

Homily for the Third Sunday of Lent Year A

The mother sends her small boy to bed. A few minutes later: The boy says, "Mommy..." "What?" "I'm thirsty. Can you bring me a glass of water?" Mom said, "No, Drinking water before bed is not good for a bed-wetter like you. Go to sleep. "Five minutes later, the boy said, "Mommy...! I'm thirsty. Can I have some water?" The mother was annoyed. "I told you no! If you ask again, I'll have to spank you!" But a few minutes later... "Mummy..." "What!?" Now she was angry. But she suddenly cooled down when she heard the sweet voice, "Mommy, when you come in to spank me, can you bring me a glass of water?"

Thirty-four years ago, Hurricane Andrew (1992) devastated southern Florida. Houses were leveled, trees were uprooted, and human lives were severely disturbed. To cope with this chaos, the National Guard was called out to restore a semblance of order and to respond to immediate human needs. One of the first things the Guard did in the midst of people whose lives had been devastated by water and wind was to supply clean drinking water. In the midst of so much loss, clean drinking water was absolutely necessary to sustain health and life. You may recall the image of a National Guardsman standing next to a tanker dispensing clean drinking water to those who were victimized by Hurricane Andrew.

We all know that water is indispensable for human living. Without water a man can die. No matter how many times we drink, we thirst again. Water keeps us alive, refreshes us, restores us, and gives us strength. But there is another thirst deep within every human being, a thirst of the soul.

The readings of this third Sunday of Lent speak about '*thirst*', *not only physical thirst*, but the deep *thirst of the human heart*. Every person is thirsty for something: love, peace, forgiveness, and true happiness.

Today we heard the first reading from the book Exodus. It tells about the Israelites wandering in the desert on their journey from Egypt to the Promised Land. As they became thirsty, they grew indignant and began to grumble against Moses asking, "Why did you bring us out of Egypt to make us and our children die of thirst?" The people forgot how God had already saved them and started to doubt His presence and asking, "Is Lord really among us or not?"

It is quite common for people to behave in the same way. When the things go well, we easily forget God and take His blessings for granted, but when difficulties, sickness or disappointments come, we quickly begin to complain. But God remains patient and faithful to His people. Instead of punishing them, God asks Moses to strike the rock and water flows out, showing that God always provides what the people truly need.

In the second reading from the Letter to the Romans, St Paul reminds us that God never abandons us. He says: “the love of God has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit.” And Paul gives the greatest proof of this love: Christ died for us while we were still sinners. Even when we doubt, fail or wander away, God’s love keeps flowing toward us, just like water from the rock in the desert.

In the gospel Saint John, presents the most beautiful encounter between Jesus and the Samaritan woman at the well. Jesus asks her for water, but then He tells her something extraordinary: “whoever drinks the water I give, will never thirst.” Jesus is speaking about living water, the water that gives eternal life. This living water is *His grace, His truth, His Spirit*.

The Samaritan woman had been searching for happiness in many places, because her life was complicated and broken and with a wounded heart. But Jesus does not condemn her, instead he reveals her thirst and offers her something better. Her encounter with Jesus transformed her life; she left her water jar behind and ran to share the good news to everyone, “*Come and see a man who told me everything I have done*”. This woman who came to the well with heavier heart, becomes a missionary.

Like the Israelites and like the Samaritan woman we are thirsty people. Sometimes we try to satisfy our thirst with things that cannot truly satisfy us: Possessions, success, Pleasure, Recognition. But these things can only give temporary satisfaction.

Only Christ can quench the deepest thirst of the Human heart. The season of lent invites us to come again to the well where Jesus is waiting for us. We meet Him especially through prayer, the word of God, the Sacraments especially reconciliation and the Eucharist. When we allow Christ to fill our hearts, we receive the living water that becomes a spring inside us. May God bless all of us. Amen.