

FIRST READING

Ex 17:3-7

A reading from the book of Exodus.

Tormented by thirst, the people complained against Moses. "Why did you bring us out of Egypt?" they said. "Was it so that I should die of thirst, my children too, and my cattle?" Moses appealed to the Lord. "How am I to deal with this people?" he said. "A little more and they will stone me!" The Lord said to Moses, "Take with you some of the elders of Israel and move on to the forefront of the people; take in your hand the staff with which you struck the river, and go. I shall be standing before you there on the rock, at Horeb. You must strike the rock, and water will flow from it for the people to drink." This is what Moses did, in the sight of the elders of Israel. The place was named Massah and Meribah because of the grumbling of the sons of Israel and because they put the Lord to the test by saying, "Is the Lord with us, or not?"

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

RESP. PSALM

Psalm 94

Response:

**O that today you would listen to his voice!
Harden not your hearts.**

1. Come, ring out our joy to the Lord;
hail the rock who saves us.
Let us come before him, giving thanks,
with songs let us hail the Lord. (R.)
2. Come in: let us bow and bend low;
let us kneel before the God who made us
for he is our God and we
the people who belong to his pasture,
the flock that is led by his hand. (R.)
3. O that today you would listen to his
voice!
"Harden not your hearts as at Meribah,
as on that day at Massah in the desert
when your fathers put me to the test;
when they tried me, though they saw my
work." (R.)

SECOND READING

Rom 5:1-2,5-8

A reading from the letter of St Paul to the Romans.

Through our Lord Jesus Christ, by faith we are judged righteous and at peace with God, since it is by faith and through Jesus that we have entered this state of grace in which we can boast about looking forward to God's glory. This hope is not deceptive, because the love of God has been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit which has been given us. We were still helpless when at his appointed moment Christ died for sinful men. It is not easy to die even for a good man - though of course for someone really worthy, a man might be prepared to die - but what proves that God loves us is that Christ died for us while we were still sinners.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Glory to you, O Christ, you are the Word of God!

**Lord, you are really the saviour of the world;
give me the living water, so that I may never
get thirsty.**

Glory to you, O Christ, you are the Word of God!

GOSPEL

Jn 4:5-42

(For shorter form read between >>)

A reading from the holy Gospel according to John.

>Jesus came to the Samaritan town called Sychar, near the land that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. Jacob's well is there and Jesus, tired by the journey, sat straight down by the well. It was about the sixth hour. When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink." His disciples had gone into the town to buy food. The Samaritan woman said to him, "What? You are a Jew and you ask me, a Samaritan, for a drink?" - Jews, in fact, do not associate with Samaritans. Jesus replied:

"If you only knew what God is offering
and who it is that is saying to you:
'Give me a drink,'

you would have been the one to ask,
and he would have given you living water."
"You have no bucket, sir," she answered
"and the well is deep: how could you get this
living water? Are you a greater man than our
father Jacob who gave us this well and drank
from it himself with his sons and his cattle?"
Jesus replied:

"Whoever drinks this water
will get thirsty again;
but anyone who drinks the water that I shall
give
will never be thirsty again:
the water that I shall give
will turn into a spring inside him, welling up
to eternal life."

"Sir," said the woman "give me some of
that water, so that I may never get thirsty
and never have to come here again to draw
water." < "Go and call your husband" said
Jesus to her "and come back here." The
woman answered, "I have no husband." He
said to her, "You are right to say, 'I have no
husband,' for although you have had five,
the one you have now is not your husband.
You spoke the truth." > "I see you are a
prophet, sir" said the woman. "Our fathers
worshipped on this mountain, while you say
that Jerusalem is the place where one ought
to worship." Jesus said:

"Believe me, woman, the hour is coming
when you will worship the Father
neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem.
You worship what you do not know;
we worship what we do know;
for salvation comes from the Jews.
But the hour will come - in fact it is here
already - when true worshippers
will worship the Father in spirit and truth:
that is the kind of worshipper
the Father wants.

