

3rd Sunday in Lent

(Year A)

<i>First Reading</i>	Exodus 17:3-7
<i>Response</i>	If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts.
<i>Psalm</i>	Psalm 95:1-2, 6-7, 8-9
<i>Second Reading</i>	Romans 5:1-2, 5-8
<i>Gospel Acclamation</i>	Lord, you are truly the Savior of the world; give me living water, that I may never thirst again.
<i>Gospel</i>	John 4:5-42

The Gospel for the Third Sunday of Lent in Year A is one of my favorite stories from the Gospels, and it's also one that the Church considers very important. It's the famous story of Jesus and the Samaritan woman at the well. One of the reasons I say that the Church considers this reading important is because although it's the official reading for Year A, which is the Gospel of Matthew, the Church actually allows for the woman at the well — the story of the woman at the well — to be the Gospel reading for every year in the third week of Lent. So you can use the woman at the well not just for Year A, but also for Year B and Year C. I'll try to show you why that's the case as we work through the Gospel. I think you'll see it because it has to do with repentance. It has to do with turning away from a past life of sin and beginning a new life in Christ, and those are perfect themes for the Lenten season, especially for catechumens, for people who are coming into the Church and beginning a new life in Christ through the waters of Baptism. So this is a powerful, powerful text.

But what is different about this Sunday — you already will notice — is that although we are in Year A, the reading is not from the Gospel of Matthew. It is from the Gospel of John. So this is one of those times where the Church inserts the Gospel of John into the reading cycle because she thinks that John's Gospel has something special, something particular, to tell us for this festal season. So here we will be looking at the Gospel of John. The Gospel reading here is John 4:5-42, so this is a long text, it's a long passage from the Gospel. What I want to try to do is I am going to read the whole text to you but I will make a few comments as I go

along just to help break it up, but also to give you some insight into it as we work through it. And then once we are done, we will come back, ask our usual questions, unpack it and try to put it in its first century Jewish context. So let's begin reading from the Gospel of John 4:5, it says this:

So he came to a city of Samar'ia, called Sy'char, near the field that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. Jacob's well was there, and so Jesus, wearied as he was with his journey, sat down beside the well. It was about the sixth hour.¹

Pause there. There are a couple of points we want to highlight here. Notice the importance of the well, that John makes a point of telling you that Jesus is not just going to meet a woman at a well, he is sitting down beside a particular well, and that is Jacob's well. So for an ancient Jewish reader it is so critical for us to recognize that just the very mention of Jesus and a well would conjure up stories from the Old Testament where wells were important. And if you go back to wells in the Old Testament, you'll see something very interesting. Whenever you have a man at a well and a woman comes along, you're going to inevitably end up with a wedding. It's a nuptial theme. So for example, Abraham's servant meets Isaac's future bride Rebecca at a well, Moses meets his future bride Zipporah at a well in the book of Exodus 4, and then finally and most important of all, Jacob, in the book of Genesis 29, meets Rachel, his future bride and the future mother of Israel, at a well, where he moves the stone and waters her flocks in a show both of his strength but also his charity and concern for her. They eventually get married and become the mother and father of Israel. Jacob's name is changed to Israel and Rachel is the matriarch of the people of God. So if you're a Jew, just after reading these few verses, what you would be queued up to expect here is a man plus a well and a woman coming along, that there's going to be a wedding, that there's going to be a marriage, that there is going to be a nuptial relationship. So keep your eye on that because that's exactly what is about to happen. Although, it's going to be no ordinary woman and, in Jesus's case, no ordinary man that are going to enter into

¹ Unless otherwise indicated, all Bible citations/quotations herein are from *The Holy Bible: Revised Standard Version, Catholic Edition*. New York: National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA, 1994.

this dialogue near Jacob's well. So that's the setting here that we are about to see. Okay, so with that in mind let's keep going, verse seven says this:

There came a woman of Samar'ia to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink." For his disciples had gone away into the city to buy food. The Samaritan woman said to him, "How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samar'ia?" For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.

