

**Third Sunday of Lent (A)
March 11, 2007
By Father Charles Bowes**

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

We celebrate the life-giving water that is the risen Christ.

"This bubbler has the best water in the state," my father would proudly proclaim as he lifted me so my lips could taste the special water bubbling up from the street fountain.

We were on our way home to Jacksonville, Florida, from the "big city" of Atlanta, Georgia, and traditionally would stop at this small-town intersection as we made our turn for home. Although the fountain's porcelain bowl was stained brown from the water's iron content, we anticipated the rich, cool water this outdoor bubbler would provide on those summer drives home, long before bottled water or air-conditioned cars became staples.

"Bubbler" is defined as a "drinking fountain from which a stream of water bubbles upward." Its unique character comes from the "bubble" of water created from the stream shooting out of its nozzle. Water was a precious commodity in Jesus' day, and in John Chapter 4, no bubbler is available for the thirsty visitors at the fountain where the Samaritan woman meets Jesus. Rather, a pail must be lowered to retrieve the treasured substance. Yet, as precious as water is on a hot day in that arid region, Jesus claims it will not satisfy. "You will be thirsty again," he tells the woman, but the water he gives will become a living fountain, "springing up to provide eternal life." The woman does not

understand that Jesus is offering himself as the bubbler, as the one who would bubble up in her life, enabling her to overflow with generosity and mercy.

As I was nourished not so much from the bubbler but from the presence of my parents and the sharing of a "special moment" with them, so too was the woman at the well - nourished by the intimacy that bubbled up from Jesus and overflowed unto her. Those who drank of that living water would be so nourished that they themselves would become fountains quenching many thirsts.

Like the Samaritan woman at the well, our elect for the sacraments of Easter are thirsting for water of eternal life and for the celebration of the sacrament of Confirmation. They are willing to question, to examine the desert and arid areas of their lives and so name them for us all. And thus Christ can scrutinize us all through his church. In the healing rite we share this weekend, we and, at the 9:00 a.m. Mass, our elect, take one more step on our path to purification and enlightenment...and thereby together become sent out to tell others, by word and example, "Come and see the Messiah! Come drink of the living water and be reborn!" For this we give praise.

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that is the risen Christ.**