

3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Lent- A  
Deacon Pat Hall

EX 17:3-7; ROM 5:1-2, 5-8; [JN 4:5-42](#)

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*Homilies are vehicles for breaking open the Word of God. First read the Sunday readings at <http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/031520.cfm>*

□

### **I thirst.**

Can there be a more desperate two words?

Moses faced that “grumbling” hoard who was about to stone him because of their thirst. Their thirst for water had turned into a blood-thirst. God did not abandon his people and He empowered Moses to be his instrument of deliverance by striking the rock, from which then issued flowing water.

It is in David reminiscing about this event, that our psalmist wrote “Harden not your hearts.” When I think of Jesus on the cross for the love of me, my rocky heart is pierced and I am able to love as God loves me.

It is in our thirst that we dare to hope. Paul reminds us,

*And hope does not disappoint,  
because the love of God has been poured out into our hearts.*

And then we have our marvelous story of Jesus meeting the Samaritan woman at the well.

There is so much that can be explored in this wonderful encounter. But I was taken by the woman’s thirst.

She is thirsty for the water in the well. There’s none other in the vicinity in this dusty land and nearby villagers need to fetch for their daily need. This woman aches for her ration of water. <sup>i</sup>

This woman comes at noon, the hottest part of the day, maybe because no one else would be expected to be there. This may point to another ache, the ache of her heart. Jesus later, through mysterious knowledge that the woman could only attribute to God, tells her of her past husbands and of the one she is with who is not her husband. This may be at the root of her shame and her avoidance of others.

Like our Country Western song, she may very well have been

*"looking for love in all the wrong places."<sup>ii</sup>*

And yet it is carved on our hearts to search for life-fulfilling love.

*Thou hast made us for thyself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it finds its rest in thee.<sup>iii</sup>*

So let us not condemn her too fiercely for her choices. It is remarkable to me that I read nothing of condemnation in Jesus' words to her. He just offers her himself.

*The water I shall give will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.*

Jesus proclaims that he is the very Messiah that she and her people have been waiting for. He offers in his Human Person the Divine Love that will quench all thirst and save all.

We are heartened and encouraged when we hear his offer to the woman and hear that this is his offer to us as well. Yet, our ability to comprehend the magnitude of the gift is hobbled by our refusal to acknowledge the magnitude of our need.

It is hard to look in the mirror for very long without our noticing our blemishes and our sags. It is hard to reflect on our souls for very long without the same. My solution, and for many others, is to not look too long or very hard. I follow along with many when

*I judge myself by my ideals and others by their actions.<sup>iv</sup>*

Much of my denial is gratuitous. It feels better. Some of my denial comes from me not wanting to remember places of hurt and shame. My self-talk becomes:

*"Let's just forget about it. Let's forge ahead. And never let anyone close enough to hurt me again."*

Look how I can wall myself off from love... love for which I was made.

When I am the most thirsty, that is when I am most grateful for that *spring welling up to eternal life*.

When we search and acknowledge our thirst, we need not look further as Jesus is always waiting to pour into our hearts.

*As the deer longs for streams of water,  
so my soul longs for you, O God.  
My soul thirsts for God, the living God. Ps 41*

What is your thirst? Allow your penitential practices to let you feel that hunger. Come to the holy Sacrament of Reconciliation and acknowledge your hurts and shame before Jesus. He awaits you, prepared to embrace you with a love that quenches all thirst and fear.

Come to His altar and allow him to fill you with his divinity.

In ending, I would like to leave you with a prayer helped by my friend, Tim Fallon.

Prayer<sup>v</sup>

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*Jesus, Living Water*

*in my thirst I turn to you.*

*Jesus, Living Water*

*help me trust the surprising and unexpected ways that I encounter you.*

*Jesus, Living Water*

*you know my deepest thirsts.*

*Jesus, Living Water*

*thanks for those who love me with your redemptive love.*

*Jesus, Living Water*

*help me to move beyond my guilt and shame.*

*Jesus, Living Water*

*give me the courage to live as one touched and changed by your redeeming love.*

*Jesus Living Water*

*in my thirst I turn to you.*

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<sup>i</sup> Timothy D. Fallon, What Jesus Said (and why it matters now), St. Anthony Messenger Press, 2006, p.39

<sup>ii</sup> Lyrics by Johnny Lee

<sup>iii</sup> St. Augustine

<sup>iv</sup> Rev. William Nevins 1836

<sup>v</sup> Timothy D. Fallon, What Jesus Said (and why it matters now), St. Anthony Messenger Press, 2006, p. 57-58