

Welcome Jesus to fill the dry wells of your life

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Our thirst for life is built into our very being; we spend our days doing everything we can to protect it, preserve it, and feed our hunger for living.

The Sunday Gospels of Pascha bear in mind this thirst in every human heart, where we see those who are stricken by disease and disability — the blind man and the paralytic — reaching out for Jesus to attend to this desire. In particular, the story of the Samaritan woman (Jn 4:1-42) explores this theme well

Jesus goes to Samaria. This should surprise us, for in Jesus' time Samaria was a place a Hebrew would dare not go. Hebrews would go to great lengths to avoid this region. A direct route to Jerusalem from Judea would require passing through Samaria. Yet the Hebrews preferred to take a longer route, navigating around this region, to distance themselves from Samaritans, a group considered impure because they had incorporated aspects of Judaism with their own pagan worship practices. For this reason, the Hebrews of Jesus' time did not consider them true worshipers of Yahweh.

However, that Jesus would go and associate with these people was compatible with his identity as the Incarnate God: Christ became what he was not in order to save us, for "he who knew no sin was made sin for us" (2 Cor 5:21).

Jesus perseveres in this identity by entering into discourse with the Samaritan woman — the Incarnate Christ goes out to seek his lost sheep.

This story is an invitation for the Samaritan woman to repent. But before Jesus does something for her, he makes a simple appeal: "Give me to drink."

The Evangelist wants to show us something in Jesus' request: God asks something of his creation. God, Our Father, wants to offer us salvation.

It is his utmost desire. For, as we sing at Vespers, "Though he asked for water, he thirsted for her salvation" (Vespers, Wednesday evening of the Week of Mid-Pentecost).

Jesus' thirst for our souls requires our cooperation. We need to let him drink deep from the depths of our souls — our thoughts and our desires, our sins and our struggles. It is only then that he can unleash the living water into our own hearts. It means opening ourselves with hearts humbled to accept this. Welcome him to the dry well of your life and of your house, and let him give you living water.

The result of the Samaritan woman's repentance, we hear at Wednesday evening Vespers, is "the fullness of joy." This joy overflows into the town, where she becomes an apostle, proclaiming that this Messiah is not just a leader who cares about the big picture, but the particulars of every human heart: "Behold the Messiah foretold in the Law of old has appeared clothed in humanity he has unveiled all my hidden thoughts" (Vespers, *ibid.*).

This experience of salvation obliges us to proclaim this Good News, to share the living water. Why would we want to deprive people of that? If we are happy to share tricks and tips about the latest diet, workout routine, or self-improvement guide, then speech about Christ's salvation should be always on our lips.

This is one of the reasons that, for Byzantine Catholics, every Sunday is Pascha. We are invited weekly to draw from the well of living water and take from it the words and sacraments that need to be brought into our everyday life.

Our Christian life does not end here at the end of the liturgy. We are to proclaim Jesus and to say, "Christ is Risen!" to this world that is waiting for his life-giving water.

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