

Exodus 17:3-7

Psalm 95:1-2, 6-7, 8-9

Romans 5:1-2, 5-8

John 4:5-42 or John 4:5-15,
19b-26, 39a, 40-42



REFLECTION

Jesus says that the Samaritans worship what they don't understand and the Jews what they do understand. The Jews have the truth of the Law and the covenant with Israel, but the piety of the Samaritan woman and hunger for God is the work of the Spirit. Cooperation with the Spirit is part of the worship that Jesus describes as being done by all people seeking God.

Those who love God as well as they can are a field ripe for harvest, whether or not they know who it is they are already worshipping in their hearts! Like the Calormene soldier in *The Last Battle* who discovers that he has been serving Aslan his whole life without knowing it, those who have spent their lives pursuing truth and love are already in some sense standing in the doorways of the Church. The Spirit does not need us to teach these souls to love God. We only need to give a name to the love they already know so they can worship in truth as well as Spirit.

Do we follow God in Spirit and truth? Or do we neglect one or the other, looking down on other Christians for being too dogmatic or too touchy-feely? God seeks those who will worship with both love of God (Spirit) and love of God's teachings (truth)!



QUESTIONS

- ❖ What do today's readings teach you about the Christian life?
- ❖ What convinces the Samaritan woman that Jesus is who he says he is?
- ❖ The people of the town believe first because of the Samaritan woman's testimony, and then reach a new level of faith after meeting Jesus for themselves. How does this compare to your own growth toward a mature faith?

Third Sunday of Lent

March 12, 2023

ACTION

Participate in a common Lenten prayer practice by attending Stations of the Cross in your parish or community or by praying through the Stations of the Cross on your own. (You can find many versions of the Stations of the Cross online.) Pay attention to how each station invites you deeper into Christ's passion and message of redemption. Ask Jesus to teach you to worship in both Spirit and truth.



Start reading
(or rereading!)

C. S. Lewis's beloved
Chronicles of Narnia series



March 12, 2023

THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT

LECTIONARY #28A

Exodus 17:3-7

Psalms 95:1-2, 6-7, 8-9

Romans 5:1-2, 5-8

John 4:5-42 or 4:5-15, 19b-26,
39a, 40-42

Prepare for the Word

The following elements may be used by the catechist, teacher, or youth minister to prepare to facilitate today's session with teens. You may integrate this information into the reflection and discussion on today's readings.

Leader's Context

Jesus travels to Samaria in this week's Gospel, and he meets a woman at the village well. Jesus asks the Samaritan women for a drink of water, and she is scandalized. First, he is a Jewish man. Jewish people do not share with Samaritans. In their culture also, a man did not approach a woman and begin a conversation with her. In spite of these restrictions, Jesus continues to engage in conversation, and gradually the woman's eyes are opened to the truth of his identity. She is transformed by this encounter with Jesus and so are we.

Q FOCUS: *Jesus offers us the life-giving water for our eternal salvation.*

Liturgical Calendar Connection

This week, we celebrate the feast of St. Patrick on March 17. As most would agree, St. Patrick's Day has taken on many nonreligious meanings over the years, but his life was deeply rooted in the Christian faith and sharing it with others. Patrick, who was a bishop, went to Ireland to spread Christianity throughout the entire country. He converted thousands of indigenous people and built many churches. He was instrumental in making Christianity an enduring presence on the island.

Church Teaching Connection

"This water represents the Holy Spirit, the 'gift' par excellence that Jesus came to bring on the part of God the Father. Whoever is reborn by water and by the Holy Spirit, that is, in Baptism, enters into a real relationship with God, a filial relationship, and can worship him 'in spirit and in truth' (Jn 4:23, 24), as Jesus went on to reveal to the Samaritan woman. Thanks to the meeting with Jesus Christ and to the gift of the Holy Spirit, the human being's faith attains fulfilment" (Pope Benedict XVI, Angelus Message, March 27, 2011).

Hear the Word

Use this resource, a Lectionary, or a Bible to proclaim the reading. The book should be held reverently or placed on a lectern. If possible, light a candle that is placed near where the Gospel will be proclaimed. Gesture for teens to stand.

Gospel Acclamation

Use the same musical setting that is used in your parish or at school Masses. Teens may help with music and proclaim the Gospel.

Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ, king of endless glory.

Gospel

John 4:5-15, 19b-26, 39a, 40-42

Reader: A reading from the holy Gospel according to John.

All: Glory to you, O Lord.

All make the Sign of the Cross on their forehead, lips, and heart.

Jesus came to a town of Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of land that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. Jacob's well was there. Jesus, tired from his journey, sat down there at the well. It was about noon.

A woman of Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink." His disciples had gone into the town to buy food. The Samaritan woman said to him, "How can you, a Jew, ask me, a Samaritan woman, for a drink?"—For Jews use nothing in

common with Samaritans.—Jesus answered and said to her, “If you knew the gift of God and who is saying to you, ‘Give me a drink,’ you would have asked him and he would have given you living water.” The woman said to him, “Sir, you do not even have a bucket and the cistern is deep; where then can you get this living water? Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us this cistern and drank from it himself with his children and his flocks?” Jesus answered and said to her, “Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again; but whoever drinks the water I shall give will never thirst; the water I shall give will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.” The woman said to him, “Sir, give me this water, so that I may not be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water.

