



Homily given by
His Eminence
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THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT « A »
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“Deeply rooted in Christ”

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

You may have heard of a conversation that took place one day in a forest between a leaf in a tree and a root from that same tree. The beautiful green leaf is high up in the tree, balancing in the wind and has a great view of the scenery. The root, as you can imagine, is pretty discrete, way down, mostly underground. The proud leaf engages in conversation with the root and says : “Oh, hi there ! What are you doing way down there ? I am a root. I feed the whole tree. I send the sap and minerals up to the branches and to the leaves so that you will have life and look good. Oh, that must be so boring. You down there and me way up here...” And the root responds : “Well, what do you say we continue this conversation when autumn comes around ?”

Dear brothers and sisters, the Lenten Season reminds us every year that to survive we need to be deeply rooted in Christ, in His Gospel. How else can we survive the autumns of our lives, the storms, difficulties, trials and tribulations ? We need to be grounded where it is solid. And that is where our faith leads us ; to Jesus Christ.

After the passing of the Red Sea, the People of Israel, guided by Moses, begin the crossing of the desert, on their way to the Promised Land. But a small glitch suddenly arises during their travels. Water becomes scarce. And how can you go on in the desert without water ? That is what

we just heard in the first reading : *“In the wilderness the people thirsted for water ; and the people complained against Moses and said, ‘Why did you bring us out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and livestock with thirst ?’ So Moses cried out to the Lord, ‘What shall I do with this people ? They are almost ready to stone me. The Lord said to Moses, ‘Go on ahead of the people, take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile, and go. I will be standing there in front of you on the rock at Horeb. Strike the rock, and water will come out of it, so that the people may drink”*.

Moses did just as the Lord ordered and the People of Israel witnessed another manifestation of God’s presence in their midst. Their thirst was quenched. The water that comes out of the rock, in response to Moses’s intercession, already announces the waters of salvation that flows from the transpierced side of the One who is the true Rock, the One who truly quenches our thirst, Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world.

This very long journey in the desert announces that there is only one who can satisfy our needs, quench our thirsts, the Lord, the one who frees His People from slavery in Egypt. The water He gives is no longer just water taken from a rock or a well but the water of the Holy Spirit who opens our lives to eternal life.

Speaking of a well, that brings us to the Gospel. We see Jesus sitting at Jacob’s well and He is thirsty. It is midday, the hottest time of day. *“A Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, ‘Give me a drink’.*” We usually think of the Lord giving out water, counsel, healing, forgiveness. But here, He is the one who is thirsty. What does the Lord thirst for ? Not just water from that well. He thirsts to see that woman experience truth and love, the Love that comes from God and the Truth that opens up to freedom and abundant life.

And so Jesus engages in conversation with the Samaritan woman. In an respectful way, He leads her to see that the 5 husbands she had in the past and the sixth one she is with now, who is not her husband, have not filled her heart with the love she yearns for. Jesus is the true Spouse, the only one capable of fulfilling her thirst, her need to be loved.

In Jesus Christ, the hour of salvation has arrived. *“Jesus said to her, ‘Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but the one who drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water gushing up to eternal life.”*

What Good News the Gospel is for all of us, for all of humanity ! We continue in so many ways, to wander in the desert, searching for happiness, for love, for abundant life, sometimes complaining like the People of Israel. And what is sad, but unfortunately often true, is that we search in places where we will never find what we are longing for.

Since God the Father sent his only Son into the world, since Jesus Christ became man, since his death and resurrection, we no longer need to search on mountain tops or knock on rocks to quench our thirsts. We look to Jesus and in Him we encounter God’s saving and abundant love. As we become His disciples, we experience New Life. As we walk with the Church, the community of disciples of Jesus Christ, we grow in holiness, and we learn what true and lasting happiness is all about.

Jesus reaches out to a Samaritan woman to bring her to abundant life. Today, once again, Jesus does the same with us, inviting us to come to Him, for He is the One who forgives, restores and leads us to Life.

Dear friends that is also what we are called to do in our daily life. Like Jesus, like the Apostles, we are sent out to today's world to sit at the well next to all of those who thirst for love, truth, happiness, peace and hope.

Saint Paul nous rappelle dans la deuxième lecture que l'espérance n'est pas une conquête humaine, mais le fruit de l'Esprit Saint. « *Et l'espérance ne trompe pas, puisque l'amour de Dieu a été répandu dans nos cœurs par l'Esprit Saint qui nous a été donné* ».

Nous qui avons été baptisés avons déjà reçu ce merveilleux cadeau. Nous avons été plongés dans l'amour de Dieu, réconciliés en Jésus Christ, et remplis de l'Esprit Saint. N'oublions jamais ce que nous sommes, les enfants bien-aimés de Dieu, et ce à quoi nous sommes appelés, rien de moins que la sainteté.

[Saint Paul reminds us in the second reading that this hope is not a human conquest, it is a fruit of the Holy Spirit, "*And hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us*".

Those of us who are baptized have already received this amazing gift. We were immersed in God's Love, reconciled in Jesus Christ and filled with the Holy Spirit. Let us never forget who we are, God's beloved children and what we are called to, nothing less than holiness !]

As we continue our pilgrimage in this earthly life, and sometimes experience thirst and hunger as we journey through the deserts of life, let us never forget that Jesus is waiting for us, at the well. Like the Samaritan woman, he wants to lead us to truth and love. We still have a few weeks in this Lenten Season. Will you consider taking more time with the Lord to listen to Him, to listen to His Word, so your life can be deeply rooted in abundant life ? Will you consider walking with Him and let Him lead you to places that you cannot reach by yourself ?

Let us thank God for our Church, for our parish communities, that help us walk together, supporting each other, praying for each other, and encouraging all those we meet. When autumn comes around and shakes up our tree and we lose our leaves ; but we fear not, because we are rooted in Jesus Christ, the One who feeds our hearts and souls and brings us to New Life. That is the Paschal Mystery we receive today at the altar. May Jesus Christ be for all of us the source of new and eternal life, today and always.