



Preparing for the Mass of Sunday 12th March 2023 - The Third Sunday in Lent

1 Relax & Remember

Set aside 10 -15 minutes and create a suitable environment by removing any distractions. Make sure that you are comfortable. Perhaps light a candle. Make the sign of the cross † and remain still for a minute of settling silence. **Call to mind the love that God has for you. Remember that through this scripture our Lord is truly present.** Then read the Gospel, preferably aloud and slowly, and pay attention to any words that stand out. If any do, meditate on them for a few minutes and be invited into a dialogue with God.



2 Read

Taken from the Gospel for Sunday 12th March 2023 - The Samaritan at the Well (John 4:5-15.19-26.39-42)

Jesus came to the Samaritan town called Sychar, near the land that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. Jacob's well is there and Jesus, tired by the journey, sat straight down by the well. It was about the sixth hour. When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, 'Give me a drink.' His disciples had gone into the town to buy food. The Samaritan woman said to him, 'What? You are a Jew and you ask me, a Samaritan, for a drink?' - Jews, in fact, do not associate with Samaritans. Jesus replied, 'If you only knew what God is offering and who it is that is saying to you "Give me a drink", you would have been the one to ask, and he would have given you living water.' 'You have no bucket, sir,' she answered, 'and the well is deep: how could you get this living water? Are you a greater man than our father Jacob who gave us this well and drank from it himself with his sons and his cattle?' Jesus replied, 'Whoever drinks this water will get thirsty again; but anyone who drinks the water that I shall give will never be thirsty again: the water that I shall give will turn into a spring inside him, welling up to eternal life.' 'Sir,' said the woman, 'give me some of that water, so that I may never get thirsty and never have to come here again to draw water. I see you are a prophet, sir. Our fathers worshipped on this mountain, while you say that Jerusalem is the place where one ought to worship.' Jesus said, 'Believe me, woman, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know; for salvation comes from the Jews. But the hour will come - in fact it is here already - when true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth: that is the kind of worshipper the Father wants. God is spirit, and those who worship must worship in spirit and truth.' The woman said to him, 'I know that Messiah - that is, Christ - is coming; and when he comes he will tell us everything.' 'I who am speaking to you,' said Jesus, 'I am he.' Many Samaritans of that town had believed in him on the strength of the woman's testimony, so, when the Samaritans came up to him, they begged him to stay with them. He stayed for two days, and when he spoke to them many more came to believe; and they said to the woman, 'Now we no longer believe because of what you told us; we have heard him ourselves and we know that he really is the saviour of the world.'

3 Reflect

After spending a few minutes considering this Gospel, continue by reading Fr Henry Wansbrough's reflection.

In this lively dialogue Jesus almost seems to be teasing the Samaritan woman, deliberately leading her into misunderstanding about what he means by living water or about the conditions of worship. Nothing daunted, she gives as good as she gets, replying with a cheeky series of sarcastic questions, gradually edging nearer to the truth: an open-minded Jew - greater than our father Jacob - a prophet - and finally acknowledging him as the Messiah. With its serious message it is a lovely example of Jesus' willingness to engage with people as they are, and of his openness with women. On these last three Sundays of Lent before Palm Sunday in Cycle A, the Church lays before us the three great symbols of the baptisms which will be celebrated at Easter. This concerns not only those who will be baptised at the Easter Vigil, but all those who are invited to renew our baptismal promise and commitment at Easter. By so doing we enter afresh into the living and nourishing water of God's love which surpasses any food or drink (the teaching given to the Samaritan woman), into the light which enlightens the blind (the Cure of the Man Born Blind) and true life (the Raising of Lazarus).

What does Jesus really mean by 'living water'? What is the real life that God gives us?

