

The Waters of Salvation

Third Sunday of Lent Scrutiny Year A Readings Ex 17:3-7 / Rom 5:1-2, 5-8 / Jn 4:5-42
Ave Maria Catholic Church. March 3, 2024. Fr. David M Vidal

Today, immediately after the homily, we will celebrate the first scrutiny of our brothers and sisters who will enter the Church at the Easter Vigil. The Church offers us, through the liturgy, the passage of the gospel of the encounter of the Samaritan woman with Jesus.

Why does the Church open this passage of the gospel for us? It is because the encounter of the Samaritan woman with Jesus is also our story. In a sense, we also have entered into this dialogue with Christ that leads to the waters of salvation.

First, let us contemplate Jesus's kindness.

Jesus is tired from the journey and sits on the well's edge. Jesus asks a Samaritan woman to give him water. She is surprised. How can he, a Jew, ask a Samaritan for something? For centuries, Jews and Samaritans had been living in hostility.

This is our first lesson: The Son of God became our brother and worked for us to the point of feeling exhausted. His rest at the edge of the well will be brief. He will continue his work for us and not stop until he arrives at the Cross, his ultimate work for our salvation.

Like the Samaritan woman, we should also feel surprised because even though we are in need and in open hostility with God because of our sins, He engages in a conversation with us as if we were doing Him a favor.

Second, let us admire Jesus's way of teaching.

From *natural water*, a material element, Jesus leads the conversation to the divine revelation of the living water. The expression "*living water*" in the language of the prophets indicates the goods of salvation of the Messianic era (See Is 12:3; 49:10; Jer 2:13; 17:13).

It looks like the Samaritan woman does not understand that language. She thinks of a miraculous water that would quench the thirst of the body, so that it would no longer be necessary to draw water from the well. However, even though she does not understand the language, the words of Jesus awaken in her the desire for Jesus' gift: "*Sir, give me this water, that I may not thirst,*" (Jn 4:14).

Third, let us see where Jesus wants to bring us.

When the Samaritan woman says: "*Give me this water*" (Jn 4:15), Jesus brings her to the path of interior truth without delay. Jesus asks her: "*Go, call your husband,*" (Jn 4:16). This is Jesus' invitation to examine her conscience, look into her heart, and know herself in truth.

The Samaritan woman examines her conscience and discovers the need to be saved. Then, in truth, she says: *“I have no husband.”*

Jesus confirms the truth of her words: *“You are right in saying, ‘I have no husband’; for you have had five husbands, and he whom you now have is not your husband,”* (Jn 4:17-18). The Samaritan woman not only recognizes her state of sin but is helped by Jesus to call by name the sins of her life.

Fourth, after welcoming the gift of truth, we are ready to begin a conversation about worshipping God.

This new shifting of the dialogue begins with a profession of faith: *“Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet”* (Jn 4:19). Their conversation, which started with a simple request for water, becomes a discussion of worshipping God!

In this context, Jesus proclaims that true worshippers will worship *“in spirit and truth”* (Jn 4:24). What does it mean to worship in spirit and truth?

Worshipping God is not principally a posture or external position. Since we are human beings, there is an outward and visible element in our worship; however, worshipping is an act that begins in the interior. True worshipers humbly accept the gift of truth in their minds and embrace the love of God in their hearts. This acceptance will have external and visible consequences. However, without the interior action, worshipping is just a hollowed performance and an empty shell.

Dear Catechumens and Candidates, Jesus is the Rock from which flows living waters.

In the book of Exodus, we read how God tells Moses: *“You shall strike the rock, and water shall come out of it,”* (Ex 17:6). One of the greatest difficulties for the people of Israel during their journey in the desert was certainly the lack of water. Then, when there was no hope, God commands Moses: *“Strike the rock, and water shall come out of it,”*

In his letter to the Corinthians, Saint Paul explains the meaning of this passage by saying: *“They drank from the supernatural Rock which followed them, and the Rock was Christ,”* (1 Cor 10:4)

Christ is our Cornerstone from which we receive the living waters of salvation, the gift of a truthful conscience, and a humble and loving heart. Through Christ, with Christ, and in Christ, we worship God in spirit and truth. With the Samaritan woman, we are all called to say: *“Lord Jesus, give me always this water, that I may not thirst again!”* Amen.