

Images of water help us 'meet' Christ

FAUCET-EQUIPPED Christians can only imagine a home without plumbing, where you pick up your water at the store and bring home not what your van can carry, but what you can carry. Those limitations remain quite real today in economically depressed parts of the world. Stripped of machinery, crowds and faucets, people who walk to a well encounter body, earth, air, water, and jug. Not surprisingly, and more easily than we do at the kitchen sink, they also meet Christ.

The woman of Samaria who meets Jesus at the well unleashes a stream of images which nourish the Church at Lent. She sets an example for catechumen and Christian: she asks for living water, and she tells her community about Christ. She is seeker; she is apostle.

Fr. Paul Turner



the
Good News
*God's word in
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JESUS PROVIDES the perfect foil for her. When they converse, we learn about this woman's sly, inquisitive character, but more importantly we learn about Jesus.

John's main interest (4:5-42) is to answer the question, "Who is Jesus?"

- Jesus is greater than Jacob. John sets the scene at Jacob's well. Jacob, a patriarch who received the promised covenant, had purchased some property (Genesis 33:19) and bequeathed it to his son Joseph who was interred there (Joshua 24:32). The well in that area was called "Jacob's." Offering a better source of water, Jesus claimed superiority to the legacy of Jacob.

- Jesus offers living water. Not only is Jesus better than Jacob, but his water is too. Those who drink the wisdom of Christ will never grow thirsty.

- Jesus is a prophet. Jesus reveals details about the woman she had not previously shared with him. She recognizes him as a prophet.

- Jesus will replace the temple. A Samaritan tradition puts Jacob at Mt. Gerizim for his famous dream about the ladder (Gen 28:10-22). The woman recalls the conflict with Jews over where worship should take place — at the temple revered by Jews, or on Mt. Gerizim as maintained by the Samaritans. Jesus says the exterior site doesn't matter as much as the interior one. We must worship in spirit and truth. Jesus will replace the disputed holy sites.

- Jesus is the bridegroom. The woman has had five husbands. Jacob's well served as a site for marriage. The unnamed woman may represent all of Samaria who had so often worshipped falsely. Now at the well, Samaria is invited to find its new bridegroom in Jesus.

- Jesus is the savior of the world. The woman assigns this title to Jesus at the end of this story. This single occurrence of the title in all of John's Gospel foreshadows the later popularity of the phrase. By revealing himself to a Samaritan (an enemy of the Jews), Jesus indicates he will save the world.

- Jesus is the Messiah. The woman says she knows the Messiah is coming, and Jesus responds, "I am he."

- Jesus is God. Literally, Jesus says "I am," and the reader fills in the blanks — not only is Jesus the "he" who is the Messiah, but he is the "I am," the name of God (Yahweh) revealed to Moses (Exodus 3:14).

SINCE THE EARLY days of the Church, this Gospel has been proclaimed at the scrutinies of catechumens. We continue the tradition today. Catechumens who thirst for the living waters of Baptism find a model in the woman of Samaria who discovered who Jesus is in conversing with him. We all join her too, that we may rise with Jesus through Easter's holy water. □

Father Paul Turner is pastor of St. John Francis Regis Parish, Kansas City.

Daily Scripture Readings

Second Sunday of Lent Sunday, March 3

Genesis 12:1-4a
Psalms 33:4-5, 18-20, 22
2 Timothy 1:8b-10
Matthew 17:1-9

Monday, March 4

Daniel 9:4b-10
Psalms 79:8-9, 11-13
Luke 6:36-38

Tuesday, March 5

Isaiah 1:10, 16-20
Psalms 50:8-9, 16-17, 21, 23
Matthew 23:1-12

Wednesday, March 6

Jeremiah 18:18-20
Psalms 31:5-6, 14-16
Matthew 20:17-28

Thursday, March 7

Jeremiah 17:5-10
Psalms 1:1-4, 6
Luke 16:19-31

Friday, March 8

Genesis 37:3-4, 12-13a, 17b-28
Psalms 105:16-21
Matthew 21:33-43, 45-46

Saturday, March 9

Micah 7:14-15, 18-20
Psalms 103:1-4, 9-12
Luke 15:1-3, 11-32

Third Sunday of Lent Sunday, March 10

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

