

March 4, 2018

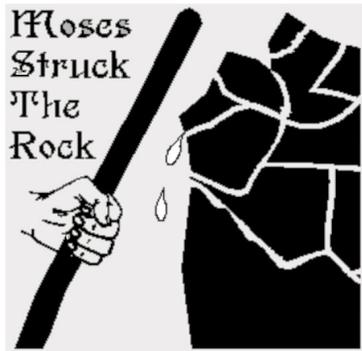
Third Sunday in Lent - "A" Cycle

Readings can be obtained from: <http://uscgb.org/bible/readings/030418-year-a.cfm>

Saint Casimir: <https://www.franciscanmedia.org/saint-casimir/>

Readings: Exodus 17: 3-7; Psalm 95: 1-2, 6-7, 8-9; Romans 5: 1-2, 5-8; John 4: 5-42

Water. Life-giving water. Ever flowing water. Water, as seen in today's readings, reminds us of the gift of faith. Let us dive into the waters of faith and see how refreshing they can be.



https://realhomilies.files.wordpress.com/2012/03/lent3a_1.gif

The account in the first reading takes place in the desert. The Israelites are complaining about being out in the hot, dry desert with no water. While they were slaves in Egypt, they had been able to drink their fill of water from the Nile River which flowed through the land. Now they blame Moses – and GOD – for leading them away from the life giving waters to the parched land in the desert. Moses prays to GOD and GOD gives them water flowing from the rock, not because of their faith in GOD, but because of their lack of faith. GOD gifts them, even though they do not deserve GOD's gift.

The psalm response challenges us not to test GOD and show lack of faith as the people did in the desert. If we believe, GOD will give us what we need. And then we can sing a joyful song to the LORD.

In the second reading, in his letter to the Romans, St. Paul speaks about faith. Faith comes to us as GOD's gift in Jesus ("Through Jesus we have gained access by faith"). Jesus gives us this gift of life-giving faith while we are yet sinners – not faithful individuals. Jesus lays down His life so we might come to know fully the gift of faith which is being offered to us.

The long Gospel of Jesus' meeting the woman at the well speaks of water and faith. Jesus reaches out to the woman. He begins the life-giving conversation which will end not only in her own belief in GOD, but also in many others coming to believe. It truly shocks the woman that Jesus would talk to her because 1) she is a Samaritan, 2) she is a woman, and 3) she is an outcast even among the other Samaritan women. (She is not allowed to come with the other women to draw water because of her lifestyle. The other women come in the early morning, but this woman has to come by herself during the hot noon hour.) Yet this is the one Jesus invites to believe in Him and to spread the faith to other women, other Samaritans, other people.

Jesus asks for water. He wants the woman to respond to His request. Jesus then invites her to receive the living (flowing) water which He offers. She thinks that Jesus is talking about another source of drinking water that is not as deep as Jacob's well. She wants this flowing water so she does not have

to keep coming, by herself, to draw water. Jesus is speaking of a spiritual water that gives spiritual life. Jesus is offering to her the gift of faith. It is only as the conversation develops that she becomes aware of the other dimension of Jesus' promise of living water. After Jesus shows that He is aware of who she really is and how she has lived her life to this point, it is then that she begins to realize that Jesus is the promised Messiah. She accepts Jesus' invitation to draw from the well of spiritual water. She begins to believe and she rushes to tell others about the One with Whom she has begun a faith-filled relationship, after all of her unfaithful relationships of old. She becomes a proclaimer of this faith-full relationship. As a result, others come to Jesus and ask that He remain and share His gifts with them.

Traditionally this Gospel has been part of the Lenten readings as a preparation for the celebration of the faith in the Risen Lord. This Gospel is read to prepare those who will receive the Easter Sacraments of Initiation and will become part of the faith community. Through Baptism, the new believers will be welcomed into the community of believers. They will proclaim their faith and begin to live as full members of the believing community. This



<https://openclipart.org/detail/63769/%C3%81gua---water-splash-by-leandrosciola>



<http://www.salfordliturgy.org.uk/Art%20Lent%203A.jpg>



<https://pbs.twimg.com/media/CfhHvozUIAAlqj.jpg>

reading speaks to those about to be received into the church. It proclaims a message about the role of the life-giving waters of Baptism and gift of faith. It also should speak to all of us who already are believers. It is a challenge for us to realize the gift which faith is.

GOD, through Jesus and other believers, has offered us the gift of faith. GOD is the initiator of faith. Just as the promise of living water was made to the woman at the well, faith is a divine gift which is made accessible to us. We can choose to accept the gift or reject it. It is our free will that allows us to do what we want with the gift of faith. We can ask questions and explore what the gift is all about, just as the woman at the well. It is in the dialogue and the deepening relationship with GOD that we will come to realize the greatness of the One Who makes us the offer. The gift may expose us and make us face the realities of our lives, just as Jesus did with the Samaritan woman. We may try at first to hide our lives from GOD, but GOD knows our lives better than we know them ourselves. And GOD will continue to develop the relationship if we are open to the gift of faith. We may look at our old routines, including our religious practices, in a new light. The Lord Jesus will be asking us to worship GOD in Spirit and Truth.

After we have experienced the newness of the gift of living water (faith), we will want to share this gift with others. We will tell them of our experiences of the Messiah, the One Who has told us everything about ourselves. We will ask others to come and drink of the life-giving waters of faith. True faith cannot be kept to ourselves. We will want others to experience what we have experienced. And when they come to the One Who gives living water, and the Lord Jesus offers them the gift of this faith, we will rejoice with them because they have accepted the gift of faith.

The personal question/action for today: How have I experienced the Lord Jesus' gift of life-giving faith? Have I sought to dialogue with the Lord Jesus in order to grow in my awareness of the gift which GOD gives me? How have I been willing to share my faith with those around me, so that they can be brought into the life-giving relationship with the Lord Jesus and His **Abba**?

Blessed are You, LORD GOD, ever giving and ever loving. Through Your Son, You offer to us a never ending, always flowing, well of life-giving sustenance. You want us to drink fully and deeply of this source of life. You ask us to accept what You offer and grow in our relationship with You, Your Son, and Your Spirit. We thank You and praise You for Your graciousness to us. We thank You for those people in our lives whom You have placed in a position where they could share their faith with us. We ask that You send to us Your Holy Spirit of wisdom, patience, and strength, so that we may respond fully to the gracious gift of faith which You offer us. May we desire to be refreshed continually with a deepening relationship with You. We ask that You allow us to be used in the spread of the faith, so that Your gift will reach even more people, and more people will come to have their thirst for You quenched in a community of fellow believers. As always, we make this prayer of You, through Jesus, Your Son and our Brother, Who is living and reigning with You and the Holy Spirit, our one and only GOD, forever and ever. Amen.

Song of the Day: *Woman at the Well* by Marty Haugen: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MBxlZOQHIE>

Video of the Day: *Saint Casimir of Poland:* <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oeE2KCJQwWw>

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