**LENT 3rd SUNDAY, Cycle. A (instead of C) 2019.**

**Today’s Liturgy makes** use of the symbol of **“water**” to refer to our relationship with God. The passage **from Exodus (First Reading)** tells us of the Jews complaining about their thirst, a picture of human longing for God and spiritual satisfaction. The **Rock which Moses strikes represents God who gives water** (God’s own life) essential for our spiritual life.

**In the Second Reading Paul asserts** that as the savior of mankind, Jesus poured the living water of the gift of his Holy Spirit into our hearts when we were dying of thirst. **We need the Holy Spirit to sustain us spiritually, j**ust as we need water to sustain us physically.

We all thirst for something. Thirst for love, happiness and joy: We **desperately search for meaning and significance in life**. Jesus teaches us about thirst, and how to truly quench our thirst, and he tells through an experience that is **given in today’s Gospel reading.** Jesus who **was tired and exhausted** by his journey, came to the **Samaritan village** where Jacob’s well was, and **met a woman who came to draw water**. And this encounter is a turning point in her life. Surely it is not a **superficial encounter**. It is an **in-depth meeting of two persons**. What is this well? **Could it be a symbol of inner depth**, **the deepest level of consciousness**? The woman by the well has to get into the well. But she keeps it well covered and hidden from herself from the rest of the world. Jesus has to lead her into her depths. It is interesting to note **how gently and delicately Jesus does this.**

**He starts from a weaker stance, with a request for a drink of water.** But the woman does not respond to Jesus. She reacts. Jesus patiently adjusts to her reaction. He does not allow her **racial prejudice** (Jews Vs Samaritans) and her ancestral pride (“**Are you greater than our father Jac**ob”) to prevent Him from leading her to the depths of her consciousness.

**Jesus does not refute her claims to any type of superi**ority. But Jesus with feather-touch delicacy, disposes of them by **transcending them** and leads her to deeper truth. He deftly matches all her claims. **With exquisite refinement**, Jesus then, exposes her private life (her six men)) and **gently unmasks her**. She loses all her claims and her theology of worship (our **fathers worshipped on this mountain**). Fully unmasked and thoroughly shorn of all her pretensions, she has reached the depth of her well, the depth of her being. Real encounters take place at this level. **This is the genuine meeting of two authentic persons.** At this depth there are two possibilities: **reception or rejection**.

It is to the **credit of Jesus that** after having “***announced the good news to her***”, after having brought her face-to-face with her own self, He leaves her free to decide. ***And it is to the credit of the woman that in spite of her initial resistance and refusal of the issue, she finally accepts herself as she is - a sinner in need of salvation, and accepts Jesus for what He is - the savior come to call sinners, and becomes His missionary***. It is clear from their exchange of words given in the Gospel today. Jesus says, “Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but one who drinks of the water that I will give will never be thirsty. The water I will give him will become in him a spring of water gushing up to eternal life”. And the woman tells him, “***Sir, give me this water, so that I may never be thirsty or I don’t have to keep coming here to draw water.***

After this transforming encounter she does not keep her experience a secret. She turns her **experience of Jesus** into a message for others. Because of her, **the whole town comes to meet Jesus.** Many believe in Jesus because of her story; many more come to believe in Him when they meet Him. **She is a summary of how people come to understand Jesus, first a Jew; then as a prophet; then as the Messiah; then as the savior of the world.** She is one of the first witnesses in John’s Gospel who leads others to Jesus. Her past does not hinder her from being a **messenger of the Good Ne**ws. She has a story to tell. At long last she has met the right man

Jesus has always a way of coming into our personal lives and we need to allow Jesus free entry into our personal lives. Jesus wants to get personal with us, to get into our **“private lives”** especially during this Lenten season. We all have a private personal life **which is contrary to the will of God**. And Christ comes into that “private” personal life, not to embarrass us, not to judge us. He never condemns us, because our hearts are already condemning us. He is ready to start a conversation with us to enter into our “private lives” to free us, to change us and to offer us what we really **need: living wat**er (ie, the Holy Spirit). When we let God’s Spirit come into us and take control of our life He brings harmony within us and with the entire humanity. For which we need to be witnesses to Jesus like the Samaritan woman- a powerful testimony and exemplary model for all of us.