Pause. This is the second aspect of the story that you need to understand the background to in order to get the point of it. So in order to grasp what is going on here you have to understand who the Samaritans were. Most people are familiar with the fact that the Jews and the Samaritans didn't like one another because of this verse from St. John. But what they don't often know is why they didn't get along and why they didn't like one another. In a nutshell, it's this, if you go back to the book of Kings, 2 Kings 15-17, it tells us that the Samaritans were the descendants of the Assyrians, this pagan empire that came and conquered the 10 northern tribes of Israel in 722 BC. They settle Assyrian pagans in the land of Israel, who married and intermingled with some of the Israelites that were left and who set up their own rival religion to the religion of the Jews in Jerusalem. They even set up their own temple on Mount Gerizim and they began to worship the God of Israel, but they did it their own way, with their own particular canon of Scripture, with their own priesthood, and they became basically a perpetual reminder to the Jews in the South of the fact that the 10 northern tribes in the North were taken away and that these, in a sense, half-blooded Israelites — they are not full Israelites, these people who were mostly pagan — had taken over the land and set up an alternative temple. So they as a rule did not like one another and did not correspond with one another. So when Jesus sits down at this well in Samaria — the very fact that he's passing through Samaria rather than going around it — would've been surprising and unusual, but now that he talks with this woman, she is shocked because she knows that he's a Jew, she's a Samaritan, and the Jews don't have any dealings with the Samaritans. So she asked "how is it that you ask me for a drink of water." Now let's keep going in verse 10:

Jesus answered her, “If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, ‘Give me a drink,’ you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water.”

Pause there, there is a lot of background in this one. In this case, the expression living water might be one of the most important expressions in the entire passage because it had multiple meanings in the first century A.D. So the basic meaning of living water would be like spring water or running water, because running water moves like it's alive, as opposed to stagnant water or water even from a well. Living water would be like spring water. So when Jesus says that, that's the first and most basic definition of the term. Now as you will see, it is going to mean more than that, but Jesus makes a promise of living water. So if we pick up again, it says:

The woman said to him, “Sir, you have nothing to draw with, and the well is deep; where do you get that living water?”

In other words, you have no bucket. What are you talking about? How are you going to get this living water? And look at what she says here in verse 12:

Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well, and drank from it himself, and his sons, and his cattle?” Jesus said to her, “Every one who drinks of this water will thirst again, but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst; the water that I shall give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.” The woman said to him, “Sir, give me this water, that I may not thirst, nor come here to draw.”

Pause there. Notice that clearly now Jesus has moved beyond the meaning of just running water or spring water to talking about something more. He's talking about some special kind of water that will give not just natural life, but eternal life. And it's not clear that the woman quite understands what he means because, if you notice, she says “give me this water so that I may not thirst or come here to draw.” In other words, she seems to still be thinking on the level of a natural water that will quench her thirst. Like if there is some special spring that she could have access to so that she doesn't have to come to the well every single day and draw

this water. Because in antiquity, in the first century A.D., wells were the source of life, and the labor of getting water daily from the well was a very basic but also very laborious part of normal life, and it was usually a burden that fell on the shoulders of women and children. So as they took care of the home, they would have to go out to the well, bring buckets, fill them with water and then bring them back to the home for anything they wanted to do. Washing, food preparation, bathing, whatever it was, you had to go and get the water. And if you ever had to carry buckets of water for a long distance, you'll know it's not fun, it is not easy work, and yet this woman is doing it day after day. So when Jesus says "I can give you some living water so that you never thirst again," she says "give it to me so that I don't have to come here and draw anymore." Now obviously Jesus here is talking about the water of eternal life that he is going to mention later, and she doesn't quite get it yet, but the very fact that she asks him is enough. That's all he needs to now move to the next level. But then he does something very interesting, now all of a sudden he shifts the topic away from the well and starts to talk about her sin, her past, and he says:

Jesus said to her, "Go, call your husband, and come here." The woman answered him, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "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; this you said truly." The woman said to him, "Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet.

He has read her heart, he knows her life. And at this point notice what she does, she totally changes the subject. So he's brought up the subject of her personal past, the fact that she has had five husbands and that the man that she's apparently living with now is not her husband. Now it's hard for us to grasp what kind of a scandal that would've meant in a first century setting. So in a first century Jewish setting, divorce and remarriage, although permissible, was considered something that would be still be frowned upon and not the norm. And the idea that this one woman would not only have divorced once or twice, but that she had five husbands, and now that she was living with a man who she wasn't even married to, would put her in basically a state of public and perpetual adultery and/or fornication. So this woman would have been a pariah. She would've been someone who would have been shunned by her people, by her society.

