

Third Sunday of Lent “A” Cycle March 18-19, 2017

For the past few years, the news has reported on the plight of the city of Flint, Michigan and its contaminated water supply, which presented a serious health danger to its over 100, 000 residents. Although we often don’t give it much thought, most of our nation is blessed by God to have an abundance of fresh water and thankful to have the technical means to purify, store, and make it readily available.

In the land of the Bible and especially at the time of Moses and Jesus water was certainly not plentiful and droughts were common. Water was a very precious commodity and was collected in cisterns.

Obviously, water is absolutely necessary to sustain all life, from the lowest single cell organism to humans. Water became a symbol of life itself, both physical and spiritual. In the sacrament of baptism, water is a conduit of a sharing in the life of God, which we call grace.

The season of Lent began as a period of intense preparation for those who were to be baptized at Easter. In our parish, we have a catechumen who is also now called an “elect” who will be baptized at the Easter Vigil. The Scriptures for this Sunday and the next two Sundays are meant to instruct all the “elect” as they prepare for the new life of the baptized.

For those of us already baptized, these Scriptures are intended to help us prepare to renew our baptismal promises on Easter.

The 1st reading, from the OT Book of Exodus, tells us of the Israelites complaining about the lack of water in their trek through the parched desert on their way to the land God promised them. Moses prays to the Lord who instructs him to strike the rock, from which flowed water. God indeed was in their midst to sustain life.

The Gospel, from St. John, narrates the story of Jesus’ encounter with a Samaritan woman at Jacob’s well. The story begins when a tired Jesus sits down by the well in the noon day heat. Water was usually drawn earlier in the day, but this woman, perhaps because she is an outcast even among her own people perhaps because of her poor reputation, comes to the well when no one else is usually there.

Jesus then breaks convention, when he asks the woman, a Samaritan woman, for a drink. When she argues with Jesus, he promises to give her a different kind of water, living water, by which he means God’s life of grace, she becomes intrigued.

When Jesus asks that she call her husband and return, she answers that she

does not have one. Jesus counters by telling her that she has had five husbands and is living with one who is not her husband. The woman realizes that Jesus is a prophet, who knows details of her sinful life.

The conversation continues about true worship being guided by the Holy Spirit to all truth, during which Jesus clearly identifies himself as the Messiah. The woman then becomes an enthusiastic evangelizer, sharing her life-changing experience with the others in her village, many of whom also became disciples of Jesus.

There are several points to prayerfully reflect upon. One is to acknowledge that Jesus offers us the gift of an eternal life with God, a life of faith, which begins at baptism by water and the Holy Spirit. This life of faith needs to be guarded and cared for by prayer, worship, and a morally upright life.

Another point is that Jesus knows our weaknesses, our sinful habits, and loves us nonetheless, but calls us to continuous conversion and repentance, especially through the sacrament of Reconciliation, which is often referred to as another baptism.

Finally, our faith in Jesus, to remain vital, means that we are to share it with others by our good example, our conversations, and charity.

May we, like the Samaritan woman and many others, come to know more and more that Jesus is really the Savior of the world and our Savior too!