

THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT

There are powerful forces that keep us from fully engaging in recovery from lust addiction. Shame convinces us that our struggle is uniquely dark and that we would be rejected if others truly knew us. Secrecy promises protection but deepens isolation. Denial minimizes the impact of our behavior so we do not have to face its consequences. These patterns may once have shielded us from overwhelming emotions, but they also kept us spiritually thirsty. What begins to break that cycle is hope rooted in truth.

This Sunday's second reading speaks directly to that hope (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 rest on flawless sobriety or perfect discipline. It rests on God's love poured into our hearts. In recovery, hope often begins when we hear someone describe a past marked by secrecy and compulsion and a present marked by honesty and freedom. We recognize ourselves in their story and begin to imagine that change is possible.

This Sunday's gospel reading presents a woman meeting Jesus at a well (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 woman returns repeatedly to draw water that will not satisfy her for long. Many of us can relate to that cycle. We promised ourselves it would be the last time. We believed the next image, fantasy, or encounter would finally satisfy the craving. Yet the thirst returned.

Jesus speaks to a deeper longing. Our struggle is not merely about behavior. It reflects a desire to be known, affirmed, and connected. Lust attempts to fill that longing in ways that ultimately leave us emptier. Recovery begins when we bring that deeper thirst to Christ and to a trustworthy community.

When we speak honestly and are met with dignity rather than condemnation, hope grows. The Samaritan woman becomes a witness to her town. Likewise, our willingness to share our experience becomes a source of courage for others. We are not defined by our past but transformed by grace.

Lent invites us to examine where we keep returning for relief. The living water Jesus offers does not eliminate desire, but it reorders it. As beloved children of God, we are invited to receive love rather than chase it through distortion. In that surrender, thirst begins to change into trust.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- When have you experienced hope through another person's honest sharing about lust recovery?
- Where do secrecy or shame still influence your willingness to be fully known?
- What might it look like to bring your deeper thirst to Christ rather than to old patterns?

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