In fact, some people have actually suggested that that's why she's coming out to get the water at the well at noon. If you have ever carried heavy buckets of water, you'll know you don't want to do it at midday, at the hottest part of the day. Normally in other passages in the Old Testament, the women will go to gather their water at the well either in the morning or in the evening, in the cooler parts of the day. Here she is at noon, and she is not with a group of women, she's by herself. So some people think that this reflects the fact that she is isolated from her community because of the public nature of her sin. She would be one of those people that is referred to elsewhere in the Gospels as a sinner. In other words, someone who is not only committing sins — everyone sins — but in this case is known publicly for being in a state of sin. So Jesus brings up this sinful past that she has and instead of talking about it, she shifts the topic of conversation to the debate between the Jews and the Samaritans over whether you should worship at Jerusalem in the South like the Jews believed, or whether you should worship at Mount Gerizim in the North as the Samaritans believed. And I just think that this is an interesting shift because if you have ever had theological conversations, sometimes what will happen is people will want to debate certain issues or topics, whether it is celibacy in the Church, the infallibility of the Pope, Mary or whatever doctrine you might get into a heated debate about, if you probe a little deeper, a lot of times the real issue will often be some issue of sin or some personal issue or pain or suffering that's under the surface. A lot of times, instead of talking about that deeper issue, we will talk about this doctrine or that doctrine or this debate or that debate, when really where the person is hurting, where they're dealing with the struggle, is at a deeper level of the question of sin or suffering. So we see that in the woman here. Jesus starts to probe into her sinfulness and she shifts topics to this doctrinal debate between the Jews and Samaritans. So she says these words:

Our fathers worshiped on this mountain; and you say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship.” Jesus said to her, “Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for such the Father seeks to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship

him must worship in spirit and truth.” The woman said to him, “I know that Messiah is coming (he who is called Christ); when he comes, he will show us all things.” Jesus said to her, “I who speak to you am he.”

Pause there. What just happened? Well in the midst of this discussion over whether to worship in Jerusalem or Mount Gerizim, Jesus takes the woman to a higher level and says “the time is coming when these different places, Jerusalem and Gerizim, aren’t going to matter anymore, because there’s going to be a new worship, when people are going to worship the Father in spirit and truth.” So that makes her realize that he is talking about the time of the Messiah, which the Samaritans believed in. The Samaritans had an expectation that the Messiah would come one day and that he would reveal everything to them. So the second the woman brings up the Messiah, Jesus says to her “I, the one who is speaking to you, am he” — although literally in the Greek it says “he who is speaking to you, I am,” which is the divine name from the Old Testament. So Jesus is in a sense revealing to her not just that he’s the Messiah, but that he’s the I AM, that he’s the Lord, that he’s God come in person. And once he makes that revelation now look at what happens in verse 27:

Just then his disciples came. They marveled that he was talking with a woman, but none said, “What do you wish?” or, “Why are you talking with her?”

Pause there. This is a weird passage. Why would the disciples be so alarmed that Jesus is talking to a woman when we see him talking to women all the time in the Gospels? Jesus has women followers in various places. He talks to women on multiple occasions in the Gospels, whether it be Mary and Martha in one context, whether it be the female followers of his, or other occasions in the Gospels, the New Testament. So why does this one provoke the questioning of the disciples? Well John doesn’t tell us here, but I would actually suggest to you that part if it might be not just that he’s talking a woman, but it’s that he is talking to a woman alone by a well. Because in ancient Judaism that would be the place of a betrothal. Like I said, in the Old Testament a man plus a woman and a well equals a wedding. So if you wanted to meet a young woman who was of marriageable age, a potential spouse, you didn’t go down to the bar and offer to buy her a drink, you could go to

the well and meet the women. This is what Moses does in the book of Exodus, he meets his future wife at a well. So when the disciples see Jesus alone with a woman at the well, in other words, they get it, that it looks like a man courting a future spouse. But of course Jesus is celibate, and so the question is why is he doing this, why is he talking to a woman? I will come back to that before we end, but just notice their response. Let's keep going in verse 28:

So the woman left her water jar, and went away into the city, and said to the people, "Come, see a man who told me all that I ever did. Can this be the Christ?" They went out of the city and were coming to him. Meanwhile the disciples besought him, saying, "Rabbi, eat." But he said to them, "I have food to eat of which you do not know." So the disciples said to one another, "Has any one brought him food?"

