

3rd Sunday of Lent, Xavier Church, Ex. 17, 3-7; Ps. 95, 1-2. 6-9; Rom. 5, 1-2. 5-8; Jn. 4, 5-42.

Dear brothers and sisters, today's Gospel begins with an ordinary encounter, between Jesus and a woman from Samaria. Jesus is tired and asks her for a drink. Then a conversation begins that soon takes on great depth. Jesus tells her: 'if you knew who it is that is saying to you, 'give Me a drink', you would have asked Him and He would have given you living water.'

The woman does not know what He means by this, by living water. Therefore Jesus explains to her: 'the water I give will become in you a spring of water gushing up to eternal life. Whoever drinks of this water will never thirst again.'

Of course the woman wants to drink of that water and I think, we all do. But the conversation continues. Jesus knows the woman's life history. He says she has spoken the truth that her current husband is not really her husband. Jesus wants to hear the truth from us, and indeed He is the truth.

Jesus' conversation with the woman goes even further. The woman talks to Jesus about her ancestors who went to pray on the mountain. She also knows that for the Jews, Jerusalem is the place, where one goes to pray. But Jesus' answer to the woman goes beyond a certain place. Jesus tells her that our heavenly Father is looking for people who worship Him in spirit and truth. This way of praying is not tied to any particular place or time.

The apostle Paul explains to us how we should understand Jesus' words. He says that God's love has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us. Christ died for us so that the Spirit, the Holy Spirit could enter our hearts. Through the Spirit, we receive the power to do what God asks of us. This can be, for example, faithfulness in prayer, faithfulness in our work, faithfulness in our relationships.

When Jesus talks about the spring of living water gushing up within us to eternal life, He means this spiritual power, which has accompanied us from the moment we received Baptism and was confirmed when we did Confirmation. It is a force that is not only individual, but is also present in the community, which comes together to celebrate the Eucharist.

The Israelites received from the Lord water from the rock, enabling them to drink in the desert. Thus, the Lord demonstrated his faithfulness, by not abandoning them after first delivering them from the slavery of Egypt. But surely this gesture of the Lord, this water is different from the living water Jesus is talking about.

Moses strikes the rock with his staff and water flows out, in itself a great miracle and a help in times of need, but it is water that quenches thirst only for a moment. Moses calls this place Massa and Meribah. Both words mean quarrelling or hassle in Hebrew. Both place names should remind the Israelites not to harden their hearts, as expressed in the well-known Psalm 95.

The living water Jesus speaks of, comes from the inward source of the Spirit. From this water you will not thirst in eternity. When the Samaritan woman hears of this, she goes to the city and tells every one of her encounter. The people then leave the city to go to Jesus. Thus, people who were not Jewish, came to believe in the one God. So it can happen to us too, when we tell others about Jesus and about his Word that can be heard in the Church every day, every week. Then it can happen that the people who hear what we tell recognise it, sometimes as something they remember from past experiences, sometimes as something they have never heard before. Especially with young people, this can be the case. Let us work and pray for this, that the Word of Jesus reaches those people, because the fields are ripe for harvest. Amen.