



Third Sunday of Lent March 15, 2020

Jesus meets the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well. John 4: 5-42

Jesus, tired from journeying, sits down at Jacob's well. When a Samaritan woman, (Jews loathed Samaritans) he broke all protocols and asked her to get him a drink of water. It says that he was tired and thirsty, but it was actually the woman who had married five times and was now living with another man who was tired and thirsting.

A young priest friend of mine was reassigned as pastor to new parish. He had been placed there because he had taken Spanish in seminary and completed an intensive language program in Mexico. This parish regularly had Hispanic liturgies. He recounts that his first Sunday, after the Mass one of the Latino elders spoke up in the group telling the new pastor what their community wanted and needed. With less than perfect Spanish comprehension, the young priest thought the elder was telling him how to do his job. His temper rose and he told the elder and the

group that he did not need others to tell him what he should and should not do. This was met with silence and some evident resentment. During the course of the week, the young pastor regretted the confrontation and asked one of the bilingual folks to explain what they had seen take place at the episode. The Latino parishioner said that the elder had simply stated a couple of hopes and desires of his community and in no way meant to tell the priest what he should do. He said the community was taken aback by the strength of the priest's response, but as faithful people they would surely return. The following weekend the priest apologized for his misunderstanding and his inappropriate anger toward the community spokesperson; and asked for forgiveness. The community was deeply touched by this and a bond was formed which has lasted and grown these past seven years.

From the brokenness of the woman at the well Jesus took the opportunity to understand and accept her. His openness was a source of healing and forgiveness for her. She could hardly wait to tell others in her town about the man 'who had told her everything she had ever done.' The young pastor used the opportunity of his own misunderstanding to open the door for forgiveness and renewed relationship.

Others meet us at the well, tired, thirsty, bruised, and misunderstood. We have the power of acceptance which brings healing and new possibilities. Whether seeking forgiveness or offering it, we open the door not simply to restored relationships, but improved relationships. Let us be attentive to those approaching us to draw forth waters of acceptance and understanding.

As I write this it is Friday. On Fridays I am gearing up for the weekend liturgies (Masses). Reading the Sunday readings, getting a homily together, seeing if I have any artwork appropriate to the Gospel. It feels so disjointed to know I won't be celebrating Mass with our beloved community physically present this weekend. God has been good and neither illness nor injury have kept me from a Sunday celebration in the over 40 years of ministry. Our shared hope is that by taking these extreme steps we will soon see the epidemic waning and can return to enjoying our community gatherings around God's table again. Hopefully this period of fasting from the Mass will increase our hunger and thirst for the bread for our journey and the cup of salvation.

Blessings, Fr. Dave