Notice this, the disciples can't ever catch any fish and they never have any food. And whenever he talks about food they always misunderstand what he is getting at here. So they think that he is saying that someone slipped him a sandwich when they weren't paying attention. But look at how he responds to them:

Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of him who sent me, and to accomplish his work. Do you not say, 'There are yet four months, then comes the harvest'? I tell you, lift up your eyes, and see how the fields are already white for harvest. He who reaps receives wages, and gathers fruit for eternal life, so that sower and reaper may rejoice together. For here the saying holds true, 'One sows and another reaps.' I sent you to reap that for which you did not labor; others have labored, and you have entered into their labor."

Now this might seem like it's kind of an aside, but it's actually not. In context, think about what has just happened. Jesus offered the woman living water, she thought he was talking about natural water, spring water. Now he talks to the disciples about food and they think he's talking about natural food. But what is he actually talking about? Food that endures for eternal life. In other words, he is talking about the food, the grain, of the harvest of souls. That's why he says to them "look up, the fields are white like the fields of wheat, ready to be reaped."

What do you make with wheat? You make bread with it right. So this food that endures for eternal life, it is like a Eucharistic image. He will get to that in the next chapters in the bread of life discourse. So it's like water for eternal life, food for eternal life; and the food here is gathering the harvest of souls that God has made ready to be reaped. He is referring here to the Samaritans, because see when the Apostles saw the Samaritans, what do they see? A bunch of unclean half-Israelite half-pagans who they don't like and who don't like them. Who they just have to pass through their territories to get back to Galilee. But when Jesus looks at the town of the Samaritans what does he see? He sees a field of souls, ripe and white and ready for the harvest, because the seeds were planted by Moses, the seeds were planted by the former Israelites. They have the Scriptures, they have the hope for the Messiah, but they just don't have the fullness of the truth yet. They are waiting for the Messiah to come and show it to them. So that's what Jesus wants to give them, the living water and the food of eternal life. And so what happens now is, in verse 39 and following, the Samaritans convert, the harvest begins to get reaped.

Many Samaritans from that city believed in him because of the woman's testimony, "He told me all that I ever did." So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them; and he stayed there two days. And many more believed because of his word. They said to the woman, "It is no longer because of your words that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is indeed the Savior of the world."

This is a very long Gospel text and that's how it ends. What do we draw from that? What are the principal points that we can make from that? I want to highlight one major theme here for us, and that's the image of Jesus as not just the Messiah, not just savior of the world, but of Jesus as the bridegroom, as Jesus as the divine bridegroom. I talk about this at length — I can't go into all the detail now — if you want more on this in my book *Jesus the Bridegroom: The Greatest Love Story Ever Told*. I have a whole chapter in it just on the woman at the well. And what I show in the book is that the reason John is highlighting the well and the woman here so much is because this is a kind of nuptial scene that's revealing Jesus as not an ordinary bridegroom who is going to take an ordinary bride, but as the divine bridegroom who has come in person in order to wed, to marry, all of humanity through the new covenant in his blood. The Jews had a tradition that God wasn't

just the creator, wasn't just the Lord, but that he was the divine bridegroom and that Israel, his chosen people, was his bride, and that the relationship between them was so intimate and so sacrificial and so permanent that it could only be described as a marriage, and that one day God would come and make a new covenant with his people who'd been unfaithful to him and that this new covenant would be a new marriage, the new and everlasting marriage covenant between God and humanity.

The reason John tells this story is because he recognizes that in it the woman at the well is like a bride and that Jesus is the divine bridegroom and that he has come into the world not to marry this individual woman in a natural marriage, but to enter into a supernatural marriage, a relationship as Savior between himself, and not just her as an individual, but with all the people of the world. So this woman, the Samaritan woman, is a kind of image of the Church, St. Augustine said, because she's not just Israelite, she's also pagan, so she kind of represents all of humanity in herself, both the Jews and the Gentiles, both the Israelites and the pagans, who are waiting for a savior to come and to save them. From what? To save them from their sin. To save them from their brokenness. To save them from their past. To save them from their adultery, because what did Israel do? They took all these false gods, they entered into relationships of spiritual adultery with all the false gods of the Canaanites and of the other peoples of the land.

