

3RD WEEK OF LENT YEAR A 2026

How are we to hear the Word of God unless there is someone to proclaim Him? [Rom. 10:14] Therefore, I proclaim what Jesus has spoken to us today, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to complete His work." [Jn. 4:34] Not only was the food of Jesus to do the Divine Will of our Heavenly Father, but it was also to complete His work, to persevere to the very end.

The Words of Jesus echo our present short-term perseverance. Entering the third week in Lenten Season, we are making every effort to persevere in our fasting, our penances and our prayers so we may obtain the strength that we need to overcome our sinful tendencies. By the grace of God, we shall achieve our personal goals so we may be one with Jesus as He is one with the Father. [Jn. 17:11]

Today's First Reading from the Book of Exodus [Ex. 17:3-7] was a prophetic picture of what was to come through Jesus Christ. It consisted of one of the three events found in the Old Testament that speak of people thirsting for water.

The first event took place in Mirah [Ex. 15:22-7] where Moses turned bitter water into sweet water. The second event, [Ex. 17:3- 7] the one that was read today, took place at Rephidim. Being without water, Moses was commanded by God to take the elders with him and to strike the rock with the staff. Then, miraculously, water came out of the rock. The third event took place at Kadesh [Numb. 20:2-13] where once more Moses was commanded by God to assemble the congregation and to command the rock before their eyes to yield its water. As biblical history tell us, Moses did not trust in the Lord. [Numb. 20:12] Because he struck the rock twice, he was punished and not allowed to enter the promised land.

In view of the above events, Moses was a type of Christ, both providing water to the people. On this subject, Saint Paul tells us, "Our ancestors all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual rock that followed them, and the rock was Christ. Nevertheless, God was not pleased with most of them, and they were struck down in the wilderness." [1 Cor. 10:4-5]

Water is symbolic of the Holy Spirit. On this subject, the Catholic Church teaches us, "The symbolism of water signifies the Holy Spirit's action in Baptism, since after the invocation of the Holy Spirit it becomes the efficacious sacramental sign of new birth: just as the gestation of our first birth took place in water, so the water of Baptism truly signifies that our birth into the divine life is given to us in the Holy Spirit. As "by one Spirit we were all baptized," so we are also "made to drink of one Spirit." [1 Cor 12:13] Thus the Spirit is also personally the living water welling up from Christ crucified [Jn 19:34; 1 Jn 5:8] as its source and welling up in us to eternal life." [Jn. 4:10-14, 7:38; Ex. 17:1-6; Is. 55:1; Zech. 14:8; 1 Cor. 10:4; Rev. 21:6; 22:17] (C.C.C. # 694)

Today's Second Reading [Rom. 5:1-2, 5-8] informs us that God's love was poured into our hearts by the power of the Holy Spirit that has been given to us through Christ. The Divine love of God assures salvation to those who are justified. Having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. [Rom. 5:1] Through peace with God, our reconciliation replaces our alienation that was caused by the disobedience of Adam.

We obtained our peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ alone because "there is only one Mediator between God and humankind" [1 Tim. 2:5] (C.C.C. # 956, 1544, 1546, 2574, 2593) in the Divine Plan of Salvation. No one is saved through his own good deeds. No one is saved by believing in God the Father alone. No is saved by his good friends. Nor is anyone saved by chasing private revelations. Salvation comes through Jesus Christ alone. "Jesus Christ, having entered the sanctuary of heaven once and for all, intercedes constantly for us as the mediator who assures us of the permanent outpouring of the Holy Spirit." (C.C.C. # 667)

"Basing itself on Scripture and Tradition, the Council teaches that the Church, a pilgrim now on earth, is necessary for salvation: the one Christ is the mediator and the way of salvation; he is present to us in his body which is the Church. He himself explicitly asserted the necessity of faith and Baptism, and thereby affirmed at the same time the necessity of the Church which men enter through Baptism as through a door. Hence they could not be saved who, knowing that the Catholic Church was founded as necessary by God through Christ, would refuse either to enter it or to

remain in it." [LG 14; cf. Mk 16:16; Jn 3:5] (C.C.C. # 846)

Through the one Mediator, Jesus Christ, we have obtained access to the grace of God in which we stand. Consequently, we hope to share in the glory of God. "And hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us." [Rom. 5:5] As our faith is a free gift from God, so is our hope. These gifts are beyond ordinary natural powers. Therefore, as our faith relies on God, so does our hope.

