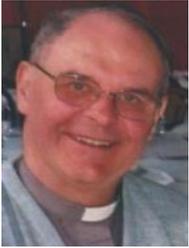


Readings: Isaiah 8: 23 – 9: 3, 1 Corinthians 1: 10 – 13 17, Matthew 4: 12 - 23



Fr Michael says:

The Living Water

We start three weeks of discovering the richness of Baptism. God's love for us is constant despite our sinfulness and turning away, as Exodus reminds us, through the gift of water to the people travelling in the desert. This love is affirmed even more by Paul's message to the Church of Rome that Christ died for us while we were still sinners. The climax comes when Jesus meets the Samaritan woman at the well. Paul's message is underlined by this loving encounter with a sinner.

Jesus is gentle with her; he waits to be invited into her life. He starts from a position of weakness, His need for water and draws her to ask for the "living water" His heart is open to her and this allows her to open up to Him! Relive that conversation. Jesus is respectful, he is not judging her and she knows that – she feels accepted and understood. It allowed her to trust and be open to Him, as she shares her sad and confused story. Jesus could see her struggles and thwarted love through the broken relationships that she had experienced – she wanted to be seen as a person, loved for herself and no longer an object!

Jesus meets us where we are, just like this woman and he says the same thing to us as to her: "If you only knew the gift God wants to give you." Our difficulty in admitting our poverty, weakness and sinfulness makes it hard for us to respond to this request. We need to accept this love and make it our own, for us to benefit fully from our acceptance of it, the deeper our need, the greater the love will become effective and bring about the profound change we need in our lives. Being loved gives us great courage and a surprising energy: It puts us in touch with our true nature and to do this is a wonderfully warm sense of home-coming.

There is a thirst in every human heart – each of us is like that Samaritan woman – we are thirsting for something, something that will satisfy all our longings. We often search in the wrong places, we draw water from several wells; the water of praise to quench our thirst for self-esteem; the water of success to quench our thirst for importance; the water of pleasure to quench our thirst for joy.... but we still get thirsty! Only God can give us water for which we are looking, He alone can cause a spring to well up inside us. The water from this spring will sustain us in our journey to the Promised Land of eternal life.



Fr Jean-Marie says:

Theme: Jesus Encounters the Samaritan woman.

My brothers and sisters in Christ, today third Sunday of Lent, we read the story of the encounter of Jesus with the Samaritan woman. Jews and Samaritans did not associate with one another because of their different social cultural background. The Samaritan woman was surprised to hear that Jesus could ask her to give him water to drink. Like her, very often we are not willing to listen to people who judge and criticize us or who look down on us and consider us like second class citizens. The people we can easily listen to and whom we can encounter from person to person are those who do not criticize us but respect us. In asking drinking water to a Samaritan, Jesus breaks the cultural barrier which separates the Jews and the Samaritans. He takes the first step to speak to the woman. Jesus gives us a good example to follow. During this time of lent, are there people we do not want to associate with? Like Jesus we are called to take the initiative and break the barrier between them and us. The Samaritan woman on her side is a model for us during this time of Lent. This woman had many broken relationships; she has had five husbands in her life. When she learned who Jesus was she believed in him and her life was changed. Jesus entered into a deep personal dialogue with her. He revealed himself to her as the giver of living, ever-running water, that is, the giver of new life to people. Jesus revealed himself to her as the messiah; she believed and she introduced him to other Samaritans who believed on the strength of her testimony that Jesus was indeed the saviour of the world. Her encounter and dialogue with Jesus gave the woman the desire to quench her thirst on the spring of the living water that Jesus offers. She was ready to change her confused life and live a new life in keeping with the Christian spirit. During this time of lent we are called to examine our lives and take this opportunity to make up for our broken relationships. Like her we are called to change our confused lives. Sometimes there are big sins that we have committed and that never go away out of our minds. Sometimes we think that those sins are unforgivable and that we'd better not go to confession because God will never forgive us. This is our human way of thinking. The conversation of the woman with Jesus gives us hope and the attitude of Jesus towards her is very consoling for us. Her past life did not hinder her from coming close to Christ. Without a note of condemnation Jesus accepted her, and coming to terms with everything she ever did wrong, she was released from her guilt. Let us pray today that we may all search to renew our past lives this Lent, that we may learn to live in the spirit of Jesus. Amen.