Third Sunday of Lent “A”

I brought my water bottle with me today. It seems like we can’t leave home without one. Just a few years ago it would seem weird to be carrying a water bottle around, now it is common place. Perhaps as a nation we now understand better how important hydration is to the human health? Or is it just a matter of “looking cool?”

The need for water forms the background of two of the scripture readings today. Take for example the first reading from the book of Exodus. God has just performed around a dozen miracles to force Pharaoh, the King of Egypt, to free the Hebrew people from slavery. The people have left their slavery behind but now find themselves in the midst of a desert. They complain to their leader, Moses, about being thirsty. Moses is rather impatient with them wondering how they can complain given all that God has done for them? Moses realizes that the problem with his people is not so much that they are thirsty but rather they lack faith and trust in God.

In the gospel reading we encounter a woman who is thirsty. She comes to a well to get water and discovers Jesus standing there. There is something different about this woman: she is a Samaritan who engages in conversation with a Jew – her natural enemy; she comes to the well around midday, the hottest time of the day to get water, while most women come to the well in the early morning when it is cool; she engages in a conversation with a strange male – something not proper for women to do; and she has had five husbands, when the Law of Moses frowns on more than three marriages.

She comes looking for water to quench her thirst. However, Jesus offers her a different kind of water - “living water.” He tells her that whoever drinks this living water will never thirst since it leads to eternal life. The “living water” that Jesus offers her is
faith in him. And so this questionable non-Jewish woman with five husband, this woman who speaks to strangers is the one whom Jesus approaches, the one to whom he reveals himself as the Messiah. This least likely candidate for salvation becomes herself a means of that salvation to the people of her town.

This woman of questionable character is meant to represent us. Like her, our lives are messed up at times – we don’t always have our act together, so-to-speak. Lent is a time for us to “come to the well” to have a conversation with Christ. Lent is a time for us to ask ourselves – what do we thirst for, what gives meaning to our lives?

There are perhaps many things that we thirst for – such as respect, love and security as well as things such as sex, drugs and rock and roll (Not all thirsts are good.)! But ultimately as Christians we have to ask ourselves the question – where does Christ fit in? What kind of thirst do we have for him?

I was talking to a guy a few months ago who had been away from the church for many years. He is a very successful business man, has a great wife, children and many friends but realized that he has a thirst for something more. His thirst was satisfied when he brought Christ back into his life.

Bottle water is a good means for quenching our physical thirst. Jesus offers himself as “living water” to quench our thirst for meaning in life. To have faith in him is to never thirst again. Do we believe that?