

## **March 4, 2018**

Ex 17:3-7; Rom 5:1-2,5-8; Jn 4:5-42 (l or s??)

What does it mean to be thirsty? Simple question, but there is more than one answer. In our readings today, God calls us to reflect on this state of emptiness we call “thirst” to help us understand different ways of being satisfied and nourished. We all thirst, we all must have that need satisfied in order to live - but what exactly does it mean to thirst, and where does God come in in satisfying thirst?

What *does* it mean to thirst? Well the thing that probably comes to mind is our body’s need for water. We can only survive 3 days without drinking water. Our bodies are mostly made out of water and it is vital for most all bodily functions that we remain hydrated. To put it simply, if you don’t drink you die - water is essential for the body to live. This has been well known thorough history. In the first reading we hear of the Israelites, after leaving slavery in Egypt, are in the desert and without water. They rightly know that if they don’t get water they will die.

The second kind of thirst is mental thirst - the thirst for knowledge and truth. This is not as immediate a need as the need to satisfy the thirst for water - but it is also important. We can try to satisfy the that thirst for knowledge and truth by trying to focus on every detail about certain specific things (like trying to figure out why this person did this and that to me, how the details of this or that conspiracy are put together, how to beat this specific video game, how to master this specific task while ignoring others, or how to beat out everyone in a specific thing). This leaves us mentally empty about all the other things we are could be learning - actually, it makes us more thirsty. The other way is to just decide to not satisfy the thirst for knowledge and truth at all. Just don’t try to learn, don’t try to grow, don’t try to expand your horizons - this leaves you in a kind of mental death. The third is to approach situations thoughtfully, to search for truth, to learn, to grow, to expand yourself in ways that enrich your life. In the end important questions are answered, and ... you have learned what to put your energy into - and what not tout your energy into to lead a more peaceful life.

The third hunger is the spiritual hunger that we often don’t realize that we have. It is that ache of incompleteness, that sense that there is more, that feeling that we are not yet where we should be. It is a thirst at a deeper place. We may try to quench spiritual thirst with bodily or

mental things, but they don't quench it. That space within us that is dry and needs ... something. Perhaps some of that thirst is what has prompted Katie to join the Church to travel with us.

Jesus comes to tell us that he is the cure for all our thirsts. In the first reading the Israelites are experiencing all three of the thirsts we spoke about. They were in the desert and bodily thirsty, they were confused and had not yet received any teaching from God - they were mentally hungry. They were wandering, not knowing where they were going - they were empty, angry, and frustrated. They had a need for God to satisfy them spiritually. God responds by taking care of the most immediate need and gives them water in the desert. Later God will provide them with the law as food for their mental hunger, and eventually lead them to the promised land. For us, satisfying that spiritual thirst can only fully come after death and entering into the promised land of heaven. God does not leave us wandering now without something for this spiritual thirst. God provides us with spiritual drink in this life, as we heard in the second reading: *hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.*

Jesus is the cure for all our thirsts. In the first letter to the corinthians St. Paul says that Jesus was the rock in the desert that gave bodily water to the Israelites. Jesus is the Word of God, the wisdom of God from whom the teachings that satisfy our mental hunger comes from. Jesus sent the Spirit to flow among us to lead us. Jesus speaks through our lives and in the depths of our hearts and feeds us with his body and blood in the Eucharist to temporarily satisfy that spiritual thirst. But, all our thirsts in this life need to be satisfied over and over. You need to drink water daily to be bodily alive, you need to continue to learn and to meditate on truth to be mentally alive, and you need to continue to pray and to encounter Jesus in the Eucharist, and Reconciliation to keep spiritually alive. Jesus said today: *Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again.* Jesus holds out to us the path to eternal life in the promised land of heaven - but we have to follow him there. Just like the Israelites would not have found the promised land without God to guide them, we will not find our final home wandering on our own. We are happy that Katie has found the Church community to help to journey with her. Let us all drink of the spiritual water of Jesus that shows us the way to final satisfaction. As he says to the Samaritan woman: *whoever drinks the water I shall give will never thirst; the water I shall give will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.*