

Third Sunday of Lent

Ex 17:3-7; Ps. 95; Ro 5:1-2,5-8; Jn 4: 5-15,19b-26, 39a,40-42

Homily

About this time in Lent already some of us may be feeling in harmony with the Israelites described in today's reading from Exodus: dry, thirsty and impatient with our seeming lack of progress in our spiritual life. Where has the time gone? we ask. We were so enthusiastic about beginning our reform. And now...

But let us take courage from this same story. God will provide water and life for us, too, if we just trust in Him. This is no time for us to give up. From what seems like a hard rocky cliff there will be the water of grace and support waiting for us to move on until Easter if we but trust. Also it wasn't by chance that Jesus passed through Samaria nor unplanned his offer of living water to the Samaritan woman in John's gospel. How gently and surely his conversation led her to admit the truth she was avoiding and request the "living water" he promised!

Despite our lack of energy so early in Lent we, too, can be renewed by our contacts with Jesus in our prayer, our reception of the sacraments and by our loving associations with our brothers and sisters. Saint Paul in his letter to the Romans this morning assures us that all things are possible if we remember that Christ died for us when we were still sinners—that no matter how we may feel we stand in the love of the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

In a few weeks now all over the world on Easter Saturday evening catechumens will be entering full communion with us—for many of them a long journey supported by the wonderful gift of faith. Let their example strengthen us as we prepare ourselves to welcome them. The witness of our lives will continue to demonstrate the power of God's grace within His church.

In the gospel today Jesus takes the initiative by asking the Samaritan woman for a drink—we hear that word water again. Here is the answer to our search for closer union with Jesus this Lenten season. The water Jesus speaks of is the grace of eternal life which He shares with us at every event in our lives beginning with our Baptism and accompanying us all along our journey with Him—every Eucharist, every reception of Reconciliation, every anointing. And every time we begin to feel discouraged about our lack of energy in things important in our spiritual life we must not fail to meet Him "at the well"—whatever the particular circumstances for us may be.

May His words to the Samaritan woman today see us through this Lent until we hear Alleluia once again and realize that these words are spoken also to us: "Whoever drinks the water I shall give will never thirst; the water I shall give will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life."