“I can see that you are a prophet. Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain; but you people say that the place to worship is in Jerusalem.” Jesus said to her, “Believe me, woman, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You people worship what you do not understand; we worship what we understand, because salvation is from the Jews. But the hour is coming, and is now here, when true worshipers will worship the Father in Spirit and truth; and indeed the Father seeks such people 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 the Messiah is coming, the one called the Christ; when he comes, he will tell us everything.” Jesus said to her, “I am he, the one who is speaking with you.”

Many of the Samaritans of that town began to believe in him. When the Samaritans came to him, they invited him to stay with them; and he stayed there two days. Many more began to believe in him because of his word, and they said to the woman, “We no longer believe because of your word; for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is truly the savior of the world.”

Reader: The Gospel of the Lord.

All: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Everyone may be seated.

Reflect on the Word

When beginning the reflection and discussion about today's readings, first refer to the handout for today. Ask teens what they learned about themselves and about Christian discipleship from performing the action for the week and journaling. Ask teens about the readings of the day: What struck them? What do they think the readings mean? How do the readings affect their own lives? Then begin the following reflection:

Some people consider this Gospel passage somewhat scandalous. Jesus visits Samaria, and he sits down at the well in town. The well of a town served a bustling center of activity. It is the place where the women of the town would gather in the mornings and share stories and build relationships with one another. However, when Jesus sits at the well, it is empty; soon, a Samaritan woman comes to draw water from the well. What is unique is that it is the middle of the day, and many scholars comment that she comes to the well in the middle of the day because she is viewed as a social outcast due to the choices she has made in her past. When she arrives at the well, Jesus asks her for a drink from her jar. The woman is shocked for two reasons: first, she is a Samaritan and Jewish people (like Jesus) do not share things with Samaritans. Secondly, she is a woman, and in these ancient times, it was inappropriate for a single man to speak to a woman in public like this.

► Can you describe a modern situation that might be equivalent to the scandal described here?

► How do you think Jesus would act in that modern situation?

In spite of the scandal, there is so much beauty in this passage because Jesus shows us a little bit more about who he is and, in turn, who God is. Though the woman and Jesus come from different places and worship in different ways, Jesus still offers her salvation, the water of eternal life.

► Why do you think Jesus uses ordinary things in his ministry to bear witness to his salvific miracles (like the water in this passage)?

Regular water will run dry. Regular water hydrates one's body and is necessary, but Jesus offers an alternative. He offers the living water and life in the Spirit. What a gift he offers the woman! What a gift

he offers to us! Jesus shows that the living water is not only for those who are worthy, for those who always do the right thing, and make the good, ethical choices. The living water is also offered to those of us who feel unworthy, especially due to our actions and mistakes.

We were washed with the water of eternal life at our baptism. The woman believes in Jesus, and in doing so, she is transformed. So much so, that she goes out to spread the Good News, to speak and teach about Jesus, and to bring others to him. Baptism has transformed us and through it we are called to share the Good News with others.

Wrapping It Up

Consider these points to conclude the discussion and reflection. Integrate the thoughts and ideas that surfaced during the discussion as well as the "Church Teaching Connection" on page 142.

Jesus does not always do what is expected of him, because he reflects God's values, not the world's.

What does it mean for you to partake of the living water? Jesus offers it to us as well.

The Samaritan woman has a conversion experience. Have you ever had a similar experience?

Act on the Word

Life-Giving Waters of Baptism

For this activity, you will need a video of a Catholic baptism, either online or a video of a member of your family. You will also need access to the parish church.

Though Jesus is not here offering us a drink of living water today, we see baptismal echoes in today's Gospel passage. The woman accepts the living water, and she is transformed. In this activity, we will discuss

the meaning of baptism as life-giving water and the way it transforms us.

Watch the video of a Catholic baptism as a group and then discuss the different symbols that they saw being used. Following the brief discussion, go visit the parish and show the teens where the baptismal font is located, the sacred chrism, and the paschal candle. All of these are used at baptism. If you are allowed, bring out the chrism so that they can look at it closely and smell it. Emphasize that the signs and symbols of the sacraments engage all of our senses, as evidenced by the smell and feel of the chrism, the feel of the water, the words prayed, and the lighted candle that is given to the child.

Returning to your original gathering space, discuss what was seen and ask the students: What does being baptized in Christ mean to you? What does it mean to partake of the living water? How do you follow Christ?

Closing Prayer

Loving Father,
you cleansed our sins in water
and made us new creations in you.

Renew us again this Lent,
making our lives fertile and fruitful,
and providing us spirits ready to do
your will.

Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

For Next Sunday

To help teens prepare for next Sunday's Mass, print, email, or share on a blog or social media the handout found on the next page. The JPG and PDF files are available at www.ltp.org/lwgr. Encourage teens to attend Mass with family or friends.