

Jesus and the Woman at the Well
(3rd Sunday of Lent, Year A)

Exodus 17:3-7—The Miracle of the Water from the Rock

1. Israel in the wilderness: people “thirsted for water”; begin to blame Moses and God
2. The Water from the Rock at Horeb: Moses strikes the rock with his rod
3. Massah (Hebrew “Testing”) and Meribah (Hebrew “Contention/Quarreling”)

Psalms 95—Harden Not Your Hearts at Meribah

1. “If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts” (v. 6)
2. “Harden not your hearts, *as at Meribah* as... *at Massah* in the wilderness” (v. 8)

Romans 5:1-2, 5-8—God’s Love Has Been Poured into Our Hearts

1. “God’s love has been *poured* into our hearts through *the Holy Spirit*...” (5:5)

John 4:5-42—Jesus Promises to Give the “Living Water”

1. Jacob’s Well: Jacob meet Rachel at a Well (cf. Gen 29:1-9)

Man + Woman + Well → Wedding

2. Jews vs. Samaritans:

- a. Jews: southern descendants of Judean exiles (Mt. Jerusalem)
- b. Samaritans: northern descendants of the Assyrians (Mt. Gerizim)

3. Living Water: basic meaning, “spring water”

- a. Ritual Baths in the Temple (Numbers 19:17-20)
- b. Bridal Bath (*Joseph and Aseneth* 14:12-17)

4. Messiah: Samaritans were also waiting for him to come

5. Jesus’ Promise to the Woman:

- a. New Water: “living water” for eternal life
- b. New Worship: worship “in spirit and truth”
- c. New Messiah: divine Bridegroom (cf. Isaiah 61-62)

When Does Jesus Give the “Living Water”?

1. Crucifixion: “blood and water” from Jesus’ side (John 19:34-35; cf. CCC 1179)
2. Holy Spirit: “living water” is “the Spirit” later “given” (John 7:39; cf. CCC 2652)
3. Baptism: the Spirit is the “living water” welling up in us to “eternal life” (CCC 694)

The Catechism on Jesus’ Thirst for Us

The wonder of prayer is revealed beside the well where we come seeking water: there, Christ comes to meet every human being. It is he who first seeks us and asks us for a drink. Jesus thirsts; his asking arises from the depths of God’s desire for us. Whether we realize it or not, prayer is the encounter of God’s thirst with ours. God thirsts that we may

thirst for him (CCC 2560)

Already Baptism, the entry into the People of God, is a nuptial mystery; it is so to speak *the nuptial bath* which precedes the wedding feast, the Eucharist. (CCC 1617)

Questions for Discussion and Reflection (3rd Sunday of Lent, Year A)

1. What was the sin of the Israelites at Meribah and Massah (Exodus 17)? How does this temptation to think that God is “not among us” manifest itself today?

2. In John 4, the Samaritan woman quickly changes the subject when Jesus brings up her sinful past. Why do you think Jesus shifts the conversation from the gift of “living water” to her own personal past? How does the woman change after Jesus reveals his identity? What do you think is the symbolism of her “leaving her water jar” (John 4:28)?

3. What do you think of the image of prayer as meeting Jesus “beside the well” (CCC 2560)? Take some time to prayerfully reflect on this paragraph from the Catechism? Do you ordinarily think of prayer as meeting Jesus beside the well to talk with him? What do you think of the Catechism’s teaching that “God thirsts for us” that we might “thirst” for him?

For Further Study

1. Brant Pitre. *Jesus the Bridegroom: the Greatest Love Story ever Told*. New York: Image Books, 2012. Pp. 55-81. A readable study of the Jewish roots of Jesus’ encounter with the Samaritan Woman at the Well, exploring Jesus’ identity as the divine bridegroom Messiah.
2. Brant Pitre, *The Woman at the Well and the Love of Christ*. (CD Bible Study, available at CatholicProductions.com).