

March 23, 2014

3rd Sunday of Lent - Cycle A

Fr. Larry Richards

Good morning. Today we hear about thirst, a lot of thirsting. We start in the Old Testament and how they were thirsty. Moses, or God if you will, through Moses gave them water from a rock. And then we hear about a God in the Gospel today it talks about a God who thirsts and asks for us for something to drink. And again this is not the only time, especially during Lent, when we hear about a God who thirsts on the cross. We hear of Jesus who cries out, "I thirst." And so we focus today on a God who thirsts for us. We ask the true question do I thirst for Him?

Let's begin with the God who thirsts for us. From all eternity again to even begin to realize that God has always existed. It just blows your mind when you try to think of no beginning. If you've ever tried to do it, try right now, go ahead and try and think of no beginning. Your mind will go pffttt! It will expel it. It cannot handle that. It is something that is beyond comprehension that something had no beginning. Now that something is who we called God. And this God was never alone sitting there thinking I am lonely. What am I going to do? The God of the universe has always been a unity of Trinity, a God of love, who constantly gives of Himself.

And this God of love brings forth out of love, us. And as He creates us and makes us, He gives us this earth and He lets us walk here and be here and produced here, He longs for us. He thirsts for us, for the people. And then He saves us and He gives us Moses and He speaks to Abraham first, then the prophets. And then He gives us His son. Because after we sinned, of course we separated ourselves and this God, if you will, how can we talk about a God who thirst well have no idea, except for that He wanted us to be with Him, He thirsts for us. It isn't the thirst of water; He is a thirst of love. The God of love thirsts for us in love if you will. That somehow in Christ Jesus, when He took on humanity, that He thirsts for our love.

And so when He reaches out to all of the people, He became one of us. And He goes and meets a woman and the woman was Samaritan. We all know by definition, Jews did not talk to women in public. You know you could talk to your wife. But you were not allowed to talk, there are still some Orthodox Jews today that they won't shake a woman's hand, they won't do anything else, because of that they wanted to make and keep everything separate. They worship separately. They would do everything. It was totally different from what we do today. And so here is Jesus breaking the barrier. He said no that is one of my daughters. And He starts talking to a woman. And the second thing was she was a Samaritan. The Jews would rather spit on a Samaritan at that time than talk to them. And not only does He talk to her and reach out to her, He asks her, He wants to share with her from her bucket. And He wants to drink with her. And she said, huh? You want to drink from the same bucket as I do? Of a woman? Of a Samaritan?

And this is a God, who comes and becomes one with us. Where we are. He meets us when everybody else pushes us away and everybody else says, you know, this is the way things are

supposed to be. He goes beyond that in love. Because He thirsts for her love. And the same reality is we all need to come, she didn't even know she was thirsty until He brought it up. And then what was she thirsty for? If anybody was thirsty for love it was this woman. Because when He said, "Go get your husband." and she say, "I don't have a husband." "You are right. You have had five and the one you have now is not your husband either." Talk about someone who is empty, someone who needed love, someone who is thirsting for more, someone who could not find that in any thing on this earth. She went through six men and not one of them satisfied her thirst and now she meets Jesus, who promises to satisfy her thirst and to let her thirst be satisfied forever.

And again as we have talked about millions of time here in the deepest need in everyone's heart is to be loved. Everyone's heart has the same need, that we would be loved. And so that is the thirst that He wants to satisfy in this woman and this is the thirst He wants to satisfy in us. Isn't it interesting the way He satisfies the thirst, or He begins to satisfy that thirst is by calling to mind her sin but not in a judgmental way. Because the problem is, again most people when they are dealing with God and that they look at their sin and they think ok look at this. As we talked about this last week or when we were talking about it this past week at the St. Joseph novena is we look at our sin and stay focused on our sin. So the first thing Jesus does is say, "You have had five husbands." She says, "Huh?" The way she goes and proclaims Him to all the other Samaritans is, "Come and meet the Man who told me everything I have ever done." He knew her in her sinfulness.

More than anything I think that when I focus on losing Father Peterson, who was my spiritual director for 30 years, as I was thinking just this past week, someone said, Did you get a new spiritual director yet?" I said, "No." And they were saying, "Well what is happening?" And I said, "Well one of the reality is nobody knew me on the whole earth, nobody, like Pete. And the reality was because he knew me, he heard my confessions for 30 years. He knew the worst part of me. And yet never once, never once did he ever judge me, he kicked me in the butt couple of times, but that is a different reality. But he always loved. It was that love that gave me the courage to keep getting up and going on.

