Spirituality
Pencil Preaching



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March 11, 2023
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“The water I shall give will become in you a spring of water welling up to eternal life” (John 4:13).

Third Sunday of Lent

Ex 17:3-7; Ps 95; Rom 5:1-2, 5-8; Jn 4:5-42

The conversation between Jesus and the Samaritan woman at the well provides rich catechesis for those preparing for baptism this coming Easter. Many biblical themes converge here at a well. It was the scene of Jacob's first meeting with Rachel, one of the great love stories of the Bible and also a tale of tangled marriages. Jacob removes the stone from the well and waters the sheep (Gen 29).

Jesus fulfills the promise of water as the main symbol of life for a desert people. Moses gave the Israelites water from the rock, but Jesus gives living water, a fountain flowing within the believer from the Source of Life.

By offering this living water to a Samaritan woman, Jesus counters the ancient quarrel between Jews and Samaritans and the common prejudice against women, and he lifts religion itself to another level. No longer is worship at this mountain or that shrine or temple exclusive, but God is found in spirit and in truth. Those who believe in Jesus will be wellsprings of life, channels of fresh running water to anyone who thirsts and has not found satisfaction.

A thirsty woman who has had five husbands (an allusion to false gods), is twice an outcast as a Samaritan and a pariah in her own community. She now becomes an apostle of universal salvation. She has encountered I AM in Jesus, the human face of the invisible God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph and Moses. All of salvation history arrives in Sychar at high noon that day. And it comes to us who hear this story today.

The first step toward conversion is to acknowledge just how thirsty we are. All our wells and buckets, spigots and bottles offer only temporary satisfaction, but we must return to drink again. Baptism in Jesus makes us walking wells for our own thirst and the thirst of others. No religion, no prejudice or failure can keep us from the Source of life. Jesus is giving it away in spirit and in truth.