

Homily- Jesus meets the Samaritan Woman at the Well.

- So here we are in the 3rd week of Lent and since all of our Gospel readings in Lent are connected, we need to take a quick look back at the lessons Jesus taught us in the first two weeks of Lent so we can fully understand this weeks lesson.
- In the first week we read about Jesus being tempted by the devil in the desert. We saw Jesus didn't give into sin. The lesson for us: we to will be tempted but like Jesus we don't have to give in, we can avoid sin.
- Last week we read about Jesus going up on a high mountain and He changed in appearance. His true identity as the Son of God was revealed to those with him. The lesson for us: we can change too! We have a true identity as children of God. We can become more like Jesus if we really want to change.
- In today's Gospel Jesus tells us what we need to help us change and he tells us how to get it!! And Jesus uses the example of WATER to make his point.
- One of my favorite places to go in the summer is the water park. I love the water slides, the wave pool and the rolling rapids. Or how about those summer days on the beach: swimming in the ocean or just sitting watching the waves.
- Water is also a bit mysterious. Its wet, no color, no taste, no smell. It is made of Hydrogen and Oxygen. Mysterious yet essential for us.
- Think of all the things we do with water: cook with it, wash with it and most importantly we consume it. We drink it because our bodies need water to exist and function.
- But we also know that we are more than physical beings, more than just bodies. We have a soul! The Holy Spirit has been given to us. It is our soul that truly makes us alive.
- Our Church teaching defines "soul" as our innermost aspect, that part of us which is of greatest value. The part of us which is most especially in God's image.
- And just as water is essential for bodily well being, there is something essential for our souls well being. In today's Gospel Jesus calls this essential thing "Living Water".
- So what is this living water Jesus refers to? Simply stated, living water is Grace. That free gift from God that helps us respond to his call to become his children. It is that love and guidance given to us by God to make us spiritually strong so we can carry out his will here and now and one day be with him eternally.
- This is the point Jesus tries to get across to the woman at the well.
- Like many of us, the woman was wrapped up in worldly, material concerns. She was preoccupied with religious differences, and class distinctions between Samaritans and Jews (two groups who despised each other). She was also focused on her material needs and comforts. She wanted Jesus to give her water that keep her from thirst and reduce her trips to the well.

- We see she also had sin in her life. Jesus tells her she needed to get rid of these preoccupations, repent and focus on what really matters. - Her inner self and her relationship with God.
- Then Jesus tells the woman (and us) how to do this. Jesus tells her to worship God in “Spirit and Truth”.
- To worship in Spirit mean to listen and be prompted by the Holy Spirit. Let the Spirit God placed in us go to work in us and leads us. It means to trust that Spirit, be open to it. Taking time to reflect and pray is critical if we are to “worship in the Spirit”
- To worship in “Truth” means to attach ourselves to Jesus. To live our lives according to His teachings. To follow His examples. Jesus is the way, the truth and the life; following Jesus is worshipping in truth.
- The woman at the well was blessed. She personally encountered Jesus, the patient teacher. He met her where she was, at her level of understanding, and gradually moved her where she needed to be.
- Notice the progression in how she addresses Jesus. She moves from seeing Him as just a Jewish man (calls Him Sir), to seeing Him as a special teacher (calls Him Prophet) and to finally accepting Him as MESSIAH.
- What made this transformation possible for her? She stayed with Jesus. She listened to what he said. She asked questions. She was open and honest and eventually trusting. She desired to be changed and God did not let her down. She left transformed. Notice what she did next. She went out and told people that God’s great love is meant for everyone. And she pointed them to Jesus – the source of that living water.
- Its no accident this reading was chosen for the season of Lent. Her story is our story. We are called to that same encounter with the Lord and to that same transformation. Like that woman at the well we also have the opportunity to encounter Jesus and receive that grace, that loving guidance, that “living water”.
- While we don’t encounter Jesus face to face as the woman did, Jesus waits to encounter us in the sacraments. In Baptism we received living water to wash away original sin. In the sacrament of penance He gives us living water to wash our souls clean of sin and to strengthen us to avoid temptation and further sin.
- In a special way He waits to encounter us in the Holy Eucharist where He gives us His real presence to nourish and sustain our whole self.
- Jesus becomes a life long source of grace (living water) in the sacraments of confirmation, marriage and Holy Orders. Helping us to listen more closely and see God’s presence in ourselves and our relationships.
- We also receive this living water each time we read scripture and let God speak to us.
- During the season of Lent and particularly this Sunday we are asked to remember that our souls need this living water, it is real.
- Isn’t it true that while water is essential for our physical existence, many times we take it for granted. It’s just there and available. We shower, get a

drink, cook with it without giving it a second thought. But every so often we get up in the morning, turn on the faucet and brown, rusty stuff comes out. Its then we become keenly aware just how much we rely on water.

- Our approach to “living water” , God’s grace, can be much the same.. We can take it for granted, not really focus on the greatness of it. Until one day something happens in our life, or world. An important decision, a loss or crisis. Then we become keenly aware of our need for this living water.
- The season of Lent calls us to be constantly aware of God’s grace and to be guided by it each day, not just in critical moments. Lent calls us to cherish these daily encounters with our God.
- And once we embrace these encounters and let them change us, we are called to do what the woman at the well did. Go out and tell others about God’s great love and point them in the direction of the living water, Jesus – by our words and more importantly our actions.