

CELEBRATE SABBATH

Third Sunday of Lent

**Find serenity deep within you by faithfully attending to your daily chores,
fulfilling your responsibilities and leaving everything
to the provident care of the Lord.**

Exodus 17:3-7

The Lord said to Moses, "Strike the rock and the water will flow from it for the people to drink". Moses struck the rock and water flowed for the Israelites to drink. Israel's relationship with God required a faith-filled and absolute reliance, a deep abiding trust in God and God's providence. Israel had to learn this trust as they journeyed through the wilderness.

This event challenges us to learn to live faith-filled lives, to learn to develop deep, abiding trust in God and God's ways, learn to trust in Divine Providence.

Psalm 95

This psalm is well known. It is part of the morning prayer of the Church. By the end of the OT period, the temple covered a large area. One reached its first gate by ascending a broad flight of steps. Then having gone through the gates at the top (Ps.24), the worshiper entered the court of the Gentiles, an open space, colonnaded round its walls. Into it anyone could enter, Jew or Gentile. Having crossed over this courtyard, one entered another court, into which Jewish women were allowed to accompany their men folk. But only the male Jew could go into the next court.

The division between these three courts is what St. Paul says Jesus broke down, for in Christ there is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither male nor female (Gal. 3:28). The lay worshiper could go no further. Entry into the final court was for the priests alone. Even this was broken down eventually. During the reformation in Europe, the railing was removed which had prevented the laity from approaching right up to the Altar and finally after the second Vatican Council in our catholic tradition. This is not because the priest had become mere laymen. It was because all people were granted what belonged to them in the first place by their call in OT times "a kingdom of priests" (Ex.19:6) and by Baptism anointed "priest, prophet and king".

**Come, let us joyfully sing to the Lord;
Let us acclaim the rock of our salvation.
Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving;**

Let us joyfully sing psalms to him.

Romans 5:1-2, 5-8

Paul says that Christian hope will never be disappointed because “the love of God has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us”. We have “Peace with God” through this outpouring of the Spirit. We rejoice and we can even boast about it, because “this outpouring of the Spirit” happened even when we were still sinners. Christian hope is founded on this belief and knowledge and experience. This hope will never be disappointed.

Be men and women of hope!

John 4:5-42

Jesus said, “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”.

Physical needs brought the woman to Jacob’s well. She went home from that water source with more than a bucket of water for drinking, cooking and washing. She went
on
her way spiritually nourished, purified and renewed by her encounter with Jesus.

“If you only knew who it is that is speaking to you.....” If you only knew! How could she?! A Jewish Rabbi asking a Samaritan woman for a drink! She had known only years of hostility between Jews and Samaritans. It was unheard of for a rabbi to speak to a woman in public; it was unheard of that any Jew would drink from Samaritan utensils.

The woman’s late visit to the well (water was usually drawn early in the morning) may suggest that she was an outcast in the village because of her questionable lifestyle with a man who was not her husband. The grace of the presence of Jesus and his offer of living water broke down the barriers that ordinarily separated her from her community. That is the nature of “gracefulness”. Gracefulness breaks down barriers that ordinarily separate Jews from Gentiles, men from women and saints from sinners.

No sin is an embarrassment to Jesus. Bring all your embarrassing moments, actions, events and situations in your life to Jesus. He will transform them into Grace-filled moments and opportunities for transformation of your life.

Jesus breaks down barriers between people, culture, religion, race, etc. What are those barriers that need to be broken in your own personal life?

Jesus gives us cleansing, life-giving water. What are those areas of life that need to be cleansed? Reflect on the life-giving water that you need to drink and the source of that life-giving water in the spring within you, in prayer, in the sacraments, in the scriptures, in the church.....

Jesus empowers us to face the truth. What is the truth in your self or about your self that you need to face? Come to the Lord Jesus. He will empower you to face the truth. Being empowered, we must share His truth with others.

Saint of the Day, March - 8 St. John of God and 18 other saints are remembered this day.

John of God was born João Duarte Cidade (Portuguese) in the Kingdom of Portugal. One day, when John was eight years of age, he disappeared. Whether he had been deliberately kidnapped, or whether he had been seduced from his home by a cleric who had been given hospitality in the home, is not clear. According to his original biography, his mother died from grief soon after this and his father joined the Franciscan Order.

The young Cidade soon found himself a homeless orphan in the streets of Oropesa, near Toledo, Spain. There, in a foreign land, he had no one to care for him, nothing on which to live and he had to be content with whatever food he could find. He was eventually taken in by Francisco Mayoral as a shepherd caring for his sheep in the countryside.

The farmer was so pleased with Cidade's strength and diligence that he wanted him to marry his daughter and to become his heir. When he was about 22 years of age, to escape his master's well-meant, but persistent, offer of his daughter's hand in marriage, the young man joined a company of foot-soldiers. He served in the capacity for 18 years with many painful and disappointing experiences, including a death sentence.

Having given up active Christian belief while a soldier, John was 40 when decided to give the rest of his life to God's service and headed at once for Africa where he hoped to free captive Christians and, possibly, be martyred. He was soon advised that his desire for martyrdom was not spiritually well based and returned to Spain to look after a religious goods store. Moved initially by a sermon of Saint John of Avila, he one day engaged in a public beating of himself, begging mercy and wildly repenting for his past life.

Committed to a mental hospital for these actions, John was visited by Saint John, who advised him to be more actively involved in tending to the needs of others rather than in enduring personal hardships. John gained peace of heart, and left the hospital to work among the poor.

He established a house where he wisely tended to the needs of the sick poor, at first doing his own begging. But, excited by the saint's great work and inspired by his devotion, many people began to support him with money and provisions. Behind John's outward acts of total concern and love for Christ's sick poor was a deep interior prayer life which was reflected in his spirit of humility. These qualities attracted helpers who, 20 years after John's death, formed the Brothers Hospitallers, now a worldwide religious order.

John became ill after 10 years of service but tried to disguise his ill health. He began to put the hospital's administrative work into order and appointed a leader for his helpers. He died under the care of a spiritual friend and admirer, Lady Ana Ossorio on March 8, 1550 and was canonized on October 16, 169

Fr. Gus Tharappel, msfs