

HOMILY for 3rd SUNDAY of LENT – Year A

This Sunday's readings tell us about the power of spiritual things and the value of Heaven. Reflecting on that message, I'm reminded of this cute story that I'd like to share with you.

A husband & his wife were driving home one night & ran into a bridge abutment; & both sadly were killed. They arrived in Heaven & found it was a beautiful golf course with a lovely clubhouse & fabulous greens. It was free & only for them, & the husband said, "Sweet heart, you want to play a round?"

She said, "Sure." They teed off on the first hole, & she asked, "What's wrong?"

He said, "You know, if it hadn't been for your stupid oat bran, we could have been here years ago!"

Anyhow, last Sunday, Jesus invited three of His disciples to go up the mountain of God & let them have a glimpse of Heaven. After that wonderful experience, they all wanted to stay up there forever. That's exactly how the husband in the cute story above felt as we just heard. In fact, he wished to be in Heaven as soon as possible. But, he was not the only one who can see the benefits of Heaven. Today's Gospel shares with us how people of a different faith & tradition like the Samaritan woman would want to have a share in those benefits. Here's how that woman tells us about her desire: "...Jesus replied: 'Everyone who drinks this water [from the well] will be thirsty again. But, whoever drinks the water I give him will never be thirsty; no, the water I give shall become a fountain within him, leaping up to provide eternal life. The [Samaritan] woman said to him, 'Give me this water, sir, so that I won't grow thirsty & have to keep coming here to draw water.'" Evidently, this Samaritan woman who was from a different faith & tradition met Jesus at a local well where she & her whole town got water for their daily needs & survival. Jesus happened to see her at the well on a hot day & let her know about secret source of spiritual water that can refresh & sustain her forever. She will not have to come back to that well & get her refreshment every day. That is why she insisted on Jesus to give her that special water. Surely we all want that special refreshment from Jesus too.

Unfortunately, most people do not search for that secret source of spiritual water. Instead, they continue to hang on to the earthly things & old habits. But, that keeps them stuck in the vicious cycle of their daily struggles & makes them desire for mundane things even more. Today's First Reading shares with us how earthly things & old habits can imprison us as following, "In their thirst for water, the people grumbled against Moses saying, 'Why did you ever make us leave Egypt? Was it just to have us die here of thirst with our children & our livestock?' So, Moses cried out to the Lord, 'What shall I do with this people? A little more & they will stone me!'" Apparently the people of God were freed from the yoke of slavery in Egypt & enjoying a new life of freedom. Unfortunately, they were stuck in God-forsaken desert & regretting about their old lifestyle in Egypt. They wished to be back in Egypt/the land of slavery to enjoy the pot of meat & the bucket of well water. They complained to Moses & gave him all kinds of griefs & troubles. They did not realize that they were hoping for their old life of slavery & vicious cycle of earthly things. But, those would not last & would only keep them desire for more mundane things day after day. They would continue to be hungry & thirsty & grumble against God if they could not get all the mundane things that they wanted. On the other hand, spiritual water & spiritual food would refresh & sustain her indefinitely.

As you can see, mundane things have limited power & cannot satisfy our human desires. On the other hand, spiritual things have infinite power & can take care of our daily needs. That is why the Samaritan woman asked Jesus to give her that spiritual water & help quench her thirst. But, Jesus could do more than just providing her the spiritual nourishment. He could tell her everything about her life. Here is what Jesus said to the Samaritan woman: "You are right in saying, 'I do not have a husband.' For you have had five husbands, & the one you have now is not your husband. What you have said is true." So, Jesus was able to reveal to her about her past & current life. She was surprised to meet someone who would know everything about her personal life like Jesus did. She had to admit to her hometown people about Him as following, "He told me everything I have done." They all realized Jesus' power & benefits & invited Him to stay with them. That is what we need to acknowledge about the spiritual power & find ways to invite Jesus to stay with us like the people of the Samaritan town did. That way we can make good use of the spiritual power & maximize its benefits in our lives.

My dear brothers & sisters, the COVID time has made us to be quarantined & helped us realize how important the spiritual power is in our life to keep us strong & alive. All the acts of hate & senseless violence that have happened around us lately have got us feel uneasy & anxious. But, they have woke us up to see the incredible value of the spiritual power in our society & personal life. Without the spiritual guidance, the whole world will become chaotic & we will turn against one another instead of treating our neighbors with care & compassion. Today's readings remind us the importance of spiritual power & call us to welcome it into our lives. If we know how to maximize its presence in our daily life, we will benefit a lot from it; & it will show us the way to the eternal life, especially helping us appreciate our Lord's passion & the Easter miracle. Otherwise, we will be stuck here with the mundane things & their limited power as we have heard in today's readings.