

Third Sunday of Lent, March 15, 2020

Letting our thirsts meet the with the thirst of God.

Dear brothers and sisters, God's irrevocable desire is our salvation, well-being, security and happiness. The Lord made this clear when he said, "I came so that they might have life and have it more abundantly" (John 10:10). St Paul's first letter to Timothy, a young Bishop echoes this truth in these words: "God our Savior desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim 2:3-4). This is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you sent" (John 17:3).

Letting our thirsts meet the thirst of God happens when we open our hearts to God's desire for us. Dear brothers and sisters, the truth about God's desire for our salvation and the yearning of hearts for God is expressed in terms of thirst and living water in our readings today.

In the first reading, we have the story of the thirsty people of God, who had been liberated from slavery in Egypt and were on the road to the "land flowing with milk and honey" (Exodus 3:17). Instead of looking to God in their thirst for water, they grumbled and distrusted the Holy One who had given them their freedom, saved them from death, led them across the Red Sea, delivered them from Pharaoh's men and fed them with manna. They sought to have their thirst satiated by returning to their old state of life of slavery and sin in Egypt. They upbraided Moses saying, "Why did you ever make us leave Egypt? Was it just to have us die here of thirst with our children and our livestock?"(Exodus 17:3). The problem with the people was one of hardening of hearts, refusing

to hear the voice of the Lord who spoke to them through his many signs and wonders. The people were not letting their thirst meet the thirst of God.

Their sin was not for being thirsty. The people sinned by doubting, testing and challenging the Lord. The spot where this rebellion happened is called Meribah and Massah. There they quarreled and tested the Lord, saying, "Is the Lord in our midst or not?" (Exodus 17:7). They fell for the awful temptation of testing the Lord which was echoed in the second temptation of the devil to our Savior "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down" (Matthew 4:6) from the parapet of the temple. The response of our Lord to the tempter showed what the people of old could have done: "You shall not put the Lord, your God, to the test" (Matthew 4:7, cf, Deut.6:16).

How does the thirst of the people and their reaction tie in with the gospel passage today? In the gospel, our Lord met the Woman of Samaria at the well. Both were thirsty. The Lord said to the woman, "Give me a drink" (John 4:7). The Lord's thirst was not merely for water but for our salvation just like his thirst on the cross when he said, "I thirst" (John 19:28). He thirsts that we may thirst for him. The woman did not get this at first, so our Lord explained, "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" (4:10). When the woman attuned her heart to this, she received the living water. When this happened, she could not contain her joy and amazement. "The woman left her water jar and went into the town and said to the people, "Come see a man who told me everything I have done. Could he possibly

be the Messiah?" (John 4:29-30). She became an evangelizer. She brought others to Jesus.

How do we know that the woman was thirsty? We know it because she said, "Sir, give me this water, so that I may not be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water" (John 4:15).

Besides the physical thirst, the woman had a deeper thirst which water could not quench. She was searching for happiness, for peace, for security and fulfillment. She was searching for God but did not know it. That was why she had had five husbands and a sixth man who was not hers. The salient point here is that the Hebrew word *Baalim* that translates husbands, means idols or gods. In the multiplicity of idols or toxic relationships she was searching for God. Did St Augustine not say that we are made for God. "O Lord you have made us for yourself and our hearts are restless until they rest in you" (Confessions 1§1

What are our hearts yearning for today? We are all yearning for the Spirit of God, the living water. It is very important to realize that our ultimate satisfaction cannot be found in the many worldly, passing things we pursue.

Many shortcuts to the Living Water include dabbling into new age movement, occult practices like witchcraft, spiritism, freemasonry, ecknkar, euransia. It could also be in form of falling into some unholy practices and bad habits like use of oujia board, palm reading, tarot card, pornography, prostitution, excessive use of alcohol, ice-cream, coca cola, recreational drugs, illicit relationships, candies, sweets, or inordinate concern about one's

look or health etc. If there is any of these that has a hold on me, I must lay it down and let it go.

LET US conclude with a word of prayer: Lord, you are truly the Savior of the world; give us living water, that we may never seek satiation in anything else other than you. Amen.