

Lent 3rd Sunday (A)

19<sup>th</sup> February 2017

'Samaritan woman: sins & conversion'

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 ...*

On these 3 middle Sundays of Lent, we have some very long passages from the Gospel of St John. We're going to hear each week the whole of these dialogues, to hear exactly, and fully, what the Lord has to say; and I'll preach for half the usual time. Each Sunday, we will draw out elements that help us examine our consciences and make a good confession as Easter draws nearer. So, as we hear of Jesus's encounter with this woman, what comes to the fore?

1. First, His stopping to talk to her, both as a Samaritan and as a woman. The Gospel-writer comments that this in itself gave surprise. Would *we* ever be guilty of making sexist or racist comments; pre-judging others on basis of race or gender? Anything that we could do with owning up to Jesus about?
2. Then there is the fact of His asking for a simple cup of water. Have we ever been neglectful of anyone, neighbour or stranger, in need of a simple bit of hospitality or kindness? Anything that we need to bring to Jesus for His forgiveness?
3. And what about the worship of God? Jesus and the woman have a discussion about how and where God is worshipped.

We know that God is honoured in Christ most perfectly in the Holy Mass. Are there any times we have missed Sunday Mass (unless ...) — which is a grave sin — and which we must bring to Jesus to seek reconciliation with Him?

4. The Samaritan woman recognizes Jesus truly as holy when he asks her about her marriage(s). She admits that it has not at all been straightforward, and senses in His questioning not a threat, but the divine offer of healing and reconciliation. It's exactly this matter that she communicates to her friends: "Come and see a man who has told me everything I ever did; I wonder if He is the Christ?" Do we too, any of us, need forgiveness and loving words of our Saviour to resolve and heal situations in our marriages?
5. Finally: the question of spreading the Gospel. The Samaritan woman goes straight back to tell the townspeople of Jesus. Are *we* finding ways to spread the Gospel; are we definitely taking all the opportunities to make known to those around us the blessings of faith in the Lord? Or is this too something we might need to reflect on and bring to Confession?

The encounter of Jesus with this woman brought her from sin to faith. Challenging her life, yet His conversation with her was life-giving, and helped her know that without condemnation that she could have life in Him.