

Go Forth...

A SERVICE OF U.S. CATHOLIC MISSION ASSOCIATION

MISSIONARY COMMENTARY

CHRIST'S THIRST FOR US



SUNDAY READINGS:

Exodus 17:3-7

Psalms 95:1-2, 6-9

Romans 5:1-2, 5-8

John 4:5-42

CHRIST'S PROFOUND THIRST

Today's Gospel, a deeply touching human-interest story, describes the lively encounter of Jesus with the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well. Their conversation revolves around water, about various senses of "living water," and how our thirst for God may be satisfied.

Lenten Catechesis. This reading from John's Gospel along with the first reading from Exodus (both centered on life-giving water) form part of the Church's catechesis for those who are preparing for baptism on Holy Saturday evening. In addition, the readings remind all Christians of their own baptism and their obligation to live as God's children "born through water and the Spirit" (Jn 3:5).

Our brief meditation today focuses on "thirst," a common human experience. Our body is composed of 75 percent water and 25 percent solid matter. To provide nourishment, eliminate waste, and conduct all the thousands of activities in the body, we need water. The experience of thirst, the desire to drink something, is our body's natural indication of the need for hydration. Indeed, water is essential for life.

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Our Thirst for God. All people “thirst” for fullness and completeness in their lives. Thirst drives us to work hard at procuring the necessities for daily life. We struggle to provide security for ourselves and our families. At times, our “thirst” may be so strong that we become lost in a fretful search, forgetting what may be the true “living water” that will satisfy us.

The Samaritan woman also found herself on such an endless search; she had already married five men. In Jesus she found the true “living water.” She rejoiced in her discovery of the Messiah; she went immediately to call the townsfolk to come to the “streams of living water” that “well up to eternal life.” Her genuine thirst, not her superficial desires, had been satiated.

God’s Thirst for Us. We seek to move beyond our desires and to appreciate God’s desire for us. Mother Teresa asked her sisters to often reflect on Jesus’ words from the cross: “I thirst” (Jn 19:28). In the Missionaries of Charity convents, these words are often placed next to the crucifix in the sanctuary. Though first spoken on Calvary, they continue to echo throughout all times and places.

Jesus Repeatedly Says: “I thirst for you.” Friends, allow yourself (as did the Samaritan woman) to feel Jesus’ thirst for you; hear Him speak to you personally: ▶ “I thirst for you. Yes, that is the only way to even begin to describe My love for you.” ▶ “I thirst for you. I thirst to love you and to be loved by you—that is how precious you are to Me.” ▶ “I thirst for you. You must never doubt My mercy, My longing to bless you, and live My life in you.” ▶ “I thirst for you. For Me there is no one more important in the entire world than you.” ▶ “I thirst for you. All I ask of you is that you entrust yourself to Me completely. I will do all the rest.”

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NOTES ON THE SUNDAY READINGS:

First Reading - Exodus 17:3-7: Today's first reading is drawn from the book of Exodus. The narrative describes that the Israelites became discouraged and grumbled against Moses. In turn, Moses asks the Lord for assistance to satisfy the quarreling Israelites. God instructs him to strike the rock; water is given to the people in a miraculous fashion.

Responsorial Psalm - Psalm: 95:1-2, 6-9: This psalm selection asserts that we must listen to the Lord's voice and not harden our hearts. Note that prayer is a continuous task. Why? Every day is a "today" as we journey in the Christian life. We all have seen the Lord's magnanimous works in our lives and in the lives of many other exemplary Christians.

Second Reading - Romans 5:1-2, 5-8: Here Paul is addressing the community in Rome. He asserts that God's love is continuously poured into our hearts through the action of the Holy Spirit. The result of God's grace, given as flowing water, is that we are imbued with profound hope. Truly, such "hope does not disappoint"; this is how "God proves his love for us."

Gospel - John 4:5-42: Our very familiar Gospel today from John narrates the story of the Samaritan woman whom Jesus met at the well. Note that there are two levels in the narrative: physical water and spiritual water. Jesus promises a much greater gift than just ordinary water; he speaks of the water that he provides as being an overflowing fountain that gives eternal life.

Notes and Commentary by Maryknoller James H. Kroeger, who has recently published *Walking with Pope Francis: The Official Documents in Everyday Language* (Orbis Books) as well as *Exploring Vatican II Treasures: Actors, Events, Insights* and *A Joyful Journey with Pope Francis* (Faith Alive Books).

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