

*Readings*

Ex 17:3-7

Ps 95:1-2, 6-7, 8-9

Rom 5:1-2, 5-8

Jn 4:5-42

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For the next three weeks of our journey through Lent, we will be invited to reflect on three of the most important spiritual symbols of our faith, namely **water**, **light**, and **life**. Our companions along the way will be **the woman at the well**, **the man born blind**, and **Lazarus**. Each of these people epitomizes a certain aspect of human need. Each also exhibits a fundamental disposition towards God which every believer is called to emulate. By sharing in their encounters with Jesus, each of us will be invited to identify within ourselves those same basic human needs and find remedy for them in God.

Our reflection this morning begins with the story of Jesus and the Samaritan woman. She meets Jesus at Jacob's well near the town of Shechem. As a result of that encounter, she makes a decision and chooses not only to follow Jesus but also to tell other people about him.

Today's gospel recounts for us the story of a conversion. The Samaritan woman's conversion doesn't happen all at once but in stages. From her first interaction with Jesus, during which she seriously misunderstands what Jesus is talking about; to the beginnings within her of faith; to full commitment to follow Jesus; and, finally, to telling other people about him. Each stage in her journey of faith involves a decision followed by a choice, at first made internally, then expressed externally.

The Samaritan woman has all the water she needs to quench her thirst. yet, she thirsts for something more in her life. She's searching for that intangible *more* that will satisfy her dryness and give meaning to her life. She is like us in so many ways; for aren't many of us searching for the who or the what that will help give real meaning to our lives?

What the gospel proclaims to us today is that Jesus Christ is that “something more.” It is Jesus Christ who quenches our deepest, driest thirst. But for Jesus to give meaning to our ultimate longings in life, we have to make a decision in our hearts to follow him. That internal decision has to be given expression externally in the concrete choices we make in our daily lives. All of us grow into faith in Jesus in stages, just as the Samaritan woman did. Each stage involves a decision to continue searching and seeking for God in our lives.

Our gospel announces that Jesus Christ is the living water that springs up within us and satisfies our otherwise insatiable human need – our need for God.

St. Augustine sums up our desire for God when he writes in his *Confessions*: “You have made us for yourself, O God, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you” This famous quote could also be paraphrased in terms of today’s gospel: “You have made us for yourself, O God, and our hearts are thirsting, and our thirst will not be satisfied until we drink from you, the source of living water.” Amen.