

**Homily for March 19, 2006  
Third Sunday of Lent Cycle A**

**By Father Charles Bowes**

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

## *Together with the elect, we thirst for the awakening of the living waters of our baptism.*

When was the last time you were really thirsty? What are your “interior thirsts” at this moment – the things that you desire, the things you bring to God in prayer and petition at this Eucharist – better health, improved family situation, money to pay the bills?

Jesus is thirsty for water, but he is even thirstier for the woman’s faith. Jesus questions the woman, gives her a kind of examination (a scrutiny even as the elect today have a scrutiny) to get at the deeper issues. The desire for water from Jacob’s well is raised to thirst for the “living water.”

Today we celebrate the first scrutiny with the elect. That’s what we call those who are going to be baptized at Easter: “the elect, the ones chosen for the sacraments of Easter.” Who does the choosing? God does through the circumstances of life. The elect themselves choose this faith. And then we, the community of faith, choose these folks, recognize them as people of faith and then welcome them.

And part of our welcoming and recognition is the celebration of the scrutinies on the third, fourth and fifth weekends of Lent. “The scrutinies are meant to uncover, then heal all that is weak, defective or sinful,

and then strengthen all that is upright, strong and good” in the hearts of the elect, but also in our own hearts as well.

Each week, our elect for the sacraments of Easter reflect on these Sunday readings in the light of their lives and then compose our litany of petitions – naming the unloving choices and the struggles associated with those readings. This week, the elect name for us all of our thirsts, our deserts, our arid wastes, the parched dimensions of our souls – drawn to do so by our Gospel of the Woman at the Well, John chapter four.

We pray that (like the woman at the well) the thirst we share with our elect for the sacraments of Easter may be quenched, that together we may move beyond our past and become more astute disciples. Our ancestors thirsted for water in the desert, but did so grumbling, without faith in our loving God, complaining about the way in which God quenched their thirst. Jesus wants to quench our thirst, to “pour out God’s love” even as he pours out his lifeblood for us.

If we realize that gift, we will leave our jar at the well, leave behind our small concerns and thirst with Jesus for the faith of today’s world. We will go and tell others of the gift we have received. As we pray for the elect: “That they may share with their friends and neighbors the wonder of their own meeting with Christ” (Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults).

In John chapter 4, the woman says of Jesus: "He told me everything I ever did." No he didn't. He didn't tell her everything...but what he told her touched her; what he said was acceptance of what mattered most...acceptance of her shame...and for her that was everything - that was living water, a fountain in her arid waste. Does God do any less for us...ever refuse to touch those who search or struggle? Are not those to be baptized the courageous ones for allowing us to touch them and so awaken in us our need to open and receive what God already and always wishes to give? Our elect for the Easter sacraments have named our common needs, our sins and struggles. Will not this holy food nourish us for a journey in which we are ultimately never alone?

Let us pray: Deepen our thirst for you, God of abundant life; increase our longing. May we speak to those we meet from a heart and soul swept up in your love. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

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