

Lent at Home

Sunday, 12 March 2023

By Fr Frank O'Loughlin



The passage being suggested for this week's *Lent at Home* is from the Gospel of St John, chapter 4, verses 1-42. It is a long passage of the gospel but presents to us one of the interesting characters of St John's gospel: the Woman Jesus meets at the Well of Jacob. We do not get many other extended conversations between Jesus and other people given to us in the New Testament. This is the gospel which will be read at Masses this coming Sunday.

I would suggest an initial reading of this long passage and then a second slower reading.

When Jesus heard that the Pharisees had found out that he was making and baptising more disciples than John, though in fact it was his disciples who baptised, not Jesus himself he left Judaea and went back to Galilee. He had to pass through Samaria.

On the way he came to the Samaritan town called Sychar near the land that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. Jacob's well was there and Jesus, tired by the journey, sat down by the well. It was about the sixth hour. When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, 'Give me something to drink.' His disciples had gone into the town to buy food. The Samaritan woman said to him, 'You are a Jew. How is it that you ask me, a Samaritan, for something to drink?' Jews, of course, do not associate with Samaritans.

Jesus replied to her: If you only knew what God is offering and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me something to drink,' you would have been the one to ask, and he would have given you living water. 'You have no bucket, sir,' she answered, 'and the well is deep: how do you get this living water? Are you a greater man than our father Jacob, who gave us this well and drank from it himself with his sons and his cattle?' Jesus replied: Whoever drinks this water will be thirsty again; but no one who drinks the water that I shall give will ever be thirsty again: the water that I shall give will become a spring of water within, welling up for eternal life. 'Sir,' said the woman, 'give me some of that water, so that I may never be thirsty or come here again to draw water.' 'Go and call your husband,' said Jesus to her, 'and come back here.' The woman answered, 'I have no husband.' Jesus said to her, 'You are right to say, "I have no husband"; for although you have had five, the one you now have is not your husband. You spoke the truth there.'

'I see you are a prophet, sir,' said the woman. 'Our fathers worshipped on this mountain, though you say that Jerusalem is the place where one ought to worship.' Jesus said: Believe me, woman, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know; for salvation comes from the Jews. But the hour is coming -- indeed is already here -- when true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth: that is the kind of worshipper the Father seeks.

God is spirit, and those who worship must worship in spirit and truth. The woman said to him, 'I know that Messiah -- that is, Christ -- is coming; and when he comes he will explain everything.' Jesus said, 'That is who I am, I who speak to you.' At this point his disciples returned and were surprised to find him speaking to a woman, though none of them asked, 'What do you want from her?' or, 'What are you talking to her about?' The woman put down her water jar and hurried back to the town to tell the people, 'Come and see a man who has told me everything I have done; could this be the Christ?' This brought people out of the town and they made their way towards him.

Meanwhile, the disciples were urging him, 'Rabbi, do have something to eat'; but he said, 'I have food to eat that you do not know about.' So the disciples said to one another, 'Has someone brought him food?' But Jesus said: My food is to do the will of the one who sent me, and to complete his work. Do you not have a saying: Four months and then the harvest? Well, I tell you, look around you, look at the fields; already they are white, ready for harvest! Already the reaper is being paid his wages, already he is bringing in the grain for eternal life, so that sower and reaper can rejoice together.

For here the proverb holds true: one sows, another reaps; I sent you to reap a harvest you have not laboured for. Others have laboured for it; and you have come into the rewards of their labour. Many Samaritans of that town believed in him on the strength of the woman's words of testimony, 'He told me everything I have done.' So, when the Samaritans came up to him, they begged him to stay with them. He stayed for two days, and many more came to believe on the strength of the words he spoke to them; and they said to the woman, 'Now we believe no longer because of what you told us; we have heard him ourselves and we know that he is indeed the Saviour of the world.'

The following suggestions might help get inside the passage and see what it says to yourself.

- This woman whose name we do not know is quite self-possessed and even sparky. She stands up to Jesus.
- What words or images or moments strike you most in the text?
- What shape would such an encounter with the Lord take for you?
- Jesus knows her and her situation (v.15-20; v.40) as he knows us and our situation. He presents himself to her: "I am he, the one who is speaking to you". He presents himself as the One who was expected to come.
- The passage ends with the very strong statement of Jesus' role and identity: "...we know that this is truly the Saviour of the world".

All Hallows Church

17 Brenbeal Street, Balwyn
Sunday 9.00 am

Basilica of Our Lady of Victories

548 Burke Road, Camberwell
Saturday Vigil 6.00 pm & Sunday 10.00 am

Our Holy Redeemer Church

4 Barton Street, Surrey Hills
Saturday Vigil 6.00 pm & Sunday 10.30 am

Our Lady of Good Counsel Church

10 Whitehorse Road, Deepdene
Saturday Vigil 5.30 pm, Sunday 10.30 am & 5.00 pm

Our Lady of Perpetual Succour Church

301 Elgar Road, Surrey Hills
Sunday 9.00 am

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**Camberwell, Balwyn Deepdene
and Surrey Hills Wattle Park Parishes**

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