

Dear Friends,

Water is the principal symbol in our readings on this third Sunday of Lent. In the first reading from the Book of Exodus, God instructs Moses to gather the elders, take them to a rock at Horeb, and strike it with his staff. God assures Moses of His Divine Presence saying: "I will be standing there in front of you" (17:6). As with the manna God gave the Hebrews earlier so now God provides water from a rock for his people, demonstrating his care for them.

In the Gospel Jesus meets the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well. Though she had come to draw water to quench her physical thirst and to use for household tasks, Jesus speaks to her of the fountain of water he will give, the life-giving waters of baptism. As water sustains life and cleans away the dirt and grime that can diminish and destroy life, in the waters of baptism, the sins that alienate us from God are washed away and we are reborn in the Spirit. Water is an essential component for the well-being of both the physical and spiritual life.

When a group from the parish went to Haiti last month, one important commodity we needed was fresh, clean drinking water which we received in jugs packaged outside of Haiti. Most of Haiti's water sources are contaminated, leaving the majority of Haitians with little or no access to clean water. Families are regularly battling illness and even death because of contaminated water.

One organization helping to bring fresh, clean water to the people of Haiti is Hands Together, an organization founded by Fr. Tom Hagan over thirty years ago. Our group met Fr. Tom because he regularly celebrates Mass for the Missionaries of Charity in Port-au-Prince. Fr. Tom founded Hands Together after a visit to Haiti with a group of college students. Observing the poverty he was compelled to respond, eventually moving to Haiti in 1997. Hands Together has many projects in Haiti, one of which is water well drilling. In the past five years, they installed more than 150 wells and constructed 3 major water cisterns.

Another organization involved in water and sanitation projects is Catholic Relief Services, and one of the items in our Lenten Packet was their Rice Bowl. This year we are designating our Rice Bowls to providing clean water for the people of Haiti. Every time we place spare change in those Rice Bowls we're helping to bring clean water to some of the poorest people. Rice Bowls will be collected throughout the Sacred Triduum – Holy Thursday, Good Friday and Easter. If you have not begun using the Rice Bowl yet, I would encourage you to please do so. Imagine what it would be like not to have access to clean water.

Peace and blessings,

Father John