speaking with a woman; however, no one said, «What do you want?» or: «Why are you talking with her?». So the woman left her water jar and ran to the town. There she said to the people, «Come and see a man who told me everything I did! Could he not be the Christ?». So they left the town and went to meet him.

In the meantime the disciples urged Jesus, «Master, eat». But He said to them, «I have food to eat that you don't know about». And the disciples wondered, «Has anyone brought him food?». Jesus said to them, «My food is to do the will of the One who sent me and to carry out his work. You say that in four more months it will be the harvest; now, I say to you, look up and see the fields white and ready for harvesting. People who reap the harvest are paid for their work, and the fruit is gathered for eternal life, so that sower and reaper may rejoice together. Indeed the saying holds true: ‘One

sows and another reaps'. I sent you to reap where you didn't work or suffer; others have worked and you are now sharing in their labors».

In that town many Samaritans believed in him when they heard the woman who declared, «He told me everything I did». So, when they came to him, they asked him to stay with them and Jesus stayed there two days. After that many more believed because of his own words and they said to the woman, «We no longer believe because of what you told us; for we have heard for ourselves and we know that this is the Savior of the world».

«Give me a drink»

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Today, just as in that Samarian afternoon, Jesus comes into our life, halfway through our Lenten journey, telling us, as He did to the Samaritan woman: «Give me a drink» (Jn 4:7). «His material thirst —says John Paul II— symbolizes a far deeper reality: it expresses his ardent desire that his dialogue partner and her fellow-citizens will open themselves to faith».

The Preface of today's Eucharist celebration speaks to us of this dialogue that ends up in a salvific barter where the Lord, «(...) “so deeply thirsted” for the salvation of the Samaritan woman “he set on fire in her the flame of God's love”».

Even today Jesus continues to “thirst”, namely, to desire humanity “thirst” for our faith and love, “thirst” for our response of faith before so many Lenten invitations to conversion, to change, to reconcile to God and our brothers, to prepare ourselves, as much as we can, to receive a new life of resurrection in the nearing Easter.

«I who am talking to you, I am he» (Jn 4:26): this direct and clear acknowledgment by Jesus of his mission, which He had never done before with anybody else, shows likewise God's love, a love that undergoes more in quest for the sinner and promise of salvation, that will abundantly satiate the human desire for true Life. This is

why, further down in this same Gospel, Jesus will proclaim: «If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water» (Jn 7:37b-38). So, your commitment today, is to go out of yourself and tell all men: «Come and see a man who told me...» (Jn 4:29).