God is spirit,
and those who worship
must worship in spirit and truth."
The woman said to him, "I know that
Messiah - that is, Christ - is coming; and
when he comes he will tell us everything."
"I who am speaking to you," said Jesus "I
am he." < At this point his disciples returned,
and were surprised to find him speaking to a
woman, though none of them asked, "What
do you want from her?" or, "Why are you
talking to her?" The woman put down her
water jar and hurried back to the town to tell
the people, "Come and see a man who has
told me everything I ever did; I wonder if he
is the Christ?" This brought people out of the
town and they started walking towards him.
Meanwhile, the disciples were urging him,
"Rabbi, do have something to eat;" but he

said, "I have food to eat that you do not know
about." So the disciples asked one another,
"Has someone been bringing him food?" But
Jesus said:

"My food
is to do the will of the one who sent me,
and to complete his work.
Have you not got a saying:
Four months and then the harvest?
Well, I tell you:
Look around you, look at the fields;
already they are white, ready for harvest!
Already the reaper is being paid his wages,
already he is bringing in the grain for eternal
life,
and thus sower and reaper rejoice together.
For here the proverb holds good:
one sows, another reaps;
I sent you to reap
a harvest you had not worked for.
Others worked for it;
and you have come into the rewards of their
trouble."
Many Samaritans of that town had believed
in him on the strength of the woman's
testimony when she said, "He told me all I
have ever done," so, when the Samaritans
came up to him, they begged him to stay
with them. He stayed for two days, and
when he spoke to them many more came to
believe; and they said to the woman, "Now
we no longer believe because of what you
told us; we have heard him ourselves and
we know that he really is the saviour of the
world."

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

THE APOSTLES' CREED

**I believe in God,
the Father almighty,
Creator of heaven and earth,
and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
(all bow during the next two lines)
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died and was buried;
he descended into hell;
on the third day he rose again from the dead;
he ascended into heaven,
and is seated at the right hand of God the
Father almighty;
from there he will come to judge the living
and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and life everlasting.
Amen.**

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Be pleased, O Lord, with these sacrificial
offerings,
and grant that we who beseech pardon for our
own sins,
may take care to forgive our neighbour.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

**For anyone who drinks it, says the Lord,
the water I shall give will become in him
a spring welling up to eternal life.**



LIVING WATER

JOHN 4:5-42

REFLECT

Our Gospel readings on this and the next two Sundays are taken from the Gospel of John. They are especially relevant in this time of Lent as we prepare to receive new members into our Christian community at the Easter Vigil. The passage about the Woman at the Well illustrates the person who is introduced to the person of Jesus but has difficulty accepting the message. In the second part of the dialogue, the question of proper worship is raised, and the answer is that it does not require a special place, but rather the directing of the person's whole life towards God, in spirit (sharing in the gift of the Father) and in truth (being authentic, genuine). Maybe for us it could mean being conscious of the Lord with us wherever we may be. ■

For many people, coming to believe in Jesus is a process. It develops over time. The scene in today's gospel reading portrays such a development.

There are several surprising details in the setting of the story. Jesus is tired: we are not often given such everyday information about his human condition. He then takes the initiative when the woman approaches the well near which he is sitting. This in itself is unusual, that he would engage a woman he did not know in conversation, and she turns out to be not only a non-Jewish person, but also a member of the Samaritan people whom the Jews regarded as heretics or non-believers masquerading as members of the people of Israel. She is obviously regarded with disdain by the townspeople as she comes to draw water at the hottest part of the day, when it is likely that there will be no-one about. But it is to her, with full knowledge of her personal situation that Jesus offers living water.

We see how her understanding of Jesus grows as they talk together, this is shown by the way in which she refers to him. First of all, he is simply a Jew: then she calls him, more politely, Sir; from his insight into her married status, she regards him as a prophet; she might even be willing to consider the possibility that he might be the Messiah/Christ, but even though Jesus declares himself to her in the formula I AM, she is still left wondering. However, her sharing of her experience with the other townspeople brings them to investigate, and they come to believe in the Saviour of the world. The unnamed woman has to struggle with her understanding of the history, religion and culture of her own people which Jesus is challenging before she can accept the living water of his Gift of eternal life. But she is not hostile: she represents the kind of person who finds it difficult to go beyond the obvious or the familiar. The assumptions and prejudices of generations are not easily set aside, but Jesus gently challenges her (and us) to look at the way we think and to try to see life more from God's point of view. ■

LEARN

The origins of the Samaritans go back to the time of the Babylonian Exile (587-539 BCE): there was an ongoing situation of hatred and hostility between them and the Jews.

"This mountain" to which the woman refers in the Gospel is Mount Gerizim, where the Samaritans had built a temple to rival the one in Jerusalem.

Eternal life really means fullness of life, beginning here and now, not after death.

DO

Fill a glass with water: consider how water gives life. The message of Jesus has a similar effect on the human spirit, if the person will accept it.

SAY

Lord, give me the living water, so that I may never get thirsty
(John 4:15).

