



## March 27, 2011 The Third Sunday of Lent

*...Give me a drink—John 4:7*

Dear Friends;

The earthquake and tsunami in Japan reminds us of how fragile our infrastructure is in the face of nature. Even in an advanced, modern society, basic necessities like fresh drinking become difficult to obtain in the face of disaster. And we remember how precious they are.

Futurists tell us, in the not too distant future, wars will be fought not over oil but over drinkable water. In many places in the world, like parts of Africa, safe drinking water is already a major concern.

Water is life and represents life, refreshment and community. Life as we know would not exist without the presence of water—which is why we look for it as we search other planets for signs of life. We live in the Delta and we know many find refreshment and renewal each summer in the waters. We also know the dangers that water poses from flooding or drowning. Water brings us to community—don't we refer to "conversations around the water cooler." Water is also used to cleanse us and promote health. We use it to cleanse wounds to prevent infection.

In the bible, because of its critical importance, water came to symbolize birth, death, renewal, cleansing and community. We begin life in a watery womb and the author of Genesis imagines creation beginning in the waters of chaos. Noah was preserved and the world was cleansed in the flood. The people of Israel were born out of the water when they crossed the Red Sea on their way to the land of the promise—in the same sea Pharaoh's army meets destruction. God's people while in the desert will also have their thirst quenched with water from the rock that Moses strikes in the first reading for today.

In today's reading from the Gospel of John, Jesus has a thirst. His thirst is not just for a drink of water but to awaken faith and life in the Woman of Samaria. The site Jacob's well was where the Patriarch Jacob met the love of his life. And so the author suggests by this location that it is love, not legalism or moralism, which is operating in Jesus.

In their exchange Jesus' love is able to bridge the barriers of gender, race and religion. That love is also able to overcome the objections raised both by Jesus' disciples and the objections of the woman's town. Both Jesus and the woman discover something new. Jesus discovers and dares to speak of a faith that transcends the ancient religious enmities. The woman discovers someone who brings her wholeness and healing—a messiah and Lord—in whom her deepest thirsts are quenched. And in turn she brings others to the Living Water of refreshment and life.

This story is told by John as an instruction about the meaning of our Christian baptism. Jesus is the Living Water that gives life, refreshes and cleanses us. Baptism is like the office water cooler. Like Jesus and the woman of Samaria we meet because of thirst. And we find our deepest thirsts for meaning, life, renewal and loving relationships quenched by the Spirit of the living Jesus. And in turn we discover the joy of bringing others to the Water.

May God continue to cleanse and renew us this Lenten season and again lead us to the waters of rebirth.

Peace,

*Fr Ron*