

Homily of Third Sunday of Lent, Year A, 2026

Exodus 17:3-7; Psalm 95:1-2, 6-9; Romans 5:1-2, 5-8; John 4:5-42

In the first reading, the Israelites thirsted for water as they journeyed in the desert. In their difficulty, they did not cry to God. Rather, they grumbled against Moses.

Sometimes, our life's journey can run out 'water' as it was for the Israelites in the desert. Do we behave like the Israelites, grumble against one another, blame one another, and fight one another; instead of coming together, reasoning together, and working together? Do we pray together for God's intervention, guidance, and direction? When the people grumbled, nothing happened. But when Moses cried to God in prayer, something happened. This event teaches us the power of prayer.

God directed Moses to strike the rock with the miracle staff in his hand. He did, and water flowed from the rock for the people. The solution was in Moses' hand, but he did not know it. The solution to our problem may be right before us. We need to always pray for God's divine guidance and direction.

Many times, God brings solutions through unexpected and unlikely means. May be, the expectation of the people was a rain fall or finding a cistern anywhere nearby for them to have some water. Rather, God made water flow from rock. Our God is a God of surprises.

St. Paul encourages us in the second reading that our hope in God does not disappoint; in that God pours out his love into our hearts through the Holy Spirit. Such outpouring is empowering and uplifting amid every difficult situation where the Holy Spirit is welcome. With such outpouring, we are never consumed by the hard times. With such outpouring, we look up to our faithful God rather than grumble. Such outpouring binds hearts together.

In the Gospel, during Jesus' time, most Jews, who traveled between Judea and Galilee, would take a longer route which bypassed Samaria to avoid the people there, "For Jews use nothing in common with Samaritans." But Jesus, intentionally, went through Samaria on his way to Galilee to show that he came for the Jews and also the Gentiles. Jesus, tired from his journey, sat down at the Jacob's well, resting and waiting for his apostles who went to the town to buy food.

Then, the Samaritan woman came to draw water. The woman was wounded in many ways. She had had five husbands and was at that moment cohabiting with a man. We do not know her past life with the five men, but we can conclude that it was not a pleasant one. One man is tough enough; how much more are five husbands and cohabiting with a man. That is six men. The Samaritan woman was very resilient!

From all indications, she was bearing the wounds of frustration, disappointment, isolation, and humiliation. She came to draw water alone, and at noon, at an hour when she would meet nobody. Usually, water was fetched in the morning and in the evening, hardly in the middle of the day. It was also strange, at that time, for a woman to go anywhere all alone, not in a company of other women. Although the woman came to draw water, but Jesus saw that she needed healing and salvation much more than ordinary water.

The Samaritan woman was healed, liberated, and transformed. Her deliverance had immediate effect. She was filled with the joy of salvation. She became a witness and an evangelizer. She left her jar, meaning that ordinary water was not what she needed. She hurried into the town and testified her experience to

her people. Many followed her to see Jesus and began to believe in him. At their invitation, Jesus stayed two days with them preaching to them. Jesus stayed with the Samaritans who were avoided by the Jews. The Samaritans said to the woman, "We no longer believe because of your word; for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is truly the savior of the world."

There are many people who are dried up like the Israelites in the desert or wounded like the Samaritan woman or discriminated against like the Samaritans. We are spiritually in union with them in our prayers as we celebrate this Eucharist. May we and those we are praying for encounter Jesus, the giver of the living water which wells up to eternal life, so that as Isaiah says, "With joy [we] will draw water from the wells of salvation" (Isaiah 12:3). As water flowed from the rock in the desert, may God's graces flow from this sanctuary (our spiritual rock) as we celebrate this Eucharist.

Isaiah 55:1 invites us, "All you who are thirsty, come to the waters ... without money and without cost." As we have come Mass, may he satisfy our thirst and fill our hunger with good things (Psalm 107:9). Psalm 34:18-21 assures us, "The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those whose spirit is crushed. Many are the troubles of the righteous, but the Lord delivers him from them all. He watches over all their bones; not one of them shall be broken." Psalm 147:3 says, "He heals the brokenhearted and binds their wounds." May he pour out his unfailing love upon us [through the Holy Spirit] as we place all our hope in him (Psalm 33:22). Amen.

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