

Third Sunday in Lent – Year A 2019-2020

A Message from Fr. Mark

Dear Parishioners,

Jesus and the Aching Heart of the Samaritan Woman



Today we hear the first of the three great Gospel Stories which will help us- and especially the catechumens- to prepare for the joy of Easter. The woman at the well is a perfect model for us of experiencing deeper conversion. (John 4) And Jesus gives us an example of compassion and tender mercy

as he spends adequate time with this woman who was a sinner. Jesus thirsted (“I thirst”) for her love, and so He says, “Give me a drink.” At first, she doesn't even feel she needs Jesus. She doesn't take seriously his statement that He can give her “living waters.” She answers flippantly: “You don't even have a bucket and this well is deep.” Then Jesus points out that she has led a superficial lifestyle including five husbands.

What a wonderful example this is for priests and ministers who must care for people who are in difficult situations. Divorce is very painful and unfortunate for those who, for no fault of their own, must separate from an abusive or controlling or unfaithful spouse for the sake of their well-being and for the sake of a serene, healthy environment for raising children. It is painful. Those who have gone through a divorce say that it is like hell. It is like death. Afterward, there is grieving and healing that must take place. Jesus sees the need and seems to spend an entire afternoon dialoguing with this broken woman. This is an example for us to do apostolic work. We organize programs and take advantage of mass gatherings, but we also know that the one-on-one encounter for spiritual direction is also a good use of time. It is especially necessary for those who are in difficult situations such as those who have been remarried. Those who are simply divorced do not need to refrain from receiving Holy Communion, but those who are remarried must sometimes stop taking Communion if they have not yet met with a priest to discern whether an annulment process is necessary for the previous bond. This is a very delicate conversation and requires a gentle approach such as we see in the story of Jesus and the Samaritan woman.

The loving care of Jesus helped the Samaritan woman to let down her defenses and to begin to thirst for reconciliation with God and her faith community. “So ardently did Jesus thirst for her faith, that He kindled in her the fire of divine love” (today's Mass Preface). His deep well of love could satisfy her. So, he lights a fire in her so that he can quench it. He offers water that makes her thirsty for more! Mad lovers satisfy one another and then desire each other all the more. In the end, the Samaritan woman forgets about her thirst for ordinary things, leaves her water jar and goes into her town to tell everyone about Jesus Christ!

The story of the Samaritan woman at the well describes thirst that is satisfied with living water, but it also mentions hungering and eating food that truly satisfies. Next weekend we will welcome Father Leo Patalinghug who will speak to us about spiritual things (Sunday and Monday), and then provide a gourmet meal that will satisfy our physical hunger and draw us joyfully together for a Lenten feast!

Sincerely,
Fr. Mark