

Lent 3rd Sunday (A)

23<sup>rd</sup> March 2014

'Catechist–collaborator'

Ex 17: (at Massah in the desert ...)

Rom 5: *Christ died for us while we were still sinners*

Jn 4: 5–42: *Sir, give me some of that water ...*

Today's long passage from St John's Gospel, ch. 4, is the first of three long Gospel passages for the middle Sundays of Lent this year. Each of the three brings out the theme of conversion to Christ that is so important in Lent. There is much to be gained from a close reading of this wonderful exchange between Our Lord and the Samaritan woman. So much about forgiveness of sins — Our Lord's gentle but insistent persuasion; and the need for the "water of life" that comes from Christ, that we may truly live. But I want to focus briefly on just the last aspect of the event. *"Many Samaritans of that town had believed in [Jesus] on the strength of the woman's testimony when she said, 'He told me all I have ever done' ... He stayed for two days and when He spoke to them, many more came to believe."* The effect of the woman's testimony — her lived experience of the Lord, her welcome from Him and her forgiveness from Him, that she shared with others of her town — brought many more to conversion. This should remind us strongly that it is by word of mouth that most evangelization occurs. It is by what we say to each other, and how we practise what we preach, that brings

others to Christ. This woman merely spoke of how her heart had been opened to receive forgiveness and grace from Jesus. We must speak, each of us, more openly and willingly about our faith — as St Peter says in one of his letters, *"always have your answer ready for people who ask you the reason for the hope that you all have. But give it with courtesy and respect and with a clear conscience"* (1Pet 3:15–16). The Lord Jesus chose to work through collaborators, not just the apostles, but others too, to bring the Good News to more and more people. I would like to link this event with the 'parish project' of our 'Growing in Faith' campaign. Because, in effect, there is nothing more valuable than to be able to *grow in faith* through the testimony and work of another. This is why a catechist working here at St Augustine's would be so valuable to us all: speaking, teaching, befriending, engaging, testifying ... in the context of Catholic faith. I would want this new employed person in our parish to be able to bring many new families and individuals to a livelier faith; to do what the Samaritan woman did in the Gospel: to go out and speak to many others, and bring them alive in faith simply through what she said. In this way, our fundraising campaign can indeed do what it is meant to do, i.e. to provide an actual 'growing in faith.'