

THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT

There are powerful forces that keep us from fully engaging in our own recovery as family members and friends. Fear tells us that if we loosen our grip, everything will fall apart. Shame whispers that we somehow caused or failed to prevent another person's addiction. Secrecy convinces us to hide the truth of what is happening at home. These coping strategies may have helped us survive difficult seasons, but over time they can leave us exhausted and spiritually dry. What begins to shift our posture is not control, but hope.

This Sunday's second reading anchors that hope in something solid (Romans 5:1-2, 5):

Brothers and sisters: Since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith to this grace in which we stand, and we boast in hope of the glory of God. And hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

Hope does not depend on another person's choices. It rests in the love of God poured into our hearts. For family members and friends, that distinction is life-giving. We may have believed that peace would come only when our loved one changes. Recovery teaches us that peace begins when we allow God to meet us in our own thirst.

This Sunday's gospel reading offers a powerful image of that thirst (John 4:7-9, 13-15):

A woman of Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink." His disciples had gone into the town to buy food. The Samaritan woman said to him, "How can you, a Jew, ask me, a Samaritan woman, for a drink?"... Jesus answered and said to her, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again; but whoever drinks the water I shall give will never thirst; the water I shall give will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life." The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water, so that I may not be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water."

The Samaritan woman arrives with a complicated history and a guarded heart. Jesus does not shame her. He speaks to her deeper longing. Many of us know what it is like to keep returning to the same well, hoping for reassurance, control, or validation. Yet those wells often leave us thirsty again.

Recovery invites us to recognize that our longing is ultimately spiritual. We want security, clarity, and relief from anxiety. When we begin sharing honestly in meetings and are met with understanding instead of judgment, hope grows. We realize we are not alone, and we do not have to manage everything ourselves.

The woman leaves her jar and tells her story. In the same way, our willingness to speak truth about our fear and exhaustion becomes a source of hope for others. We cannot change another person's path, but we can allow Christ to transform ours.

Lent invites us to examine where we keep returning for relief and to bring that thirst into the light. The

living water Jesus offers is not dependent on outcomes. It is a steady source of peace rooted in God's love. As we receive that gift, we discover that our recovery matters, and that hope can flourish even in uncertain circumstances.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- When have you experienced hope growing in your own recovery, even if circumstances had not yet changed?
- Where do fear or shame still influence how you respond to a loved one's struggles?
- What does it look like for you to seek living water for yourself rather than trying to manage someone else's thirst?

MASS READINGS

FIRST READING Exodus 17:3-7

RESP. PS. Psalm 95:1-2, 6-7, 8-9

SECOND READING Romans 5:1-2, 5-8

GOSPEL John 4:5-42

