

### Third Sunday of Lent A2023

I like to tell stories. Here is another one this morning. In our Yuma County these last days, we had repeated snow storms and I am not sure, as winter continues that it is over. The storms poured out a lot of snow. Everywhere the snow piled up to the point the removal service of the county was overwhelmed.

In the city of Yuma, because of an organizational problem, the snow was not removed at all from the streets. As the storm was not shy, the snow piled up enormously to the point that the circulation was very difficult and the simple walk under the snow dangerous. Perhaps today because of repeated sunny days, things are changing a little bit.

The general reaction I heard everywhere was indignation toward the city. I heard also some saying: the City Director has to look for another job elsewhere. He can be sure that we will not reelect him when elections come up. Such a reaction is a sign of disappointment, indignation and somehow revolt.

In the heat of the desert, Moses found himself in such a situation. As the Israelites did not have water, the thirst pushed them to incriminate against Moses and God who freed them from Egypt. They accused God not only of abandoning them, but also of wanting them to die in the desert with their children and their livestock.

Touched by the plight of the sons of Israel, Moses implored God to intervene and act in their favor. So, in his bounty and generosity, God reassured them and gave them water through the hands of Moses. Thus, they drunk, were satisfied and saved from thirst.

By acting in such a way with Israel, God teaches us that in whatever difficult situation we might find ourselves, as hard as it might be, he will find a way of pulling us out of it. He can never abandon us; he has his time to intervene and put an end to our suffering. What he wants is that we trust him and keep firm our confidence in him.

The physical thirst that has been at the origin of Israel's revolt in the desert, Jesus utilizes it in today's Gospel and makes it an opportunity for the gift of eternal life. But before receiving eternal life, one has first to eradicate the established prejudices, to welcome Jesus and recognize him as more than a prophet, that is, the Messiah. Then, a true dialogue can happen between him and Jesus.

That is what the Samaritan woman had done; she opened up to Jesus. While she was claiming that there was no relationship with the Jews, Jesus invited her to transcend that barrier and to receive the gift of life he was bringing from the Father.

It is only when we break the barriers and destroy the prejudices we have for one another that we can be able to know each other better. It is only at the moment when we honestly overcome our differences that we can discover the other in his depth, discover our own poverty and how the other is someone who can enrich us. In destroying the barriers and prejudices between one another, people can learn from one another what they do not know on their own.

By accepting to dialogue with Jesus, the Samaritan woman discovered what she sought in vain for so long and during many years, that is, the peace of heart. Jesus gave her, and without condition, the tranquility of heart that she never found in changing husbands over the years. Of course, this woman knew well what disappointment in love meant!

She was still hoping to meet the right man who could fulfill her deepest desires. Yet, now she was facing a man who was not just another man, but a prophet, the Messiah. Although Jesus knew everything about her, he did not condemn her or humiliate her. He wanted for her only to be at peace and to reconcile with her God. That is what Jesus wants for each one of us, particularly in this time of Lent.

Jesus gives the living water that becomes a spring of water welling up to eternal life to those who welcome him and accept his teaching. He is in search of true worshipers of his Father, those who worship God in Spirit and truth. How can we authentically worship God if we do not face the truth about ourselves?

Whatever might be the truth of our life, whatever might have been our past, as bad as it might be, there is no reason of being ashamed about it. Nobody is excluded before Jesus. He loves us and wants us to be saved. The encounter with Jesus can even change the course of our life. That is what happened to the Samaritan woman in her journey. At the end, she became the messenger of Jesus in the village.

Because this is the time of worshiping the Father in spirit and in truth, the external cult of God does not suffice anymore. Of course, salvation comes from the Jews, but now is the time of the interior worship that transcends all these divisions, where we have to become ourselves the temples of God's worship.

Brothers and sisters, Jesus sits at our wells, waiting for us when we come to draw water. He is waiting for us at the places where we are the most vulnerable and weak. He understands us; he knows our thirst; he wants to fill us with his healing love. There, even a failure in marriage, even a bad habit we have for so long, can become an opportunity to experience God's mercy and bounty.

The Samaritan woman symbolizes the dark side of our lives, all that we have as secrets we carry at the bottom of our hearts. The Samaritan woman symbolizes our hidden past, especially that which we are ashamed of, that nobody knows except God. All those troubled situations of ours we do not want people to know, Jesus can heal them and win us back the freedom of God's children.

This Lenten Season let us come to Jesus. Let us yearn for the living water he gives and which opens us to the love of the Father. Let us long for his word that quenches our thirst. God reveals himself to us when we are thirsting for him. God alone can ultimately satisfy all our desires. His Holy Spirit can renew in us the thirst for God. He can calm and increase again and again in us the thirst for God. May God bless each one of us as we prepare our hearts for the celebration of the death and the resurrection of our Lord Jesus!

**Exodus 17: 3-7; Romans 5: 1-2, 5-8; John 4: 5-42**



Homily Date: March 12, 2023  
© 2023 – Fr Felicien I. Mbala, PhD, STD  
Contact: [www.mbala.org](http://www.mbala.org)  
Document Name: 20230312homily