

## “Tap Into the Living Water”

3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Lent [A]

Ex 17:3-7; Ps 95:1-2, 6-9; Rom 5:1-2, 5-8; Mt 1:23; Jn 4:5-42

I remember very clearly some 26 years ago

- when our oldest son Jon was just a few months old
  - just old enough to be able to pull himself up
    - and stand for a few seconds.

And the time was right to teach him how to fall asleep on his own at night.

Karen & I were rookie parents and discovered a new technique we decided to try:

- First - have a bedtime routine. Fortunately, we already had that:
  - Bath time, bottle, book – no problem
  - But then, instead of rocking him to sleep like we had been,
    - now we would carry him to his room
    - give him a kiss goodnight, lay him in his crib
    - And then... much to his dismay...
      - we would leave the room...
- And of course, he didn't like that one bit.
  - Falling asleep nestled in his mother's arms was so much better!
  - It's hard to imagine what he was feeling at such a young age:
    - but certainly some separation anxiety
      - perhaps even some fear
    - But suffice it to say, he was NOT a happy camper
      - and, to be expected, was crying up a storm.
- Mom wasn't too happy either
  - hearing the cries of her baby
- But the plan was simply to leave and wait 5 minutes.
  - If he was still crying at that point
  - We'd go back in, lay him back down, give them a quick caress and a few soothing words, and then leave again.
    - In & out in about 15 sec.
    - And hack the clock again, this time for 10 min...
    - Still crying? Same routine: in & out, then wait 15 min...
    - Etcetera... until the baby if for no other reason but

- exhaustion from crying, falls asleep.
- The first night wasn't easy. I don't know who was crying more:
  - our son or Karen!
  - and soon I was agreeing to modify the 5-10-15 minute times
    - to 3, 6 & 9 minutes...
- But we got thru it and that first night Jon fell asleep at some point in the 9 min window – which meant he cried for close to 20 min.
- The second night he cried again, but fell asleep w/in 10 min.
- Third night, he cried even less, falling asleep w/in 5 minutes.
- Fourth night and beyond? He no longer cried when we put him to bed...
  - He would just lay down and go to sleep on his own.

What great long-term dividends from enduring a temporary trial...

- As an infant Jon quickly learned that when he felt alone in the dark
  - and we weren't holding him,
    - he was by no means abandoned.
  - He learned we were always there watching over him
    - even when he could not see or feel us.
  - One could say that as his faith grew in our enduring presence,
    - soon he found peaceful rest...

**Our spiritual lives** can be like this sometimes...

- having our own “spiritual separation anxiety” if you will.

In our first reading from Exodus

- we heard how the Israelites questioned whether God was still with them.

It was still relatively recent that God had miraculously freed them from Egyptian slavery

- capping it off with the astounding miracle of parting the Red Sea.
- But now, the party was definitely over:
  - They were hot, they were tired, they were thirsty.
  - And they were hearing all this talk about a “Promised Land”
  - but it pretty much seemed like they were just wandering around
    - lost in the desert...

- They began to quarrel among themselves
  - and lashed out against their leader Moses, asking:
    - Did you bring us out here to the desert to die?!
  - In other passages they exclaimed:
    - At least when we were in slavery we had food & water..!
- But even more seriously, today's reading tells us
  - they "tested the Lord, saying, 'Is the Lord in or midst or not?'"

Now they were in a stressful situation, no doubt.

- But this was spiritual immaturity.
  - This was the maturity of an infant that hadn't learned to be at rest
    - when not being coddled.
- And God was not impressed.

**We Christians** today are not so different from the Israelites of old...

- As the saying goes: "The more things change, the more they stay the same..."
- We too were freed from slavery (slavery to sin) in a most dramatic manner
  - thru Christ's Passion, Death and Resurrection.
  - But... that was so 2,000 years ago...
    - What have you done for me lately?
- We too have been hearing about an eternal Promised Land
  - the 2<sup>nd</sup> Coming of Christ, a New Heaven & New Earth
- But we've been hearing about that for eons now
  - and yet here we are, wandering around in a spiritual desert
    - in what is arguably a post-Christian world
    - And oh by the way: I'm hot, and I'm thirsty, and frankly I'm just not feeling it anymore
      - in my family
      - in my parish
      - in my diocese
      - or even in the Church as a whole
- And so we quarrel, and we lash out, and sometimes we might even wonder
  - God, are you still there...?

**Every morning**, the clergy of the Church (and many others)

- pray the Liturgy of the Hours, and it always begins with Psalm 95
  - excerpts of which are in today's Responsorial Psalm
- And it makes reference to today's scene in Exodus.
- God is talking and it reads in part:
  - *"Do not grow stubborn as your fathers did in the wilderness*
  - *when at Meriba & Massah they challenged me and provoked me*
  - *although they had seen all of my works..."*
- Then God concludes by saying:
  - *"They are a people whose hearts go astray*
    - *and they do not know my ways.*
  - *So I swore in my anger, 'They shall not enter into my rest.'"*

*They shall not enter into my rest...*

- Like the child who cannot rest while filled with anxiety or fear
- We, like the Israelites, will not be at rest
  - if we doubt the presence of God in our midst.
    - Even in the midst of a spiritual desert.
  - You cannot find true peace if you doubt God is with us...
    - and that lack of faith is displeasing to Him.

