

March 12, 2023
Cycle A – 3rd Sunday of Lent

Exodus 17:3-7

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

Romans 5:1-2, 5-8

John 4:5-42

Notes from Bishop Peter

THEME: JESUS PROMISES US LIVING WATER, THE HOLY SPIRIT

1. Many of you have witnessed a baptism. When I preside, I ask everyone to be quiet as I pour the water over the candidate's head so they can hear the words, "I baptize you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit," and the water flow into the font.
2. What happens at this moment? The Holy Spirit gently enters the hearts of the newly baptized, bringing the Father and the Son. Thus, we can adore God present in them and, of course, in us.
3. What an awesome moment! The Holy Spirit fills the whole universe and yet comes to dwell in us. That is what we heard in that beautiful reading from the Letter to the Romans: "The love of God has been poured into your hearts by the Holy Spirit who has been given to us."
 - a. What does this mean? The Holy Spirit is Jesus' Spirit moving us to live like him so we can become persons capable of true love because God is love. Even to the point of loving our enemies and praying for those who persecute us.
 - The Holy Spirit is the living water to which Jesus refers in the Gospel story. Living water flows as opposed to stagnant water.
 - This living water is the source (again, a reference to water) of all our good actions because the Spirit helps us drag ourselves out of the swamp of our selfishness to become men and women for others like Jesus and Mary.
 - b. Jesus leads the woman (a poor, simple soul who has suffered so much) into an ever deepening relationship with him and the knowledge of who he is. She refers to him as: sir, prophet, Messiah, Savior of the world. Jesus leads us as well into that ever-deepening relationship with him thanks to the Holy Spirit dynamically present in us.

4. What happens when we are left on our own or when we ignore the Spirit's power to help us grow in our humanity?
 - a. Hitler, Putin and other ego-centered persons who put others down (White Supremacists, racists), who don't see how their actions are harming others. Coaches who berate their players, parents who don't care about their children's wishes and who push them to excel, hoping for prestige for themselves...

5. What about people who are truly moved by the Holy Spirit? They are parents who like yourselves deprive yourselves of certain pleasures for your children's benefit; parents who really listen to them, helping them to develop their own talents so they can become independent. Coaches and teachers who want their players and students to become more fully alive. In that context, Eunice Kennedy Shriver who created the Special Olympics...
 - a. Conversion stories like that of John Newton, an Anglican clergyman and poet involved in the slave trade. He had a profound conversion experience, denounced that nefarious practice and composed the words of that unforgettable hymn, "Amazing Grace..."
 - b. Mother Teresa who left a secure teaching post to go out onto the streets of Calcutta and serve the poorest of the poor.
 - c. Father and Saint Damien De Veuster who dedicated his life to the lepers on Moloka'i in Hawai'i.
 - d. Those who took climate change seriously decades ago as they faced scorn and ridicule. Now they are heroes as more and more people become aware of the effects of this most serious problem.
 - e. Those who advocated for reductions and elimination of nuclear weapons years ago, including Ronald Reagan. They continue to inspire us as we become aware of the threat posed by these weapons...

6. All these examples draw us back beyond ourselves to the Holy Spirit, the source of true love and courage. May Jesus through his Eucharist continue to send his Holy Spirit into us and into our world so that people, moved by true love, can produce little by little a world befitting the great dignity of every woman and every man.

Amen.