

Our Sunday Readings

EXODUS 17:3-7
 PSALM 95:1-2,6-9
 ROMANS 5:1-2,5-8
 JOHN 4:5-42
 (or JOHN 4:5-15,19b-26,39a,40-42)

Living Water



by He Qi

Prayer

adapted from a prayer by St. Columban

Merciful God, good Lord,
 I wish that you would unite me
 to that fountain where I may drink
 of the living spring
 of the water of life.

May I dwell in that heavenly
 region, delighted with abundant
 sweetness.

May I say: "How sweet is the
 fountain of living water which
 never fails, the water welling up to
 eternal life."

O God, you are the fountain we
 desire, the fountain we yearn to
 consume forever.

Lord Jesus Christ, give us this
 water always.

Amen.



by Annibale Carracci

Moses struck the rock and brought forth streams
 of water; Christ touches his table, strikes the
 spiritual rock of the new covenant and draws forth
 the living water of the Spirit.

—St. John Chrysostom

EXODUS 17:3-7

Reading closely

1. Where are the Israelites? Where have they come from?
2. How have things changed for them?
3. What might life have been like after Egypt?
4. What are the people feeling? Why?
5. What might God be "feeling?"
6. What might Moses be feeling?
7. What exactly does God tell Moses to do?
8. What is the significance of the staff?

Applying the word

9. How have your feelings toward God moved up and down? Have you been thankful one moment only to complain the next?

THE FIRST READING

Complaining

God freed the Israelites from slavery in Egypt in a dramatic display of power that included plagues, environmental disasters, and finally the death of their enemies' firstborn sons. Despite all that God, did the Israelites kept grumbling about how things were better in Egypt than in the Sinai desert.

God provides the people with water, just as he previously gave them food – manna and quail in Ex 16. By sustaining their physical needs God is trying to teach this wayward people that they can trust him to protect and lead them. God will always be faithful to his people, even if his people aren't always faithful to him.



by Marc Chagall

THE SCRUTINIES

The Gospel passages in Cycle A for the 3rd, 4th, and 5th Sundays of Lent are from the Gospel of John. We've used them for centuries to prepare people who wish to be baptized. When a local community has people preparing for baptism, these readings become part of a ritual called "The Scrutinies."

These readings help us to scrutinize Jesus. Guided by the Holy Spirit, we look more closely at the sin in our lives and confess our need for God's savior.

THE GOSPEL READING

Jesus ignores the rules

Jesus ignores cultural and religious boundaries in order to talk with this lone (and lonely?) woman.

- Because most Jews thought Samaritans had set up a false worship of God, they avoided contact with them
- It was improper for a male to be alone with a female who wasn't a relative
- The woman was getting water during a hot time of day, which suggests the other village women excluded her

Jesus offers the woman living water. Although she doesn't realize it yet, this water is infinitely greater than the water from **Jacob's well**. Jacob is the father of the tribes of Israel, which makes the well an important religious site. Jesus, however, is of much greater importance.

Not so crazy after all

Jesus reveals what he knows about the woman not to shame her but to help her believe in him. She, in turn, accepts that he has prophetic insight. Because she believes that he is a prophet, she asks him about the proper worship of God, which was a major concern of the Old Testament prophets (v.20).

Jesus first says that the Jews are properly worshiping God, but then he says it doesn't matter: the **hour** (the time) has come for the Father to replace all forms of worship. Jesus offers the woman **living water** (the Holy Spirit) so she can participate in true worship. The woman believes God will send someone to reveal this true worship. Jesus replies that he is the one God has sent (v.26).

Reaping the harvest

The woman leaves her physical thirst and rushes to tell others that Jesus will quench their spiritual needs. She's part of the **harvest** of people whom Jesus gathers. She also becomes a gatherer herself by bringing others to Jesus (v.28f.).



The Samaritans go out to see Jesus because of the woman's testimony. They treat

Jesus as kindly as he treated the woman. After spending time with him, the villagers are able to call Jesus *the savior* because of their own experience of him.

Jesus' work

The Gospel of John presents Jesus as the one who reveals the Father. Jesus gives people the Spirit of God so that they can believe in him and through him have eternal life. Bringing people to faith is Jesus' work and the work of everyone who believes (v.34f.).

JOHN 4:5-42

Reading closely

1. What is life like for the woman?
2. What is the living water?
3. How does the woman slowly grow in her understanding of Jesus?
4. What might the woman have felt during all of this?
5. What is the controversy about true worship?
6. How do the disciples react?
7. How do they misunderstand Jesus?
8. What is the harvest?
9. How is this harvest gathered?
10. How has the woman changed?
11. Why do the Samaritans go to Jesus?
12. How do these villagers experience Jesus as the savior?
13. What are all the boundaries that are broken?

Applying the word

14. How have you misunderstood Jesus?
15. What stages have you gone through in your faith journey?