"While we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly." [Rom. 5:6] While we were weak, we were unjustified. We were sinners, incapable of doing anything that could make us right before God. By the grace of God, we received the free gifts of faith, hope and charity that are instrumental in leading us towards salvation through Jesus Christ. *(Note: We also need the Sacraments.)*

During the Second Reading, Saint Paul said, "Rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though perhaps for a good person someone might actually dare to die." [Rom. 5:7] Here he corrected himself, showing his sense of humour. Maybe someone would die for a really good person. Maybe a father would give his life for a son. Maybe a man would give his life for his brother or a woman would give her life for her sister. But while such is possible, none of these self-sacrifices lead to salvation. For there is one Mediator between God and mankind, Jesus Christ Himself.

Today's Gospel Reading [Jn. 4:5-42] echoes the First Reading from the Book of Exodus. As we heard, Jesus promised to give us water that will become a spring of water gushing up to eternal life. [Jn. 4:14]

During the reading, we heard that Jesus and His disciples came to a Samaritan city called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. [Jn. 4:5] In case some of you may try to locate the city Sychar, you will not be able to do so. The name "Sychar" is believed to be a corruption of the name "Sychem" (Shechem) which was near the field that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. [Gen. 33:19, 48:22] Shechem is where the bones of Joseph were buried. [Jos. 24:32]

Tired of His journey, Jesus sat on the ground by Jacob's well. [Jn. 4:6] (Jacob's well is located between "Tell el-Balatah" and "Askar.") During that time, while the disciples had gone to the city to buy food, a Samaritan woman came to draw water. [Jn. 4:7-8] Jesus asked her to give Him water. At this point, the Samaritan woman said to Jesus, "How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?" [Jn. 4:9] In those days, it was unheard of for a rabbi to speak to a woman in public, even worst for a Jew to request water from a Samaritan. The Jewish people considered the Samaritans to be unclean, this including their utensils for eating and drinking. Therefore it appears that Jesus was asking to drink from an unclean water jar? Yet, Jesus was not bothered a bit by such scruples.

Knowing the Samaritan woman's hesitation, Jesus told her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water." [Jn. 5:10] What is the gift of God that Jesus was speaking about? It was Jesus Himself! But who was Jesus to the Samaritan woman at that moment? All she could see was a thirsty Jewish man who had been travelling.

And what was this living water that the thirsty Traveller was offering her? The Samaritan woman must have understood "living water" to mean running water versus water from a well or cistern water. But is this was Jesus was telling her? In the Old Testament, when a reference was made to "living water," it meant "water of life." It meant Divine vitality, revelation and wisdom. [Jer. 2:13; Zech. 14:8; Ezek. 47:9; Prov. 13:14, etc...]

As Nicodemus literally took the Words of Jesus when he was told that he had to be born again to enter the Kingdom of God, [Jn. 3:4- 6] the woman also literally took the Words of Jesus. Unable to logically understand Jesus, she said, "Sir, you have no bucket, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water? Are you greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us the well, and with his children and his flocks drank from it?" [Jn. 3:11-12]

Since Jesus had no means of getting water out the well, where would He get his "living water" from? When considering how great Jacob was in the eyes of God and the

people, and that he had no better source of water than the well that was present, how could Jesus offer to give a better water?

To her question, Jesus answered, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life." [Jn. 3:13-4]

In Sirach 24:20-1, we read that he who drinks wisdom will thirst again. One could never satisfy the desire for wisdom. But, on the contrary, through the Sacrament of Baptism, the water that Jesus will give, will have the fountain of eternal life within him.

Understanding "living water" to mean never to thirst again, the Samaritan woman asked Jesus for some of it so she would never have to go back to the well to draw water. [Jn. 3:15] What followed was a conversion in which Jesus revealed to the woman that she had five husbands and that she was now living with another man. [Jn. 3:16- 8]

Jesus' reply to the request of the woman for living water was intended to show her that He possessed superhuman knowledge. This provided the woman with sufficient enlightenment to perceive that the Words of Jesus must have had a greater meaning. Surprised, the woman said to Jesus, "Sir, I see that you are a prophet." [Jn. 3:19] Now, the woman no longer saw a Jewish man before her, but rather, a prophet.

