

Reading for the Third Sunday of Lent

March 8th 2026

First reading

Exodus 17:3-7

‘Give us water to drink.’

In those days: The people thirsted for water, and the people grumbled against Moses and said, ‘Why did you bring us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our livestock with thirst?’ So Moses cried to the Lord, ‘What shall I do with this people? They are almost ready to stone me.’ And the Lord said to Moses, ‘Pass on before the people, taking with you some of the elders of Israel, and take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile, and go. Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock at Horeb, and you shall strike the rock, and water shall come out of it, and the people will drink.’ And Moses did so, in the sight of the elders of Israel. And he called the name of the place Massah and Meribah, because of the quarrelling of the people of Israel, and because they tested the Lord by saying, ‘Is the Lord among us or not?’

Responsorial Psalm

Ps 95(94):1-2. 6-7b. 7c-9. R7c, 8a

O that today you would listen to his voice!

‘Harden not your hearts.’

Come, let us ring out our joy to the Lord;

hail the rock who saves us.

Let us come into his presence, giving thanks;

let us hail him with a song of praise.

O come; let us bow and bend low.

Let us kneel before the Lord who made us,

for he is our God, and we the people,

the people of his pasture, the flock of his hand.

O that today you would listen to his voice!

‘Harden not your hearts as at Meribah,

as on that day at Massah in the desert

when your forebears put me to the test;

when they tried me, though they saw my work.’

Second reading

Romans 5:1-2, 5-8

Love has been poured into our hearts through the Spirit who has been given to us.

Brothers and Sisters: Since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God, and hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will scarcely die for a righteous person — though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die — but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Gospel Acclamation

Cf. John 4:42, 15

Glory to you, O Christ, you are the Word of God.
Lord, you are indeed the Saviour of the world;
give me living water, so that I will not be thirsty.
Glory to you, O Christ, you are the Word of God.

Gospel

John 4:5-42

‘A spring of water welling up to eternal life.’

At that time: Jesus came to a town of Samaria called Sychar, near the field that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. Jacob’s well was there; so Jesus, wearied as he was from his journey, was sitting beside the well. It was about the sixth hour.

A woman from Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, ‘Give me a drink.’ (For his disciples had gone away into the city to buy food.) The Samaritan woman said to him, ‘How is it that you, a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a woman of Samaria?’ (For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.) Jesus answered her, ‘If you knew the gift of God, and 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 said to him, ‘Sir, you have nothing to draw water with, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water? Are you greater than our father Jacob? He gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did his sons and his livestock.’ Jesus said to her, ‘Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.’ The woman said to him, ‘Sir, give me this water, so that I will not be thirsty or have to come here to draw water.’

Jesus said to her, ‘Go, call your husband, and come here.’ The woman answered him, ‘I have no husband.’ Jesus said to her, ‘You are right in saying, “I have no husband”; for you have had five husbands, and the one you now have is not your husband. What you have said is true.’ The woman said to him, ‘Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet. Our fathers worshipped on this mountain, but you say that in Jerusalem is the place where people ought to worship.’ Jesus said to her, ‘Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.’ The woman said to him, ‘I know that Messiah is coming — he who is called Christ. When he comes, he will tell us all things.’ Jesus said to her, ‘I who speak to you am he.’

Just then his disciples came back. They marvelled that he was talking with a woman, but no one said, ‘What do you seek?’ or, ‘Why are you talking with her?’ So the woman left her water jar and went away into town and said to the people, ‘Come, see a man who told me all that I ever did. Can this be the Christ?’ They went out of the town and were coming to him.

Meanwhile the disciples were urging him, saying, ‘Rabbi, eat.’ But he said to them, ‘I have food to eat that you do not know about.’ So the disciples said to one another, ‘Has anyone brought him something to eat?’ Jesus said to them, ‘My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work. Do you not say, “There are yet four months, then comes the harvest”? Look, I tell you, lift up your eyes, and see that the fields are white for harvest. Already the one who reaps is receiving wages and gathering fruit for eternal life, so that sower and reaper may rejoice together. For here the saying holds true, “One sows and another reaps.” I sent you to reap that for which you did not labour. Others have laboured, and you have entered into their labour.’

Many Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman’s testimony, ‘He told me all that I ever did.’ So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them, and he stayed there two days. And many more believed because of his word. They said to the woman, ‘It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is indeed the Saviour of the world.’

Short reflection on the reading for today

The thirsting soul: Our need to drink regularly is obvious; without water we would quickly die. Not so easily recognized is the soul's thirst for meaning, for vision and purpose in life. We can be fully preoccupied with the surface of things, and quite neglect our spirit's obscure longing for eternal life. Like the Israelites, we worry constantly about physical needs, but are often unmindful of God who supplies them. Today, Jesus offers us the refreshing water of eternal life, a power of faith and union-with-God which is our deepest need, and can satisfy the thirst of our soul. How the desert blossoms, when water is brought to it. (We may cite dramatic examples of successful irrigation in Israel, Egypt, California.) The same miracle of growth can take place in the parched soul, if God lets his Spirit flow over me. All the ravages of doubt, fear and sin will yield to the new life of grace.

A sacramental washing: Already in baptism, the sacramental washing with water by the Christian Church was a first contact with the grace of Christ. We were given a good start, planted well in the garden of God, with room to put down roots, and draw vital nourishment from the living spring of the Saviour. Yet, we need continuing help, to keep the spirit alive and pleasing to God as life goes on. Like the desert-wandering Jews, we suffer from thirst; we grow weary in confronting problems and temptations. Jesus guarantees us the "living water" we need. His own Spirit is always at hand, as a force of encouragement and fidelity.

"To dwell in the house of the Lord": Our deep desire remains, something not confined to Christians but shared by the mystic tradition in other religions: namely, the yearning to come into the presence of God, and be welcomed by God. All of us are called by him to drink of that "fountain of water, springing up to everlasting life." In times of widespread religious scepticism, the hope of heaven as eternal life after death is often cast in doubt as wishful thinking. But we cling to this hope, relying on the word of Jesus. For Paul and the early Christians, the hope of eternal life breathed joy into all their efforts and sacrifices. Fidelity until death seemed well worthwhile, "for the weight of glory that will be revealed in us." Our part to play is turning aside from sin, and trying to live by the gospel. God can be absolutely relied on to fulfil his promise, and will in time satisfy the deep thirst of our spirit.