Dom Henry Wansbrough OSB

4 Respond & Request

Now slowly and prayerfully read the Gospel once again but this time in silence. Consider how this Gospel could apply to your life in general. Then thank God for any insight you may have received. Conclude by asking God to bless you with one of the following spiritual gifts to help you act on any resolution you have made: love, understanding, wisdom, faithfulness, peace, self control, patience, or joy. Please remember to pray for the Church and particularly our school families. **Then conclude by requesting the prayers of Our Lady & St Joseph.**



**The Wednesday Word is under the patronage of St Joseph, Patron Saint of Families and Protector of the Church
Within the tradition of the Catholic Church, each Wednesday is dedicated to St Joseph**

WEDNESDAY WORD PLUS †

Fr Henry's reflections on the first and second readings of Sunday 12th March 2023



First Reading: *Water from the Rock*

Exodus 17:3-7

Tormented by thirst, the people complained against Moses. 'Why did you bring us out of Egypt?' they said. 'Was it so that I should die of thirst, my children too, and my cattle?' Moses appealed to the Lord. 'How am I to deal with this people?' he said. 'A little more and they will stone me!' The Lord said to Moses, 'Take with you some of the elders of Israel and move on to the forefront of the people; take in your hand the staff with which you struck the river, and go. I shall be standing before you there on the rock, at Horeb. You must strike the rock, and water will flow from it for the people to drink.' This is what Moses did, in the sight of the elders of Israel. The place was named Massah and Meribah because of the grumbling of the sons of Israel and because they put the Lord to the test by saying, 'Is the Lord with us, or not?'

Throughout Lent the first readings dwell on the history of salvation narrated in the Old Testament; the third Sunday is always about Moses. In this year, Cycle A, the incident at Massah and Meribah is chosen to pair with the gospel-reading about living water. Christ is the living water of salvation, an image of which is the water God provided for his people when they were tortured by thirst in the desert. It was not just that they could do with a bit of a drink, which we in a well-watered country have the fortune to experience. When you run out of water in the desert you lose all strength, all will to advance, and eventually wilt to death. On two separate occasions in the Old Testament the story of Moses striking the rock is told, and the rabbis held that it was the rock that followed them through the desert. Paul interprets the rock as Christ, who always provides for his people, but in the Old Testament God was not well pleased with most of his people. They continued to rebel and complain about their hardships and to long for 'the leeks and onions' of their slave-life in Egypt. With the same ingratitude we continue to neglect the salvation offered us, absorbed in any passing pleasures we can find.

How do you use water? Is water of life a good image for the gifts of God?

Second Reading: *Peace with God through Jesus*

Romans 5:1-2.5-8

Through our Lord Jesus Christ by faith we are judged righteous and at peace with God, since it is by faith and through Jesus that we have entered this state of grace in which we can boast about looking forward to God's glory. This hope is not deceptive, because the love of God has been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit which has been given us. We were still helpless when at his appointed moment Christ died for sinful men. It is not easy to die even for a good man - though of course for someone really worthy, a man might be prepared to die - but what proves that God loves us is that Christ died for us while we were still sinners.

“An unshaken conviction that God will come to our rescue.”

Gradually explaining the mystery of salvation in his great Letter to the Romans, Paul has described a world sunk in evil. Then he meditates on Abraham's trust in God's promises, the same unwavering trust which is our only way to salvation, an unshaken conviction that God will come to our rescue in our shame and our failures. But what is the means by which God fulfils his promise of obliterating the evil which grips the human race? It can only be the obedience of Jesus, shown in his loving and obedient death on the Cross, which outdoes the disobedience of the whole human race, represented in Adam's sin. It is not the gore and suffering which are in themselves salvific - like a price paid for human delinquency - but the total extent of the love shown in unflinching obedience to the Father's will. He did this out of love for the Father, and also out of love for us, for whom he established the Kingship of God on earth. Paul seems to argue that, though in normal terms we were not worth dying for, Christ did die for us, just as in his ministry he did not wait for sinners to repent, but actively and unconditionally called them to himself.

What evils grip the human race today, and what can Jesus' work do to solve them?

The Wednesday Word: *Connecting Home, School & Parish through the Word of God*

w: www.wednesdayword.org

e: info@wednesdayword.org