And see that is the love of God. When He looks at us and tell us our sinfulness or He is calling us to tell our sinfulness at Lent when we go to confession, it is when we bring all of this garbage, all of these things inside of us that we hate, all of these things that keep us focused on ourselves, all of these things that make us think we are unlovable, all of these things, and He says, "Yes I know. I was right there when you did it you know. I have never stopped loving you." When we finally bring all of these things to a God of love and He says I know, I was there. Right there. His acceptance of us in our misery, in our sinfulness, is that which gives us life. It is that which changes us. That is why she can go and proclaim to all of those Samaritans, "Come, you have to know this person that told me everything I ever did." And what is said there, if you will, "He didn't judge me. He didn't judge me." And the reality that you can say about Jesus here if He had a true ministry, if you will, of presence. That he was just with this woman. When everybody else

wouldn't. You don't talk to women. You don't talk to Samaritans. He sat there with her. And entered into relationship with her. He wants to do the same thing with you and I.

Yesterday I was in Phoenix and it was 85° and sunny. But we won't go there. There were 2000 men and one of the people that spoke with me was Sister Regina Maria. She is one of the Carmelites from down outside of LA. I have done retreat for them down there. And when you see these sisters, or you go down there, it is like going back to the movie, "Going My Way." Do you remember that? It is the most wonderful place. They have 100 some sisters there. Full habits, not partial habits. I mean the full habits. I mean it like this. You can always see this much of their face. Unbelievable. Even in the 85° sun. They were there, her and another sister. She used to be head of all of the traditional religious orders in the United States. So I had dinner with her a couple of years ago when I was there so it was a great joy. So I said, "Sister, who would ever expect that you and I are speaking at a men's conference together?" You know here is this... I called her the anti-Father Larry. Because as I am sitting up there saying, "You have to pray every day, if you don't pray every day you might as well just enjoy hell..." The Bishop was sitting there like oh dear. And I was the first speaker. "You better do this... Sick of the excuses... Gentleman it is time..." Well, that is my style.

And then Sister got up after me and she talked to the people, truly the anti-father Larry. The most gentle, wonderful, glorious woman. She had all of us men right there in the palm of her hand. She talked about the reality of the father. Because what we were talking about and what we showed exactly, is when men and women are who they are, we complement each other completely. It is when we try to be what the other person is that, problems and conflicts start to a rise. So here is me, as a man, doing my thing and there was Sister as a woman, doing her thing. And I was saying right before I even talked, I said, "Sister what I love about being with you Sisters is that you bring me completeness. Because you are the opposite of me. And when we come together we truly form one body and we truly can minister."

One of the things she was talking about was with her father. And you know them losing their mother and different things that one of the biggest things her father ever did was just be with her. A ministry of presence. And so what has to happen is the way relationships grow is by being present. And so God, in case you have been wondering, is always present to you and I. Right? There isn't a moment in your life, He is closer to you the end your breath. Every time you inhale He must exhale, every time you exhale He must inhale. He keeps us alive by giving us mouth-to-mouth resuscitation. And He has been with us and all of our sin. He has been with us in all of our goodness, but the reality is He has been with us. And then, what happens when she goes and tell to Samaritans about Him? The Samaritans come to be with Jesus. And how long did He stay with them? Two days. Great for those paying attention. He stayed with them.

So here is a God who thirsts for us. He wants to fulfill our needs. He wants to love us. But the reality is what we have to do to have our thirst inside kept, or finally fulfilled, is that we need to thirst for Him. Because no matter what else we thirst for, only He is love. And only He will fulfill our thirst. And so what we need to do is the same thing the Samaritans did. We need to be with

Him. To spend time with Him. The last line of the Gospel says, "As they go to the Samaritan woman and they say, 'We no longer believe because you told us. We for ourselves have come to know and to believe.'" "Sometimes when I sit there and I am going around talking and I come back here, I think I do a lot of talking and some people here might believe because I have told you things. That is not enough. You need to come to believe for yourself. You need to come into His presence. And you need to let Him tell you everything you have ever done in love. And then you need to respond with your life. He told me everything I ever did and He still loved me. And when you and I spent time and we thirst for Him the way that God thirsts for us, then we too will be transformed.

And so I just want to ask you the question, today as I leave here with this thought, do you really know Him? Has He really taking your thirst? Has He told you everything that you have ever done in love as He transformed you? Or are you still coming here and listening to a loud mouth priest because he makes you laugh for me to feel guilty, whatever it is? Or do you come because you need to come because they told me you know if I miss Mass on Sunday it is a mortal sin? Father it is lent. I decided for Lent I am going to Mass every Sunday. Are you here because you know he loves you and you just want to respond in love? That you just want to be with Him? And if it is it is just a little bit of all of those things, just as Jesus today to purify your heart. That what this is about is about Him because when everything is about Him, it is about you. May each of you know His love today and forever, amen.