



Relationship with GOD

More than Just SUNDAY

You, Me, and the Woman at the Well

Jesus is tired as he comes to the outskirts of the Samaritan town of Sychar and sits down by the community well. He has been traveling on foot all morning and it is about noon. His disciples are in town buying food, but he has stayed back. He has an important appointment to keep.

Here she comes now, carrying her water jar.

Looking at her, a sad and solitary figure whose dreams have faded, you might ask – why her? Large crowds have been flocking to see Jesus. The news has spread that he works great signs and speaks with a power and authority far surpassing that of the Scribes and the Pharisees.

So why waste time on such an unlikely audience of one? It's bad enough that she is a Samaritan, but she has also made a mess of her life. She has been married five times and is now living with a man who is not her husband.

Jesus knows all that. He knows how barren her life has become, how parched and thirsty she is. In fact, he knows it better than she does. As is the case for so many other weary sinners – the “tax collectors and prostitutes” of which Jesus spoke (Mt 21:31) – he knows that her disillusionment has made her ready to listen and to live a new life by the grace, the “living water,” that he will offer. Her thirst is deep.

So it is interesting to note that Jesus first asks *her* for a drink. Is that just a set-up for turning the tables and saying *she's* the one who should be asking for a drink? Or is Jesus' expression of thirst telling us something important about him (also when, later from the cross, he will cry out, “I thirst”)?

The Catechism, referring to the story of the Woman at the Well, explains it this way: “Jesus thirsts; his asking arises from the depths of God's desire for us.... God thirsts that we may thirst for him” (2560).

Let that sink in this Lent – *God thirsts, for you*. And not just in a general way, but for you as a unique person, whom he knows by name. He knows everything about you. Paraphrasing the mysterious words of St. Augustine, he is “closer to you than you are to yourself.”

Jesus has an appointment with each one of us beside a well somewhere. Where have we been going to try to quench our thirst? Money? A nice car? The latest iPhone? Entertainment? Fleeting pleasures?

Wherever it is, he waits. And he *thirsts* for us to see that only his Love can quench our thirst. He doesn't just want his picture or his crucifix on our wall, he wants to live in our hearts as the truest friend and the Lord of our life. We will not have lasting peace or contentment until we accept the thirst-quenching love that flows from his Heart.

In the words of Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI:

“There is nothing more beautiful than to know Jesus and to speak to others of our friendship with Him... If we let Christ into our lives, we lose nothing, nothing, absolutely nothing of what makes life free, beautiful and great. No! Only in this friendship are the doors of life opened wide. Only in this friendship is the great potential of human existence truly revealed. Only in this friendship do we experience beauty and liberation.”

Maybe you know all this. Maybe you know it better than I, who still get distracted way too often. Let's remind each other every day, especially this Lent.

Of course, once we know the truth, we can't keep it to ourselves.

What did the Samaritan woman do after meeting Jesus and learning he was the Messiah? She ran to town to tell everyone she knew, *leaving her water jar behind!* She went and “testified” about her life-changing encounter and “many began to believe in him because of her word.”

Are we ready to do the same? After this Lenten journey of ours, there will be a golden opportunity for it on April 28-29. Visit www.dioc.org/basic-evangelization to learn more.

In what remains of this Lent, let us more deeply encounter Jesus Christ, who sits beside our well, waiting...waiting. And then let's tell our thirsting friends and neighbors. That's what a Samaritan woman did, because she could not contain her joy. What about me?

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