

*Lent 3A 2017*

*Christ the Rock*

**In today's first reading the people—the people whom God had so recently freed slavery in Egypt—grumble against Moses.** Why did you make us leave the land of Egypt to come to *this* place, to *this* wilderness, where we are dying of thirst? Although God has freed them from oppression, and although God is about to make a covenant with them at Mount Sinai, the people complain and grumble because they have no water. The anguish of their thirst has become more important to them than their freedom from slavery. And now they are ready to exchange everything—even their freedom—for a cup of water. But God's wonders are never exhausted. And so God commands Moses to strike the rock with his staff, and when he does water comes forth, living water that sustains the people on their journey.

**In the gospel we just heard, Jesus meets a woman at the well—a woman with a long history of failed marriages.** When Jesus asks her to draw some water for him, her first reaction is disdain: “Why are *you* asking me to give you something to drink? After all, you are a Jewish man, and I am a Samaritan Woman.” In response, Jesus tells the woman that if she knew who was asking her for something to drink, she would ask him for living water, the kind of water that will quench her thirst once and for all. Jesus is about to offer her something extraordinary, the gift of God's life-giving Spirit. But first, the woman must recognize who is standing before her.

**We are like the Samaritan woman and the people of Israel in the wilderness.** Like the Samaritan woman, we do not recognize the one who is standing in our presence. The risen Christ comes to us with an extraordinary offer of grace and mercy in the scriptures and sacraments, and we fail to recognize his presence. The risen Christ stands in the midst of the church with an offer of new life, and we do not recognize his presence. And so instead of coming

to him, we return to the old well, thinking that it will be different this time, this time it will satisfy us.

There are times when we are like the people of Israel in the wilderness. God frees us from the powers of sin and death through the saving death and resurrection of his Son. God makes us his sons and daughters in Christ. God gives us the gift of grace, the gift of his own life. But when the time of testing and temptation comes, we are tempted to turn back. When things do not go our way, we are tempted to drift away from the community of the faith. We fall away from the sacraments. We stop praying and meditating on God's life-giving Word. And when we do this, we will fall back into the darkness of sin from which Christ has freed us. We no longer live in the light.

**This is why Saint Paul reminds us, in today's second reading, of what God has done for us in Christ.** *First*, God has reconciled us to himself we are at peace with God. *Second*, God has poured his love into our hearts through the gift of the Holy Spirit. *Third*, God has proved his love for us because Christ died for us precisely at the moment when we were weak and alienated from God. Christ died for us when we were sinner.

**Where are you in your Lenten journey this third Sunday of Lent?** Are you wandering in the wilderness, like the Israelites of old, a bit discouraged, tempted to turn back? Or are you like the Samaritan woman, unable to recognize the presence of Christ who is standing before you with and his offer of grace, and mercy, and forgiveness? If this is where you are, then it is time to take up the journey once more. It is time to recognize that Christ is truly and always in our midst. It is time to renew our faith so that we can walk with Christ and hear his Word. For, it is only when we drink from the rock that Christ that we can complete the journey that brings us to God.

- Israel grumbles against Moses although God has freed them
  - Why did you bring us to this place
  - Let us go back to the place of our slavery
  - God's wonders are not exhausted, Water from the rock
- Jesus meets the woman at the well
  - He asks her for water
  - She response to Jesus with disdain
  - She fails to recognize who is standing before her
- We are like the woman and the people of Israel
  - We don't recognize Jesus and the gift he brings in the scriptures, the sacraments, the church
  - In times of testing and discouragement we are tempted to turn back to our old ways
- This is why St. Paul reminds us of what God has done for us
  - We are at peace with God
  - God has poured his love into our hearts
  - God shows his love for us because Christ died for us when we were sinners
- Where are you on the journey
  - Are you wandering aimlessly, are you tempted to go backwards
  - Do you fail to see the risen Lord who stand before you with the gift of life
  - The Christian life is a long and arduous journey, and we all need the encouragement on the journey that comes from the rock who is Christ