

We gather again on the 3rd Sunday of Lent celebrating our theme Lent 2018: Take 40!

Our specific theme for today is Renewed in the Spirit

The church chose the wrong first reading for today's mass! : It should not be the one of Moses supplying water for the Israelites in the desert Wrong reading. It should have been from the story of Jacob, at Jacob's well! The story of Jacob's well fits better.

In Genesis chapter 29, Jacob is a young adult and ready to get married. His family is living in the midst of a foreign people, the Canaanites. His parents do not want him to marry someone from a foreign tribe. So they send Jacob back to his uncle, Laban, to find a wife among the members of his own tribe.

Jacob comes to a well which in Jesus' time is known as Jacob's well. (Point to the well.) When he arrives he finds shepherds are at the well waiting to give water to their sheep. They are waiting because the opening of the well is covered by a large bolder and they need many men to remove it. While they are waiting for others to arrive, Jacob asks if anyone knows a man named Laban, who is his uncle. They say, "Yes, we do; in fact, his daughter, Rachel, is just now coming to water her sheep."

He sees her from a distance.

As Rachel approached the well, Jacob immediately got up and BY HIMSELF, lifts up the stone and waters her sheep. Then, here let me quote this passage to you from Genesis 29;

“Jacob kissed her and burst into tears!” Love at first sight!

Rachel takes Jacob to meet her family.

Rachel’s father asks what Jacob what he wants. “Rachel was shapely and beautiful, and Jacob had fallen in love with Rachel.” So Jacob says to his uncle “ I will work for you for seven years to win your younger daughter, Rachel”. They all agree. But after seven years, Laban fools poor Jacob and marries off his older daughter to him. Jacob is crushed. He has married the wrong daughter!

Jacob agrees to work for another 7 years and then takes Rachel as his wife.

We are dealing with a love story here!

(Go over to the well)

And Jesus goes into a Samaritan town to Jacob's well. My sisters and brothers, we are dealing with a love story here!

Jesus is madly in love with her. He is thirsting for her.

He is wanting to embrace this woman with God's love.

The woman very hesitant to receive his love. Remember, she has been married five times; five very unsuccessful attempts at love; so much does she not trust love relationships that she is not even married to the man she is now living with.

Jesus says, "the water, (the love), I which I wish to share with you is like a well within you leaping up to eternal life!"

(PAUSE)

In the midst of this wonderful love story. I would like to step aside speak about marriage and divorce in the Catholic Church. We know that Pope Francis and the bishops are struggling with care for those who are divorced. With 50% of marriages in the United States ending up in divorce, how do we respond to people with both the

compassion of Christ and the truth of the Bible? Isn't that what Jesus is attempting to do with this woman at the well?

Here is the situation we face today. First of all, we know that true Christian marriage lasts forever. You cannot get divorced. The Bible says so. Yet, Christian marriage presumes two things: 1) that people give consent (they say: "I do") and 2) that the marriage is consummated (which usually means physical union). Without consent and consummation of the union there is no marriage.

In a recent article by a leading church canon lawyer, he asks the question: does consummating a Christian marriage mean the simple physical union of man and woman (like the five marriages the woman at the well had been in) or does consummation ... watch this... does consummation mean experiencing the love of God in the unitive love of man and woman? (tell story of couple active in marriage encounter and their 50 years of marriage where they most powerfully experience the risen Lord, not at the Eucharist, but in their relationship with one another.)

Jesus said to this woman who had been married five times and living with a man not now her husband "The water I shall give will become

in you a spring of water welling up to eternal life". Jesus invites her into a new way of loving, a new way of communion, into God's way of loving.

How many people in our world have not experienced God's love?

How many people have not consummated their marriages by experiencing God's presence in their relationship with one another?

And how do we know if we have experienced the love of God? See

what the woman does after receiving the embrace of Jesus? Well, we get our cue from the woman at the well. She cannot hold in the Good

News. She goes out and announces the good news with the whole

world! She is renewed in Spirit. He told me everything I had ever

done! He has revealed to me a new intimacy that my soul was searching for!

My brothers and sisters, TAKE 40. Take these forty days of Lent.

Have a good talk with the Lord.

Renew and deepen your love relationship.

Let the Spirit well up within you, overflowing to the fullness of life.