

Homily: 3rd Sunday of Lent: Cycle A: 2023: Ex 17: 3-7; Ps 95; Rom 5: 1-2, 5-8; Jn 4: 5-42

“Jesus's Encounter with the Woman at the Well as the Model of Conversion”

1. **While we were still sinners, Christ died for us!** Wow! Do we realize what that means? **God has infinite love for us humans.** His gracious mercy is such that no human is beyond hope if they are still living on earth. We must pray and work for everyone's conversion to the Lord - beginning with ourselves - that is what the Lenten season is all about. Again, as I mentioned back in Advent, we need to think about the people we know in our families or social circles that have turned away or drifted away from the practice of the Catholic Faith and encourage them to come back and be an active part of our Parish family, and to invite others to consider becoming Catholic. This would be a most wonderful way to show your love for the Lord this Lent. As St. James says in his letter in the New Testament, *“The case may arise among you of someone straying from the truth, and of another bringing him back. Remember this: the person who brings a sinner back from his way will save his soul from death and cancel a multitude of sins”* (James 5: 19-20). I ask you as your pastor, please put any lapsed Catholic you know in touch with me and I will try to help them - if they are open to it - as well as anyone who is not Catholic and is interested in exploring our beautiful life of Faith. What a gift it is!
2. Jesus shows us in a concrete way **His patience and mercy** as God, in how He interacts with the Samaritan woman at the well in the Gospel today. Again, the message is amazing - no one is beyond redemption. She is someone who has made a spiritual and human mess of her life. She's been married 5 times and now is living with a sixth guy who is not her husband. **Yet Jesus is still willing to engage her and point her to a better life in Him as the source of living water.** As He says to her and to us, *everyone who drinks the water (from the well) 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.* But, from the dialog with her, **we see that we can only come to Jesus** as the internal spring of living water, of salvation, of meaning and ultimate purpose in our life - if we let Jesus into our life in a deeper way and allow Him to show us the truth of our current life - especially if there are sins, sometimes serious ones, that need to be repented of and inner wounds that need to be healed. Jesus always does this process of

dialog with our souls with great respect and kindness. To paraphrase St. John Vianney, the patron saint of parish priests, who said, *God does not show us all our sins and weaknesses at once, because He knows we would be overwhelmed and tempted to despair, but instead in His kindness He gradually shows us the state of our life, over time, so that with His help we will want to change and become more like Him in all ways - drawn by the Lord's cords of love, mercy, and patience with us sinners. And the biggest grace in this regard is the thoughtful reception of the Sacrament of Confession - which takes away our sins and begins our spiritual healing* like the woman today with Jesus.

3. **What is this living spring of God's life that Jesus speaks about today?** It is a divine person, namely, **the Holy Spirit** the 3rd person of the Blessed Trinity who is the living spring of God's life in us, who Jesus promised to send to the Church after He ascended back to Heaven. Once we invite God into our life in a deeper way, through those moments of "spiritual visitation" that I spoke about last weekend, then the Holy Spirit takes over again in a gentle respectful way to mold us more into the image of Jesus, in all that we say, and think, and do. We are changed for the better over time. And once we see that change for the better, then we want to share that gift with those around us like the Samaritan woman did - she went into the town and told them about what Jesus had done for her. The goal of sharing our Faith is not that others believe in Jesus because of us, but they come to accept it themselves, by encountering the patient merciful love of the Lord for each individual person. As the other Samaritans in the town said to the woman at the well, at the end of this Gospel passage after Jesus had visited them for two days, *we no longer believe because of your word, (saying He told me everything I have done); for we have heard for ourselves and we know that this is truly **the savior** of the world.* Let's invite Jesus into our life like the characters in the Gospel did today, and then our Faith will come alive, and we will ask the Lord to use us as instruments to bring His saving message of truth of love and forgiveness to a hurting and wounded world. As Pope Francis put it, the modern world is like a battlefield with many spiritually wounded and dying ppl. The Church's job is to a spiritual hospital to help the healing begin, the only true healing, which God gives us through the life of His Eternal Son who came to save each wounded person through the Catholic Church He founded to bring this true healing.