

Third Sunday in Lent – A

One of the things I find interesting in the story of the woman at the well is that, although Jesus' request for water is how the story begins, he never actually gets a drink.

The woman ends up leaving her jug at the well so that she can go and tell the townspeople who she has found sitting by the well.

Which makes me wonder about Jesus' intention to begin with. I have no doubt that he was thirsty. He and the disciples had just arrived in town by walking there.

But it strikes me that, upon seeing the woman coming to the well in the heat of the day, lugging her water jar, he could very well have seen that here was a person very much in need of salvation, and that's what caused Jesus to act.

Water is heavy. I had to pour water from the holy water font into the baptismal font the other day, which meant lugging it from the back of church into the sanctuary. It was not easy.

That makes it difficult to imagine having to carry water every day from a well to one's home. What a chore!

One thing that makes chores easier is if you can do them with someone else, but the woman is alone.

Perhaps she catches Jesus' attention

because she is fetching her water at noon, possibly to avoid the other women of the town, who would have come for water before the day got too hot.

Jesus picks up on the signs that the Samaritan woman's life has become a burden. So, he takes a risk. He breaks through all the taboos between Jews and Samaritans, all the taboos between men and women of the day, and engages her in conversation.

Gradually, he brings her around to seeing who he is. He does first of all this by taking her seriously, without passing judgment, and by doing so, wins her trust and gives her the opportunity to share with him her thirst for something more--living water, the grace God has to offer.

That's what makes Jesus tick. That's what he's most interested in. Getting those who are burdened by life, by sin and its consequences, to open up to God.

As we continue toward Easter and the celebration of the Easter sacraments our Elect have been well-schooled in recognizing the brokenness of our world and their own brokenness.

This process has heightened their awareness that they cannot make it alone—the burdens of the sin of the world and of their own weaknesses are more than they can bear.

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The never-ending cycle of just getting by has gotten to them so that they, too, have opened up to the message of the Gospel.

This first scrutiny highlights the difference between the dead end life without God, and a life which flourishes when we allow God to engage us, to meet us where we are.

Our elect have all be able to identify a thirst that only God can quench, whether that has to do with fear of the unknown, anxiety about how brutal life can be, or the need for reconciliation in relationships.

They have all had the experience of receiving Good News that healing grace is available to them and they are letting their thirst for it move them forward.

For our part we join with them in solidarity, acknowledging that that is our story, too, and that we, too, await the fullness of live which comes only with handing our lives over to God and receiving from him the living water of His Spirit.