

Third Sunday of Lent (A): Friendship with the Lord is Lasting Like a Living Water

Exodus 17:3-7; Psalm 95:1-2,6-7,8-9; Romans 5:1-2,5-8; John 4:5-42

Dear CCST family and friends,

The proclamation of the Responsorial Psalm sets the needful disposition to receive what is offered to us this weekend by our Lord: "If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts" (Ps 95:8). As if telling us, if you don't hear his voice, you better ask yourself why not.

Today, a life-giving friendship is offered to us by Jesus to renew our lives. It is likened to water that quenches the thirst for meaning and life-giving relationships. Remember, during the washing of his disciples' feet, Jesus said, "I no longer call you slaves; I call you friends." He chose them as his friends because he told them what he heard from the Heavenly Father. Jesus defined this friendship by saying: "There is no greater love than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends" (John 15:13). His friendship goes beyond the human standard; he chooses and wills to die for his friends because of his love. His cross is the icon of friendship.

In the gospel, Jesus initiated an encounter with the Samaritan woman at a particular time, place, and circumstance. He was waiting at the well. Often, God comes or visits where we are and patiently waits for us. He visits to comfort us when we are in pain and rebuke us when our earthly happiness leads us away from him.

The Samaritan woman used to pitch water at the well at an unusual time, during the midday, the hottest time of the day when no one else ventured to come. But Jesus was waiting for her and started the conversation; he asked her for water, which surprised her. Because she's a Samaritan, an outcast to her community, unloved and condemned for her way of life, she must have thought, if you only knew me, you won't be talking to me. Of course, she didn't yet know the Lord. He was a stranger to her. But the Lord understood what was going on in her life. There was a sense of respect in this encounter. As their conversation progressed, the woman, who appeared comfortable talking with Jesus, openly told him she was living with someone, not her husband. She didn't feel judged nor condemned when Jesus said she had five husbands; the man she lived with was not her husband. Jesus came to save!

Little did she know that the ordinary water at the well, which she thought was all she needed to quench her thirst, was used by Jesus. Her thirst was met with Jesus' thirst leading her thirst for natural water to the supernatural, from earthly to the heavenly. She was astonished to hear that Jesus could provide her with water that would last forever. Jesus told her, "whoever drinks the water I shall give will never thirst; the water I shall give will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life" (Jn. 4:14). She had always wanted to be spared from being despised and humiliated at the well by her neighbors. She was like a child begging for it without comprehending what was being offered. But Jesus only needed her recognition of her need and openness to his offer.

She, who had been asked for a drink, was the one who received it. The love of God has been poured out into her heart through the Holy Spirit, which filled up her empty life, and restored her self-worth and dignity (cf. Rom 5:5). She realized that her problem was not the lack of water but an inner thirst that no earthly water could satisfy. She abandoned her water jar; she left it behind. It was no longer important because she finally found the man who gave her a life-giving friendship. Because of Jesus, she was no longer hiding from her neighbors. Instead became the messenger of good news!

Her story could also be ours! She was identified only as a Samaritan woman, so her story could also be about a Filipino woman or man, Portuguese, Hawaiian, Vietnamese, Chinese, Chuukese, Japanese, Korean, Samoan, and Tongan in Hawai'i. It is a story of thirst and one's encounter with the Lord.

More often than not, we all thirst for meaning and a life-giving relationship. It would be worthwhile to bring these to Jesus. Jesus thirsts for our "thirsts." When your relationship suffers vexation because of unfaithfulness, dishonesty, and toxic attitude, it would be good to pray and beg for patience and humility from God. When the comfort you expect with the things of this world causes more wanting and emptiness than fulfillment, it would be good to engage in soul-searching to find true joy. When you thought that seeking comfort from the "secret well," the well of vices or sensual pleasures offered by the world or internet, could satisfy your thirst yet slowly destroy your self-worth and family relationship; it would be best to surrender to the Lord and seek intervention.

Remember, our Lord Jesus is present in all this; he speaks through all this. But like a water jug, these thirsts can't be filled with the overflowing water of God's saving grace if it is covered. The "thirst" is ultimately our faith in God. Sometimes, we are like the Israelites on their journey to the promised land. They were impatient and became stiff-necked people. God answered their grumbling and thirst for water; he commanded Moses to strike the rock with his staff, and the water flowed from out. Some of us, if not all, are like rocks, stubborn and closed, that need to be struck to open up, which we don't like but is often necessary.

Let us tell Jesus our thirsts and willingly surrender to his renewing love, primarily through the Sacrament of Penance. Please let us offer this prayer: "Jesus, I beg you, pour unto me your living water. You are the only one who can quench my thirst, and I surrender them to you. Jesus, I trust in you. Amen."

The Holy Eucharist, the hour of Jesus' glory, is the wellspring of his life-giving water. Jesus, our eternal friend and savior, speaks to us first through the priest, the Word of God, Eucharistic prayers, and through the words of the institution narrative, "this my Body, this is my Blood." He does more than give himself. He enters an intimate friendship with us to fill our empty lives, unburden our souls, set us free, and restore our dignity. He gives us new life, but at the same time, he lets us know that there is something great that we can do for him.

There is something great we can do for Jesus! Jesus chooses you to be his friend. Let us share the fruits of his life-giving friendship! The best starting point is the person close to you.

God bless you!

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