**Tomorrow** is the first day of spring.

- A time of refreshing rain, pleasant temperatures, and new life.
- Green grass, flowers and trees in bloom
  - all with little to no effort on our part
- Truly a wonderful season

And we relish Springtime while we can, for we know all too well

- that a less comfortable season is around the bend...
- bringing with it
  - the dog-days of Summer...
    - days when the heat is hot and rain is scarce
    - the ground hardens

And if things get bad enough, we start to notice

- that our plants & trees with shallow roots
  - (and therefore more reliant on rainwater)
  - are in jeopardy of dying
- But those plants & trees with deep roots stay healthy.
  - They're not so dependent on the rain
  - for their deep roots have tapped into
    - the life-giving water below...

Likewise, the depth of our spiritual roots largely determines

- how we will fare in seasons of spiritual dryness or drought.
- Whether we will remain strong and resilient despite a lack of rain,
- or whether we will shrivel up and die...
  - ending up like tumbleweed
    - tossed about the desert floor at the mercy of the wind...

**In today's Gospel**, Jesus tells us exactly

- what our spiritual roots should be tapping into.

Jesus said to the woman at the well, *"...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."*

So what is this spring of water Jesus is talking about?

The short answer is the Holy Spirit – who would be sent at Pentecost after Christ's Ascension -- this is our Living Water that we should be tapping into.

But how do we go about doing that -- growing our roots to tap into this spring?

Like the woman in today's Gospel, if you can't fill your bucket with rain

- you need to go to the well; you've got to go deep.
  - And like this woman, when we go to the well
    - we'll encounter Christ.

Brothers & Sisters, to effectively live out our Christian calling

- thru all the seasons of life, we NEED deep spiritual roots.

And the three most fundamental ways to deepen our spiritual roots are thru

- Scripture, Prayer, and the Sacraments

If you sink your roots in these three areas, you'll be able to withstand any drought.

1. Sacred Scripture – 100% inspired Word of the Holy Spirit

- which explains why we call it the “Word of God” (because it is)
- And as our parish name “Jesus the Divine Word” alludes to
  - and the opening verses of St. John’s Gospel proclaim,
    - Jesus Christ is the “Word made flesh.”
    - He IS the Word
  - So if you want to tap into Jesus. If you want to tap into the
    - Wisdom and Charity and Mercy and Truth of His Holy Spirit
    - Take a few minutes daily to read and meditate upon His Word
    - And to that end you’d do very well to take advantage of our Bible studies, offered throughout the year.

2. Prayer – Have daily conversations with your Maker.

- “Conversation” implying that you’re listening at least as much as talking.
- Talk with the One who knows you better than you know yourself
  - the One who has a plan for your life – ask Him to reveal it to you.
- Reading prayers or praying memorized prayers can be effective in helping you to express yourself to God.
- But you should also definitely be speaking to God in your own words.
- Still other times, don’t try to put all of your feelings into words
  - but rather, sit with God and just “spiritually exhale” (if you will)
  - Romans 8:26 teaches us how the Holy Spirit himself intercedes for us  
“*with groans too deep for words...*”
- One of the most powerful opportunities to converse with God thru all these ways is in Eucharistic Adoration.
  - If you’re new to it, it can feel a bit awkward at first;
    - but trust me, it’s worth the effort
  - And I tell you from personal experience the deepest prayerful moments I’ve had with Jesus, have been in Adoration.
  - So if you’re serious about going deep and tapping into the Living Water, get to Adoration.

3. Last but certainly not least, are the Sacraments.

- Partaking of the Sacraments is like opening up a water spigot of God's Grace and letting it pour into your life.
- Special outpourings of the Holy Spirit come thru the
  - one-time Sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation.
- But beyond those, in our daily lives
  - we can do ourselves no greater favor
  - than frequent participation in the Sacraments of
    - Reconciliation and the Eucharist
- If you're in a spiritual slump and decide you should take a break
  - from Mass and Reconciliation
  - That's like feeling a bit sluggish and deciding to tie off an artery!
- Bottom line: the Sacraments are our spiritual lifeblood and
  - to shortchange them is to shortchange your spiritual vitality. Period.

**My brothers and sisters**

- there are times in our lives when we're in a spiritual desert.
- Times when we struggle, times when we thirst
- Times when we're praying for relief
- and the Hand of God seems so far away

In these times, as our Responsorial Psalm compels us today:

- *"harden not your hearts..."*

Send your roots deep

- deep into Scripture, Prayer, and the Sacraments

Do that and you'll be tapping into the Holy Spirit of God, the Life-Giving Water

- And not only will you weather your desert wanderings,
- you'll actually come out stronger on the other side.

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