

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.

PSALM Psalm 94 (95):1-2, 6-9

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 Jn 4:5-16, 19-26,39-42 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 there." >"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.

PROFESSION OF FAITH

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.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

As we receive the pledge of things yet hidden in heaven and are nourished while still on earth with Bread that comes from on high, We humbly entreat you, O Lord, that what is being brought about in us in mystery May come to true completion. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Sunday Message

THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT

THE WORD

Year A • 8 March 2026 • Colour: Violet • Psalter Week 3

The story of the meeting of Jesus and a woman at the well is one of the highlights of John's Gospel. More than any other Gospel, John emphasises the importance of personal encounters with Jesus.

For Jews, Samaria was a kind of 'no man's land' between the regions of Galilee and Judea. Samaria had at one time been the seat of the independent Jewish Kingdom of Israel. Captured by the Assyrians more than 700 years before the birth of Christ, it had been 'planted' with non-Jewish people who intermarried with remnants of the local Jewish population. Other Jews saw them as outsiders and as tainted. Samaritans returned the compliment and sometimes harassed Jewish pilgrims on their way to Jerusalem. It was territory best avoided. The Samaritans were proud of their ancient Jewish roots, however, including the well of the patriarch Jacob that is the scene of today's Gospel.

Tired from travelling and in need of a drink, Jesus stops at a well where he encounters a Samaritan woman with a colourful past who has come to draw water from it. Jesus does the unthinkable. He speaks to her. He is aware of her past but doesn't let it get in the way. He is aware, too, that she is a Samaritan. But he doesn't see her as different or unworthy or inferior. Instead, he sees the good in her.

He asks her to give him a drink. She replies, "How can you, a Jew, ask me, a Samaritan woman, for a drink?" She's astonished that he would speak to her, of all people.

Then they start to talk about religion, and Jesus reveals himself as the Messiah. Rather than dismiss his claim, the woman returns to her people to tell them about Jesus. She bears witness to Jesus. This outcast of a woman, this foreigner, this outsider, brings people to faith. She becomes a true disciple.

All because Jesus treated her with love and respect. Just like he treated everyone he encountered. ■

SAY

"Lord, help me to treat everyone as you would treat them. Fill me with your love."

PRAY

Today's Gospel is a story of how a woman and her townspeople come to faith. Thank God for the gift of faith you have received. Pray for a deepening of your faith.



THE GIFT OF FAITH

JOHN 4:5-42

REFLECT

As 1938 began, life was good for 11-year-old Robert Borger. His family owned an electrical goods shop in Vienna. He liked school, had many friends. Then disaster struck. Hitler marched into Austria, unifying the country with Germany. It was a catastrophe for Austria's Jews, and the Borger family was Jewish. Jews were assaulted, their businesses ransacked, their lives made intolerable.

Overnight, Robert's schoolmates shunned him. They wouldn't play with him, taunted him, chased him away. Imagine his horror at suddenly being terrorised by those he considered friends.

Desperate to get his son to safety, Robert's father placed an ad in *The Guardian* newspaper, which read: 'I seek a kind person who will educate my intelligent boy, aged 11, Viennese of good family.'

A wonderful Welsh couple responded to the ad and Robert eventually reached them in Wales. But he was never the same. He had experienced so much trauma, he died before his time, another victim of the Nazis.

That's what racism does, what hate produces. Hitler's racism murdered over 6 million Jews, gypsies and others, destroyed the lives of millions more, like Robert. And people let it happen. There would have been no holocaust if enough Germans had opposed Hitler, if they'd said no. But they remained silent, and so became complicit in genocide.

Three years ago, at world youth day in Portugal, Pope Francis spoke to half a million pilgrims from throughout the world. "Friends, I want to be clear with you," he said. "In the church, there is room for

everyone. Everyone. In the church, no one is left out or left over. There is room for everyone, just the way we are.

"Everyone, everyone, everyone," he repeated.

That message summed up Francis's papacy. Open church, open hearts. It's a message of inclusion our church needs to hear. It's a message of inclusion our world badly needs to hear.

We see what racism is doing in Gaza today, what racism is doing in so many countries, how hate is flooding the internet, dividing people rather than bringing them together.

Racism is a sin. It's never justified under any circumstances against any person or any group. So, what to do?

First, be actively unracist. It's not enough to oppose racism. We must actively oppose it, take a stand against it, wherever we encounter it - in person or online. When we see hate, we must call it out.

Second, try to stand in the other person's shoes. Imagine you were that person. How would you like to be treated?

Third, be welcoming. Go out of your way to make people feel at home. To be Christian is to welcome and include. It is the opposite of them and us. For Christians, there is no them and us - only everyone together, as Pope Francis told those young people.

Jesus didn't see the Samaritan woman as a foreigner to be avoided, victimised or denigrated. He treated her with profound respect. It's how we must treat everyone. ■

LEARN

Water is a central image of today's Gospel. It teaches us that Jesus is the living water that leads us to eternal life.

Christians make no distinctions between people

DO

Remember Jesus' words in the judgement scene in Matthew's Gospel: I was a stranger and you welcomed me. Think about your attitude to immigrants, to strangers. Will God be pleased with you on judgement day?