

### **Third Sunday of Lent A2026**

The third Sunday of Lent is dominated by the encounter between our Lord and the Samaritan woman. Every encounter, however, requires that the barriers that separate people might be broken, and the established prejudices might be eradicated. That is why, while the Samaritan claimed that there was no relationship with the Jews, our Lord invited her to transcend that barrier and to receive the gift of life he was bringing to her.

It is only when we break the barriers we have erected and destroy the prejudices we have for one another that we can be able to know each other well. 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. By destroying the barriers and prejudices between one another, people can learn from others what they do not know on their own.

As she accepted to dialogue with our Lord, the Samaritan woman discovered what she had sought for many years through different husbands, that is, the peace of heart. Our Lord, indeed, could gratuitously give her, and without condition, the tranquility of heart that she never found in changing many husbands over the years.

Of course, that woman knew well what disappointment in love meant! She was still hoping to meet the right man who could fulfill her deepest needs. And now she was facing a man who was not just another man, but a prophet, the Messiah. That is why her encounter with our Lord was an opportunity to be healed of her ghosts and to have peace.

In fact, our Lord did not humiliate her because she was living in sin. Though he knew everything about her life, he did not condemn her. He wanted only for her to be healed and to reconcile with God. That is also what our Lord wants for each one of us in this time of Lent, namely to be healed of our spiritual sickness. He does not condemn us or judge us. He gives us an opportunity of reconciliation with his Father, whatever might be our sins. The problem is always if we are open to this grace of healing or not, if we accept it or reject it.

Our Lord gives 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 adore and worship God in Spirit and truth. How can we worship God if we do not face the truth about ourselves? However, whatever might be the truth of our life, whatever might have been our past, there is no reason to be ashamed. Nobody is excluded before our Lord. He loves us and wants us to be saved.

The encounter with our Lord can even change the course of our life. That is what happened to the Samaritan 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 these temples of worship of God.

Our Lord sits at our wells, waiting for us when we come to draw water. He stands at the places where we are the most vulnerable and the weakest waiting for us. He understands our thirsts, but he wants to fulfill them with his healing love. There, even a failure in marriage can become an opportunity to experience God's mercy, bounty and peace.

The Samaritan woman symbolizes the dark side of our lives, all that we have as secrets we bury in the depth of our hearts, all past that we are ashamed of, that nobody knows except God. All those troubled situations of ours we do not want people to know, our Lord can heal them and win us back the freedom of God's children. The living water that our Lord promises means above all the word of revelation that opens us to the love of the Father.

The wellspring of water that quenches our thirst is the Holy Spirit who has been given to us in baptism, as Saint Paul said in the second reading. God reveals himself to us when we are thirsty for him. To the one who desires more, more will be given so that each receives according to his desire. God alone can ultimately satisfy our desires. The Holy Spirit quenches our thirst by renewing in us the thirst of God. He calms and increases again and again in us the thirst for God.

In this time of Lent, let us yearn for the living water that Jesus gives. Let us bring to him all our desires so that he can satisfy them. Let us yearn for eternal life that only Jesus gives. May God bless each one of us as we prepare our hearts for the celebration of the death and the resurrection of our Lord! Amen.

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



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