

GOSPEL*John 4:5-15. 19-26. 39-42 (Shorter form)*

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. I see you are a prophet, sir. 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.'

Many Samaritans of that town had believed in him on the strength of the woman's testimony, 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.'

REFLECTION BY POPE BENEDICT XVI*24 February 2008*

This year, on this Third Sunday of Lent, the liturgy again presents one of the most beautiful and profound passages of the Bible: the dialogue between Jesus and the Samaritan woman (cf. Jn 4: 5-42). St Augustine, of whom I am speaking extensively in the Wednesday Catecheses, was justifiably fascinated by this narrative, and he made a memorable comment on it. It is impossible to give a brief explanation of the wealth of this Gospel passage. One must read and meditate on it personally, identifying oneself with that woman who, one day like so many other days, went to draw water from the well and found Jesus there, sitting next to it, "tired from the journey" in the midday heat. "Give me a drink", he said, leaving her very surprised: it was in fact completely out of the ordinary that a Jew would speak to a Samaritan woman, and all the more so to a stranger. But the woman's bewilderment was destined to increase. Jesus spoke of a "living water" able to quench her thirst and become in her "a spring of water welling up to eternal life"; in addition, he demonstrated that he knew her personal life; he revealed that the hour has come to adore the one true God in spirit and truth; and lastly, he entrusted her with something extremely rare: that he is the Messiah.

All this began from the real and notable experience of thirst. The theme of thirst runs throughout John's Gospel: from the meeting with the Samaritan woman to the great prophecy during the feast of Tabernacles (Jn 7: 37-38), even to the Cross, when Jesus, before he dies, said to fulfil the Scriptures: "I thirst" (Jn 19: 28). Christ's thirst is an entranceway to the mystery of God, who became thirsty to satisfy our thirst, just as he became poor to make us rich (cf. II Cor 8: 9). Yes, God thirsts for our faith and our love. As a good and merciful father, he wants our total, possible good, and this good is he himself. The Samaritan

continued over page ►

woman, on the other hand, represents the existential dissatisfaction of one who does not find what he seeks. She had "five husbands" and now she lives with another man; her going to and from the well to draw water expresses a repetitive and resigned life. However, everything changes for her that day, thanks to the conversation with the Lord Jesus, who upsets her to the point that she leaves her pitcher of water and runs to tell the villagers: "Come, see a man who told me all that I ever did. Can this be the Christ?" (Jn 4: 29).

Dear brothers and sisters, like the Samaritan woman, let us also open our hearts to listen trustingly to God's Word in order to encounter Jesus who reveals his love to us and tells us: "I who speak to you am he" (Jn 4: 26), the Messiah, your Saviour. May Mary, the first and most perfect disciple of the Word made flesh, obtain this gift for us.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

What stood out to you from the Gospel or Reflection/ Homily?



Head: What misunderstandings does the Samaritan woman have about Jesus at the start of the conversation, and how does her understanding change as she listens and keeps engaging with him?



Heart: Where do I recognise a deeper thirst in my own life — a restlessness or dissatisfaction that ordinary things never fully satisfy?



Hands: What is one habit, attachment, or way of coping that I might need to loosen so that I can make more space for Christ to meet me and refresh me?

PRAYER

Spend some time in prayer with one another:

1. Conscious of what has just been shared, members briefly name/ describe their prayer needs.
2. Intentionally call on the Holy Spirit to be present (e.g. "Come Holy Spirit, please be present as we pray")
3. Offer prayers of thanks and praise to God.
4. Pray for each others' prayer needs. Where appropriate, you may like to encourage the group to place a hand on the shoulder of the individual that you are currently praying for.
5. Conclude your prayer time with another prayer of praise, perhaps praying the 'Glory Be'.