Today’s three scripture readings are about the journey of faith each one of us takes – it’s unique for each one of us. The last reading, the story of the Samaritan woman at the well, reports her journey of faith. Hers peaks in the course of a conversation. That’s something we do much less of these days. We tend to talk at each other more; we hear the other side, but we don’t truly listen. Whereas in conversations, people actively listen to each other, and they advance to a clearer understanding of something.

Well Jesus is a master conversationalist. He isn’t just talking at the Samaritan woman at the well in today’s Gospel. He’s having a conversation with her, two people opening up to each other, and it results in a life-giving transformation for her. Jesus guides her in their conversation to a clearer understanding of who He is, and the vastness of God’s Divine Mercy.

First he asks her for a drink, and then He promises her a drink that will satisfy her deepest thirst: for love and being understood. Jesus gets her to admit that her thirst led her to the wrong wells. She’s tried to slake her thirst for love and understanding through four marriages, and her fifth so-called marriage is really just “shacking up.”

Her thirst has led her down dead-end streets. She’s so disreputable she’s forced to come to the well at mid-day, the hottest time in the desert, because she’s not welcome among the other women who come in the morning.

Then Jesus brings up in the conversation the Good News that God wants everyone to come to the unrestricted waters of Divine Mercy. The Good News is that God doesn’t reject sinners; His loving mercy goes out to everyone, even to the people who we think don’t deserve it. This living water of faith in God, trust in God, gives refreshment that lasts.

Hearing that Good News, the Samaritan woman comes to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Christ, the Savior of the world, and she wants everyone in her village to know it, and she tells ‘em.

Jesus used water in this conversation as a metaphor for our thirst for God, something everyone experiences, even if they say they’re atheists – because we’re built with a God-sized hole in us, born with a yearning for the greatest love, God’s love. But too often, when we experience our emptiness, instead of turning to God to satisfy our thirst, we turn to other things, myself included. So many of us look for living water in all the wrong places.

Our deep emotional hurts gnaw at us, and instead of turning to Christ and dealing with them head-on, we often don’t cope with them; instead, we numb ourselves, turning to sin and addictions to refresh us. We take detours, seeking to find satisfaction in excesses: shopping, gambling, our work, our looks, porn, alcohol, drugs, and so on. Or just as bad, we look for other persons to be our Savior. But we’ll never find healing or long-term satisfaction at the wrong wells.

Indulging in these excesses shape us, or should I say, misshape us. They turn us into more selfish people, instead of the life-giving, loving, sharing people God designed us to be.

Jesus is God’s gift, the “living water” for all who thirst for God. To all who drink him in, he will bring peace of mind and heart – soul-satisfaction. That deeper emptiness in us will calm down.

God thirsts for us sinners even more than we do for Him. God thirsts for our faith, our trust, our love. So it’s mutual. Let’s spend some more time with our Lord every day. That relationship, His living water, will lead us to eternal life – and others, too, when we share this Good News with them, like the Samaritan woman did.

Third Sunday of Lent, March 7, 2021

Fr. John Ozella, Pastor

Christ the King