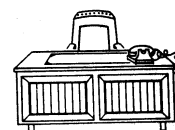


3rd Sunday of Advent

December 14 & 15, 2019



From the Desk of
Fr. Romanus

Dear Parishioners,

Sunday Gospel Reflection:

This Sunday's gospel is the familiar story of Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman – the woman at the well. The encounter took place after Jesus left the region of Galilee in the north and was heading to Jerusalem in the south. Samaria, a Gentile city, happened to be located midway between the north and the south. It was not uncommon for Jewish travelers going to Jerusalem for pilgrimages to bypass Samaria through an alternative route to avoid contact with Gentiles. Jesus' decision to pass through this Gentile city may have been designed as a teaching moment. That decision set the context for the fascinating exchange between Jesus and this Samaritan woman at Jacob's well.

That this conversation even took place was simply amazing given that Jews and Gentiles went to great lengths to avoid each other. Even more surprising is the fact that the conversation was between a Jewish man and a Gentile woman. However, it is not surprising that Jesus initiated the conversation by asking for a drink after a long and tiring journey. We know that part of his mission as Messiah was to break down barriers. He was not going to pass up this opportunity to teach us about the importance of reaching out to those we consider different. As Christians, we should strive to break down those artificial barriers based on gender, race, religion, age, culture, education, politics, economic status, et cetera.

After overcoming her shock that a Jewish man asked her for a drink, the woman was drawn to an understanding of God's graciousness. Jesus told her that if she knew the gift of God and who was asking her for a drink, she would be the one asking for the living water. It is a reminder that God often comes to us in disguise - as a homeless person, a destitute, or someone in dire need. How we respond to God in those situations could make the difference between salvation and condemnation. Fortunately, the Samaritan woman overcame her initial cultural resistance and embraced utter dependence on God. She turned the table on Jesus by asking him to give her the water of eternal life.

Realizing that Jesus was a Jewish prophet, she courageously engaged him in theological debate about the proper place to worship God. Whereas her ancestors worshipped God on "this mountain," that is, Mt. Gerizim, she accused the Jews of insisting that God should be worshipped in Jerusalem. Jesus points to a time in the future when true worshippers would worship God neither on Mt. Gerizim nor in Jerusalem, but in spirit and truth. It is another way of saying that what matters most is not where we worship God, but the spirit with which we worship. This strikes me as a call to sincerity and genuineness in our practice of faith. Are we genuine Christians or pretenders?

In the course of their theological debate, the woman expressed hope in the coming Messiah, the Christ, who "will tell us everything." Then, Jesus revealed himself as the expected Messiah by stating "I am he, the one speaking with you." The woman's response is remarkable. She left her water jar by the well and hurried back to the town to announce the good news that she had found the Messiah. Now that she had found the water of life, she no longer needed the temporary water of Jacob's well. At first, the Samaritans believed in Christ on account of the woman's testimony. However, after welcoming and listening to him, many came to believe not on account of her testimony, but on account of their personal experience of the Messiah.

Have a great week!

Fr. Romanus