So Jesus the bridegroom meets this woman at a well and enters into this relationship with her, and what does he offer her? Living water. Well I didn't tell you this earlier, but the other meaning that living water had was the water that a woman would use in her bridal bath. So before a wedding, Jewish tradition both in Numbers 19, describes the ritual water of cleansing as living water, and in Jewish tradition — like the books outside the Bible — it talks about the fact that when a bride would be prepared for her wedding day, she would wash in living water, a ritual bath, kind of like a baptism basically, an immersion in water, and then she would come up from the water prepared for the wedding. So when Jesus promises to give this woman the living water, he is in a sense inviting her to become a bride. Not an ordinary bride but an extraordinary bride, a spiritual bride of him as the bridegroom Messiah come in person, as the Messiah.

So what does all that mean for us? Well I think what it shows us here is that Jesus is going to give this living water, the supernatural water, in a few key ways. First,

when he goes to the cross. Because on the cross in the Gospel of John he is going to be pierced and what is going to flow from his side? Not just his life that he is going to give for his bride the Church, but the blood and the water, the life giving blood and the life-giving water that will flow from his side. Second, John's gospel actually tells us in Chapter 7 that when Jesus talks about the living water, he's referring to the Holy Spirit which will be given after his death when he breathes on the Apostles in the resurrection and says "receive the spirit" and which we begin in the Church in a full way at Pentecost. And then finally and I think most importantly for us, when do we each individually receive that living water of the Holy Spirit? When do the waters that flowed from the side of Christ wash us clean of our sins? Well above all in our baptism, when we were immersed in water and through the power of the water and the Holy Spirit we were cleansed of all of our sins. Not just Original Sin, but any actual sins, any venial sins, mortal sins; any sins that we committed, all of that is washed away through the power of baptism.

I think that sometimes people don't realize this because so many of us are baptized as infants. We just focus on Original Sin, but in the waters of baptism, like if you're an adult and you are going through RCIA and you are about to enter in to the sacrament of Baptism at Easter; and when you are baptized at Easter, you don't have to go to confession before that baptism, because that baptism is so powerful it not only washes away your original sin, it not only washes away your venial sin, it washes away any mortal sins you have ever committed, no matter what they were, as well as all of the effects of those mortal sin, all the temporal punishment of those mortal sins. So that if you died at that moment, you would not have to go to purgatory. You are completely made clean at that moment of baptism. So that's the power of the living water and so the reason the Church gives us this gospel for the Third Sunday in Lent is because it's preparing catechumens to get ready to receive the power of the living water in baptism at the great feast of the Easter vigil. So this is so critical for us to taste that and to really see it.

And I'm not making this up by the way either. If you look at the Catechism of the Catholic Church, paragraph 1617, it actually says — not that you thought I was making it up, but just in case some of you were wondering and have never heard this before, "where is Dr. Pitre getting this, is is some kind of newfangled idea of his?" Nope, it's just the teaching of the Church. Paragraph 1617 of the Catechism says this:

The entire Christian life bears the mark of the spousal love of Christ and the Church. Already Baptism, the entry into the People of God, is a nuptial mystery [in other words a marital mystery, a bridal mystery]; it is so to speak the nuptial bath, which precedes the wedding feast, the Eucharist.

So if you are preparing to receive the Sacraments of Initiation this Easter, you receive the bridal bath of living water that will make you clean in order to receive the wedding feast of the Eucharistic banquet. That's all that is going on. The whole thing is a wedding between Christ and his bride, the Church, and then each individual member of the Church is becoming part of the bride through the living waters of Baptism. And that's what Jesus is promising to give to this woman at the well, because she really is, in a sense, a bride of Christ who he's betrothing himself to so that he can make her clean through the waters. Which, by the way, now you know why he brings up her past sins, because one of the things that he wants to do is call to mind the sins of her past that are keeping her from loving him. Her sin is not an impediment to him seeking her out, to him loving her. He goes to the well and meets her and asks her for a drink. He's the bridegroom who is extending his hand in an invitation to her.

