21 Homily for the Third Sunday of the Lenten Season Year A

19 March 2017

Ex 17:3-7; Rom 5:1-2, 5-8; Jn 4:5-42

How many times did you drink water yesterday. Even if you try to trace the number of times, it will be pretty difficult to think of an exact number of times because drinking water is so impulsive and it comes to us naturally. Water is primary source for man’s existence. A human can go for more than three weeks without food but certainly not without water. Without water it is a matter of a few days before a person dies due to the loss of fluid in his or her body. So today we see a Samaritan woman approaches a well to satisfy such basic human need. She goes to the famous and old village well known as Jacob’s well to fetch some water. But very interestingly, she leaves the well without the water jars. That leaves a big question in us. What really happened to her? Drawing water from a well is not a common phenomenon that we see in the western society today as we have running water the moment we turn a tap on. I have drawn water as a teenager and it is not an easy task. To fill a pot of water it takes at least three to four buckets of water. So you never leave behind the pot or the jar that you filled with so much effort.

On the other hand, water in Israel was of two categories. The water people collected during the winter rains into cisterns to be used during the dry season. But this water had the risk of becoming stale and contaminated. The second type of water was the water from the spring-fed limited wells around the land and due to its purity and pristine nature; it was given the name as living water. The Samaritan woman, in approaching the village spring-fed well and encountering Jesus at the well, has approached nothing but the eternal well itself in the person of Jesus Christ and has drunk to her heart’s desire the living water welling up from that eternal life. By having a friendly conversation with her, Jesus allows her to drink deeply from his eternal water. Ultimately she doesn’t thirst anymore and so she doesn’t need water anymore. Then, why should she take back the water jar? Jesus has quenched her thirst once and for ever. She will never thirst again and that is what happens to any person who drinks the water welling up from Jesus. All our thirsts will be satisfied forever. This is the gift of God Jesus speaks about. For he says to the woman: “If you knew the gift of God, you yourself would have asked me and I would have given you living water.”

What is this gift of living water? We thirst for all sorts of things. We thirst for success, fashion and beauty, power, control, money, comfortable life style, pride, status, titles, love and acceptance, companionship, justice and honesty. Some of these thirsts are good and the human heart yearns for them. I’d like to ask you to take few minutes to reflect this week when you go home and make a list of things both material and immaterial that can’t satisfy you. Like we drink water when we are thirsty, we invest a lot of time and energy to satisfy all these thirsts. Then like water, after sometime we become thirsty for more and more; thirsty for more control, more money, more status, for more success. So our thirsts never end. So like water they fill our longing temporarily.

But with the water with which Jesus quenches our thirst is different. How? Jesus tells in the gospel today when one drinks this water, it will turn into a spring in that person welling up to eternal life. His word draws us up to himself as we truly are, with our imperfections and flaws. That word doesn’t put a standard before us to adhere to, no conditions or strings attached, doesn’t expect anything in return. That word doesn’t judge us. That word wins our hearts with his selfless love.

Therefore, Jesus satisfies all our deep seated thirsts and desires: thirst for perfect acceptance, thirst for perfect success, thirst for perfect companionship, thirst for perfect faithfulness; thirst for perfect knowledge and wisdom, thirst for our material needs, thirst for perfect honesty and truthfulness, and the thirst for perfect all-embracing selfless love. Do I see my thirst for God and my following of Christ as something which is accidental to my life, or is it something that I value as being fundamental to my existence? When Jesus groaned the words hanging on the cross: “I thirst”, it is the same thirst he has today for you and me. That thirst waits to draw me to him and quench all my thirsts because He is the living water of eternal life.