



Bringing Home the Word

Third Sunday of Lent (A)
March 12, 2023

Water for Living, or Living Water?

By Sr. Dianne Bergant, CSA

Water flows through this Sunday’s readings. In the passage from Exodus, the Hebrews cry out for the water so necessary for life. In the Gospel, Jesus speaks of living water that provides eternal life.

The exchange between the Hebrews and Moses is straightforward and startling. Physical thirst led them to question the divine care that miraculously delivered them from the hands of Egyptian oppressors. We shouldn’t be too quick to shake our fingers at them. How many times have we

looked past blessings we take for granted, only to focus on lesser immediate needs? These desert people are our ancestors in more ways than one.

The Gospel of John is most interesting. Jesus is in Samaria, a land hated by the Jews. There he initiates a conversation with an inhabitant of the town of Sychar, someone who is an outcast in three major ways. She is a woman—no self-respecting man would be alone with a woman he didn’t know. She is a Samaritan—Jews considered Samaritans unclean. And she is promiscuous—his own honor might be at risk. The woman’s questionable social status does not prevent Jesus from engaging her, first in social etiquette (“Give me a drink” [4:7]), then in a theological exchange (“Whoever drinks the water I shall give will never thirst” [4:14]).

The Hebrews experienced God’s saving action in their exodus, but they lacked trust. The woman, hated by the Jews, was an outcast of her own people, yet she believed. How do we respond to the water? †

A Word from Pope Francis

Like the Samaritan woman, whoever personally encounters the living Jesus feels the need to talk about him to others, so that everyone might reach the point of proclaiming that Jesus “is truly the savior of the world” (Jn 4:42), as the woman’s fellow townspeople later said...[W]e too are called to witness the life and hope that are within us.

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Sunday Readings

Exodus 17:3–7

The LORD answered..., “Strike the rock, and the water will flow from it for the people to drink.”

Romans 5:1–2, 5–8

The love of God has been poured out into our hearts through the holy Spirit.

John 4:5–42 or John 4:5–15, 19b–26, 39a, 40–42

[Jesus said,] “The water I shall give will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”

How many times have we looked past blessings we take for granted, only to focus on lesser immediate needs?

REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- What is the deepest longing of my heart?
- Have I overlooked a blessing, an answer to a prayer?

Foreign Encounter

By Fr. Byron Miller, CSsR

“Y’all mind sharing a table with these folks?” asked the attendant as we wandered into a dueling piano bar in the French Quarter. Our group was one or two years past the legal drinking age; they were elderly couples who were one or two drinks past the legal alcohol limit. The couples were from California visiting New Orleans for an Elks Convention. My Cajun friends and I had limited experience with elks—or their conventions—but thirst knew no boundaries, and lasting friendships with these strangers was formed.

In John’s Gospel, two strangers meet at a well on the outskirts of town. Their peoples—the Jews and the Samaritans—had been estranged from each other for generations. Thirst, however, knows no boundaries.

“The woman is taken aback that a Jew, no matter how thirsty, would ask a Samaritan for a drink,” writes Denis McBride, CSsR. Yet, she “has a thirst for meeting Mr. Right” that hadn’t been satisfied after five husbands and the man she’s living with. Then the buckets are turned, when Jesus tells her he is the Christ, and “at long last she has met the right man.” †



These reflections were excerpted from Daybreaks: Daily Reflections for Lent and Easter by Fr. Daniel P. Horan, OFM, available from Liguori Publications. To learn more and review our complete list of Daybreaks authors, including Fr. Ron Rolheiser, OMI; Fr. Byron Miller, CSsR; Sr. Dianne Bergant, CSA; and others, visit Liguori.org.

WEEKDAY READINGS

March 13–18

Monday, Lenten Weekday:
2 Kgs 5:1–15ab / Lk 4:24–30

Tuesday, Lenten Weekday:
Dn 3:25, 34–43 / Mt 18:21–35

Wednesday, Lenten Weekday:
Dt 4:1, 5–9 / Mt 5:17–19

Finding Redemption

By Amy Welborn

As John narrates the encounter of Jesus with the Samaritan woman at the well, we witness one more fascinating conversation that seems circuitous, but by the end, homes in on the truth.



It begins in the heat of the day, the point at which the light is strongest, and into this light steps a woman. An ordinary chat turns into a moment of profound self-knowledge. She is confronted with her flaws and comes away with understanding. How instructive that, faced with embarrassing and awkward news about her life, she experiences it as good. Good news. She meets Jesus as she is, and in that truthful, painful space she finds redemption.

A friend fought cancer for years. At some point between her diagnosis and her death she said to me with complete conviction, “Thank God for my cancer.”

Cancer had ravaged her body and was cutting her physical life short, but my friend felt strongly that cancer had also stripped her of pretense and forced her to confront herself and God on spare, honest terms. There, in that bright, painful light, she was brought face to face with Jesus through a winding, wandering path. She saw herself as she really was, flawed, yes, but most of all, loved. †



So that we may recognize you wherever we are and proclaim your presence to all those we meet, we pray—Lord, let us be like you.

The Redemptorists

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