So her sins aren't an impediment to his love, but they are an impediment to her being able to love him back. She has to deal with her sin first, and in a sense come clean, so that he can wash her and make her into his bride. And she doesn't deny it when he brings up that past. She recognizes that he's told the truth and she doesn't try to get away from it. All she says is "Sir, I perceive you are a prophet." She admits it and then that's all he needs, that is the doorway that opens up so that he can then give her the gift of salvation in the living water of eternal life. And the fact that she gets it is shown to you by the fact that John tells you that once Jesus said he was the Messiah, she left her water jar there and then goes back to her people. So she's no longer looking for just earthly water because she's found the water of eternal life in him as her Messiah, as her Savior, as her bridegroom. Now that's the gospel. You may think that there's nothing more that could be said about this Sunday, that pretty much takes care of it, but we have an Old Testament reading and a Psalm that I'd at least like to quickly hit because they do tie in this Sunday in a more direct way with the Gospel reading.

So the First Reading for this week is from the book of Exodus 17:3-7, and the reason it is so interesting is because this chapter also concerns miraculous saving water. It is the famous story of the miracle of the water from the rock at Meribah. So real quickly this is what it says, Exodus 17:3

But the people [this is the people of Israel in the desert] thirsted there for water, and the people murmured against Moses, and said, “Why did you bring us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our cattle with thirst?” So Moses cried to the Lord, “What shall I do with this people? They are almost ready to stone me.” And the Lord said to Moses, “Pass on before the people, taking with you some of the elders of Israel; and take in your hand the rod with which you struck the Nile, and go. Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock at Horeb; and you shall strike the rock, and water shall come out of it, that the people may drink.” And Moses did so, in the sight of the elders of Israel. And he called the name of the place Massah and Mer’ibah, because of the faultfinding of the children of Israel, and because they put the Lord to the proof by saying, “Is the Lord among us or not?”

So what does that have to do with anything else that we have read? Notice what's going on here. Israel's in the desert and the people are thirsting for water, so God performs a sign where Moses strikes the rock and out of the rock comes this miraculous saving water. It quenches the thirst of the people and it gives them life in the desert. But in the process they commit a sin, the sin of doubt. They put God to the test. That's why he calls it Massah, which means testing, and Meribah, which means quarreling. So they are quarreling with God and they are doubting God and they are testing by saying “is the Lord really with us or not?” And so God shows them “yes, I'm with you” by making the water come forth from the rock. So what's going on? In other words, they doubt, they don't believe that God has the power to quench their thirst when they are in the desert.

So if you fast-forward now to the Psalm for this day, the Psalm is Psalm 95, which actually retells the story of the water from the rock and basically it says this, “If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as at Mer’ibah, as on the day at

Massah in the wilderness.” This is a famous Psalm that you have probably heard before. “If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts.” What does it mean and why does the Church give it to us today? Well the answer is really simple. How did they harden their hearts at Meribah and Massah? They hardened them by doubting that God had the power to save, that God had the power to quench their thirst, that God had the power to bring forth water for them in the desert. So if we take the spiritual meaning of that text and we connect it with the woman at the well, what is the Church saying to us? That if today we hear the voice of God calling us to repentance, the one thing we don't want to do is to harden our hearts and begin to doubt that God has the power to make us clean. That our past is too sinful, that our past is too broken, that we have done too many things that are too evil for God ever to love us, to ever cleanse us and to save us. That would actually be the sin of doubt, of putting God to the test. It would be like the sin of the Israelites who hardened their hearts in the desert. So we want to be like the Samaritan woman who doesn't harden her heart, who doesn't think that “well I have committed adultery so many times now and am living with someone in a state of fornication, there is no way God can love me, there's no way God could save me, there is no way God could cleanse me.” No, no, no, to the contrary, no matter what you've done, whatever your past, God has the power to make a living water spring from the rock of Jesus Christ and cleanse you of that sin, and that's exactly what he did on Good Friday. When his heart was pierced, the living water flowed from his side because the rock was Christ. And that living water now flows to us in the waters of Baptism, to make us clean so that we can become members of the bride of Jesus, which is the Church.

