

# *Our Lady of Lourdes*

Third Sunday of Lent

March 6, 2010

Readings:

Exodus 17:3-7

Romans 5:1-2, 5-8

John 4:5-42

We all know the story, almost by heart. She was out in the noonday heat because she couldn't very well show her face at the well in the morning, when the 'respectable' women were there to gather water. She was, in the eyes of her fellow villagers, and how shall I put this tactfully, a woman you wouldn't want your son to bring home. In addition, Jews absolutely hated the Samaritans—considering them to be half-pagan heretics and religious infidels. Jews who were traveling, would rather go around Samaria, even though it took much longer, than to step foot in the land of people they wouldn't even spit on.

And, here we have Jesus actually talking with her—a woman who probably considers herself pretty self-sufficient. After their initial words, Jesus' love finally gets through to her and she opens up her heart to Him. The story begins by her offering him no respect. She doesn't refer to him by any title of courtesy for a stranger. It's not long, before she refers to him as sir. As the dialogue continues, she considers him to be a prophet. And at the end of the conversation, she comes to understand that he is the messiah.

Thirsty for the gifts of 'living water', she welcomes Jesus, not only into that part of her life, where formal visitors are received and then sent off on their way, but, to the contrary, this woman allowed Jesus access to the deepest part of her heart, where most of us allow no one, sometimes not even ourselves, to enter. The more she allowed him in, the more she began to understand who he was and what he meant for her. This self-sufficient woman found that she needed to know him, to know him personally, for her life to change.

We are people, who, by and large, consider ourselves pretty self-sufficient. Her experience is our own. When we were baptized, we, too, were washed with Jesus' living water. At every Easter vigil, we're washed again and forgiven and transformed, just as the woman at the well was.

Unfortunately, however, some of us continue to doubt that such a radical transformation in us is possible and we go through Lent in a way that hopes for change but often doubts its possibility.

Things are given up for this period. For some, an attempt at changes in behavior. Giving something up, is meant to leave room for Christ to enter. Sacrificing of things or behaviors is meant to remind us of the need to let Christ into our lives in a more enriching way. Lent is, and should be for all of us, a life-altering season. All Jesus asks of us is a cupful of faith. Trust in Him and he'll show us exactly what he wants of us this Lent and in the days to follow.

In this season, when we have the death of Christ as a backdrop, we are asked not to give up hope. Not to give up or despair that we can't change ourselves no matter how often we may have tried. We are called to let Jesus help us to grow and change where we are. To ask Jesus to give us a trusting heart—a heart that only He can enter to its depths. We are called to let Jesus transform us. To let Jesus give us a new mind—a mind filled with openness to what He wants.

The conversation with the Samaritan woman only lasted a few minutes. A very few brief minutes. But her willingness to even have the conversation was life changing. Just the willingness to have the conversation, to speak and to listen, can create. Can bring about the same change for us and for what rests in our hearts.