

THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT YEAR A

PRAYER OF THE DAY:

God, who knows all things,
you made us your children
in the waters of our baptism.
Keep us faithful to you
by obeying your Son, Jesus,
who lives with you,
forever and ever.

FOCUS OF THE READINGS:

Both readings focus on *water* as a sign of salvation. Wearied from their journey, the Israelites began to complain to Moses, "We are going to die of thirst." They had lost their confidence that God would supply their needs. They are called back to faith by the gift of water: "I will be there with you. . . Water will flow out for the people to drink."

Our Gospel is the well-known story of Jesus and the woman at the well. The complete reading (*John* 4:5-42) has many different themes running through it—from the initial call of Jesus, "Please give me some water," to the preaching ministry of the woman, "Many Samaritans believed in him because of her words." We have chosen to retain only the *living water* theme in our adaptation.

In the dialogue between Jesus and the woman, they speak first of water from a well. And as in our first reading, the gift of water is a call to faith. Jesus' promise of living water stirs initial faith, and he responds in self-revelation—"I am the Messiah."

FIRST READING: *Exodus 17:3-7*

This is a reading from the book of Exodus.

After the Israelites

had been out in the desert for a long time,
they became very thirsty.

They started complaining to Moses, saying,

"Why did you bring us away from Egypt?

We are going to die of thirst here.

And so will our children and all of our animals."

So Moses cried out to God,

"What am I going to do with these people? They are
ready to kill me!"

God said to Moses,

"Take some of the leaders of the people
and go to the rock of Horeb.

Take the rod that you used at the Nile River.

I will be there with you.

When you hit the rock,

water will flow out for the people to drink."

So Moses did just as God said.

[Then he named the place Massah,
which means in Hebrew,

"The children of Israel complained."

He also called it by another name, Meribah. That
word means, "Is God with us or not?"]

The Word of the Lord.

[] Reader may omit text that appears in brackets.

RESPONSE: *Psalms 36*

RESPONSE: 1st time: Leader; 2nd time: All

You are the light, the fountain of life.

VERSES: Leader

1. Your love is true and sets us free.
2. You give us light that lets us see.

All:

1. Your love is true and sets us free.
2. You give us light that lets us see.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION:

"I am the living water, you will have life in me.

I am the living water, you will have life in me."

After Gospel, repeat Acclamation

GOSPEL: John 4:5, 15, 19-26, 39-42

This is a reading from the Gospel of John.

One day, as Jesus was going through the country of Samaria, he stopped at a well called Jacob's well. He sat down to rest because he was tired from his journey. It was about noon. A woman from the town came to the well to get some water. Jesus said to her, "Please give me some water."

The woman said, "I am surprised that you are asking me for water. You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan."

She said this because, at that time, Jews and Samaritans were enemies and did not speak to each other. But Jesus said to her, "If you only knew the gift that God offers you and who is speaking to you, you would be asking me for water. And I would give you living water."

The woman said, "But this well is deep, and you don't have a bucket. Where will you get this living water?"

Jesus said, "Anyone who drinks the water from this well will be thirsty again. But anyone who drinks the water I give, will never be thirsty again. The water I give will be like a spring of flowing water inside of them. And this water will give them eternal life."

The woman said to Jesus, "Sir, give me this water that you are talking about so that I won't be thirsty again. Then I won't have to come to this well anymore to get water."

Jesus said to the woman, "Go and get your husband."

She said, "I'm not married."

Jesus said, "Yes, that's true. You have been married five times. So the man you are now living with is not really your husband."

The woman said to Jesus, "I can see that you are a prophet. I know the Messiah is coming, and, when he comes, he will explain everything to us."

Jesus said to the woman, "I am the Messiah."

The Gospel of the Lord.

REFLECTING ON THE READINGS WITH CHILDREN:

Help the children understand the setting of the reading—the dryness of the desert and the land of Palestine. Perhaps you could obtain posters or large pictures to help the children visualize a land almost barren of vegetation. For the Israelites wandering through the desert and living in Palestine, water was a natural sign of life, of salvation.

Ask the children to visualize the Gospel. (Whenever the Gospel presents a visual story, take time to help the children sense the scene.) What might Jesus look like? (Again, perhaps a picture would help.) Imagine Jesus, tired from walking in the hot sun and sitting down to rest. How did the woman collect her water? Ask:

- What did Jesus say to her?
- How did she answer?

Help the children recall the dialogue.

- What kind of water was the woman talking about?
- What did Jesus mean by "living water"?

Help the children to gradually see the relationship between Jesus' promise of living water and baptism. We were baptized in living water, and we will have eternal life. If you have catechumens in your parish, explain to the children that catechumens are people who have been preparing for a long time to be baptized. They have been learning more and more about Jesus, and, during this Lent, they are preparing in a special way to be baptized at Easter. We have already been baptized in water, and, during Lent, we too, are preparing to make new again our baptism at Easter, expressed in the renewal of baptismal promises.

Explain to the children that the holy water at the entrance of the church is a symbol of the water used for baptism. When we sign ourselves with it, we are reminding ourselves that we are baptized Christians.

"I am the Messiah." Jesus gives us living water.