This provided the woman with a perfect opportunity to settle a long standing controversy between the Jews and the Samaritans regarding the proper place of sacrificial worship. [Gen. 12:7, 33:20; Deut. 27:4] The woman said to Jesus, "Our ancestors worshipped on this mountain, but you say that the place where people must worship is in Jerusalem." [Jn. 3:20]

To this, Jesus responded, "Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem." [Jn. 3:21] The response from Jesus indicated that soon, it will make no difference who is right or who

is wrong. For "the Christian economy, therefore, since it is the new and definitive Covenant, will never pass away; and no new public revelation is to be expected before the glorious manifestation of our Lord Jesus Christ." [Dei Filius: 3 DS 3008] Yet even if Revelation is already complete, it has not been made completely explicit; it remains for Christian faith gradually to grasp its full significance over the course of the centuries." (C.C.C. # 66)

Jesus said to the Samaritan woman, "You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father seeks such as these to worship him." [Jn. 3:21-22] In other words, in Judaism, God's revelation was safeguarded. But the Samaritans, although they had good faith, they preserved the truth in a distorted form. Salvation came through the Jewish people. The proof was Jesus Himself, He being Jewish. Through Jesus was the fulfillment of the expected Messiah.

When Jesus said that "the hour is coming," He was referring to His glorification, the "hour" when His Church would be instituted. The final sacrifice will have been made, the perfect sacrifice of the Lamb of God.

Jesus said, "God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth." [Jn. 3:24] These words are echoed in the First Letter of Paul to the Corinthians. "The first man, Adam, became a living being; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit." [1 Cor. 15:45] Christ is the life-giving Spirit in the sense that His actions are life-giving. God is Spirit in the sense that He gives the Spirit. Equally, God is light and love. [1 Jn. 1:5, 4:8] That is why the believers must worship God in "spirit and truth," in the truth as thought by the Spirit who guides and teaches.

At that moment, the woman indicated that she knew that the Messiah was coming and that He would proclaim all things to the people. [Jn. 3:25] She remembered the Words of God, "I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their own people; I will put my words in the mouth of the prophet, who shall speak to them everything that I command." [Deut. 18:18] Having perceived that Jesus was a prophet over and above being Jewish, the woman now suspected that He might be the

promised Messiah. To this, Jesus answered, "I am he, the one who is speaking to you." [Jn. 3:26] Jesus affirmed the fulfillment of the words spoken through Isaiah, "Therefore my people shall know my name; therefore in that day they shall know that it is I who speak; here am I." [Is. 52:6]

During the Gospel Reading, we then heard that the disciples returned and were astonished that Jesus was speaking to a woman. Following that, the woman left and returned to the city, leaving behind her water jar. For she had no more need for it because she had come to the source of living water. Once in the city, the woman invited the people to come and see Jesus who told her everything that she had done. Her words echoed the words of Philip to Nathanael, "We have found him about whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote." [Jn. 1:45]

In the meantime, the disciples were urging Jesus to eat some food. [Jn. 3:31] To this Jesus answered, "I have food to eat that you do not know about.

So the disciples said to one another, "Surely no one has brought him something to eat? My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to complete his work." [Jn. 3:31-4] It is obvious that the disciples did not understand the full meaning of what Jesus was saying. The words of Jesus summed up His entire career. He came to do the will of His Father who sent Him, even to death on the Cross. In Jesus was found perfect obedience, to the last drop of blood.

The Gospel Reading ended by telling us that the people came from the city to hear Jesus. As they stated, "It is no longer because of what (the woman) said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is truly the Saviour of the world." [Jn. 3:42] Not only did the Samaritans come to believe, they also recognized the fulfillment of the Messiah in Jesus.

From today's readings, we are reminded that as children of God, as members of the Body of Christ, we too have been called to do the Divine Will of He who has called us to share in the life-giving Spirit through faith in Jesus and the Sacrament of Baptism. As Jesus was called to complete His work, we too are called to complete our calling through our perseverance in the living faith. To persevere necessitates our ongoing

reception of the Sacraments of Confession and the Holy Eucharist as the means of maintaining our righteousness before the Lord God.

With the approach of Easter that commemorates the glorious Resurrection of the Lord Jesus, we now, more than ever, have an obligation to reinstate our holiness through the Holy Sacraments that have been given to us by Jesus Himself. Let us keep this in mind as we enter the Third Week in Lent.

Source: Catholic Doors Ministry

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