

# Third Sunday of Lent

## Christian Call to become life giving water to quench the thirst of livelihood needs for one's brothers and sisters

Special Theme for the 3rd Sunday

15 March, 2020

**1st Reading: Exodus 17:3-7**

**2nd Reading: Romans 5:1-2,5-8**

**Gospel Reading: John 4:5-42**

### Mass Introduction:

Today, we have entered the third week of the Lent. The Liturgy of today invites us to focus on the Christian call to become life-giving water to quench the thirst of livelihood needs for one's brothers and sisters.

Today's first reading is from Exodus, where in the wilderness, the thirsty people of Israel complained to Moses against God. Moses, being helpless, sought God's help. God commanded Moses, "Go ahead of the people...I will stand before you". In the same way, God is commanding us to go ahead, be the life-giving water, God will stand before us.

Today's Gospel is about the dialogue between Jesus and Samaritan woman. Her life changes as she encounters Jesus. We are called in this season of lent to encounter Christ and turn our hearts towards those in need and in suffering, to help them to quench the thirst of livelihood.

Are we contributing towards building a just society where all can live in harmony? Let us ask for God's grace as we participate in the Eucharistic celebration.

### Homily:

#### Dear Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ,

Today we enter into the 3rd Sunday of Lent. Today's Liturgy leads us to discover Jesus as the Living Water. And professing our profound faith in Jesus Christ, helps us to be judged righteous by our ever loving God.

The Greek Philosopher Thales said, "Water is

the primary principle." We all know that water is one of the most essential needs of all living beings - be it animals, plants or human beings. It is estimated that 72 percent of the earth is covered in water, but 97 percent of that is salty ocean water and not suitable for drinking. Water also exists in the air as water vapor, in rivers and lakes, in icecaps and glaciers, in the ground as soil moisture, even in you and in animals. Due to the environmental exploitation and climate change, water scarcity is increasingly being experienced in thousands of our rural villages as well as in our urban metropolitan cities like Chennai, Mumbai, Delhi and so on. The conflicts on water-sharing between nations (Pakistan vs India; India vs Bangladesh) and Indian States (Tamil Nadu vs Kerala, Tamil Nadu vs Karnataka) are also witnessed very often. The big companies have begun fishing in the troubled water by making water as a commercial commodity that is bottled and sold. The commercialization of water has made the matter worse.

In this context, the reflection on today's readings would make a lot of sense. In the first reading, the people of Israel murmured against God with regard to water and God quenched their thirst with fresh water on the request of Moses and in the second reading St. Paul reiterates that our faith in Jesus has saved us. In the gospel, we witnessed the encounter of Samaritan woman with Jesus where Jesus tells that he could give her living water.

If we focus our reflection on the gospel, on the one side, the encounter between Jesus and the Samaritan woman brings forth the stages of transformation in the life of the Samaritan woman which could be understood the way she addresses Jesus

during the conversation: first, 'Jew,' second 'Sir,' third "Prophet," and finally "Messiah." On the other side, we can reflect on two phrases from the gospel: Jesus asked the woman, "Give me a drink." And to her reply Jesus said that if she would have asked him, he would have "given her living water" (cf. Jn 4, 7-10). The message that we could derive from it, "Give what you have" and "Jesus would give what you lack or Jesus would give what you need." When we give what we have, God works wonders. That is the case with the boy who offered the 5 loaves and 2 fish in the Gospel story of the multiplication of bread. Yes, when we give what we have, God multiplies and works wonders.

As we go deeper, we can say that Jesus gives living water to the one who believes in him. The person who believes in him will obey his commandments. The fruit of the believer is affirmed by the psalmist, "He is like a tree planted by streams of water, that yields its fruits in its season, and its leaf does not wither." That is to say, the living water that Jesus gives is life giving. The water that flows has life in it. The water that gives, has life in it. Giving is living. The following narration is very appropriate to state that giving is living: The Sea of Galilee and that of Dead Sea receive water from the same source that is the river of Jordan. But one could observe a clear difference between the two. That is to say, there is so much of life in the Sea of Galilee and there is no life in the Dead Sea. The reason attributed to this condition is that the Dead Sea is in the lowest level and the saltiness of the water is so high that there is no possibility of life in it. As against this, the Sea of Galilee has an outlet through which its water flows out of the sea but Dead Sea does not have an outlet to let its water go. The one who gives, lives and the other who does not give, is dead. The living water promotes life and sustains it. As Jesus, the giver of living water rightly said, "I have come so that you may have life and have it in abundance."

Having reflected on the gospel, what should be our response? Giving is living: The art of

living is the art of giving. There is no one in this world who is so poor that he/she has nothing to give. Everyone has something to give. Give and live. It could be a glass of water, a hello to the unknown, a smile to the stranger, a handshake with the rejected, some quality time to the lonely, a helping hand to the fallen, food to the hungry, drink to the thirsty, clothe to the naked, shelter to the homeless and so on. Remember, in the last judgment our Lord would say, 'I was thirsty and you gave me drink...' Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.' During this Lenten season, let us promote random acts of kindness, giving and living the way Jesus expects of us.

Save water and save life: our natural source of clean drinking water is shrinking due to various reasons. We have the responsibility not only to give drink to the present but also to take care of the water needs of the future generations. Hence, the clarion call is 'save water, save life.' One of the best ways to save water is 'not wasting water.' For example, use water sparingly while taking bath, washing clothes, plates, vehicles, brushing, shaving, watering plants and also by blocking the leakages, not polluting the water bodies and so on. Other ways could be like restoring the water bodies, planting trees and harvesting the rain water.

Keep going and keep growing: Be like the living water that flows and promotes life. Keep flowing, do not be stagnant. As Martin Luther King Jr. puts it succinctly, "If you can't fly then run, if you can't run then walk, if you can't walk then crawl, but whatever you do you have to keep moving forward." To the person who keeps going, the hurdles, difficulties, falls and failures are opportunities to grow. Be like the living water; Promote life. Let everything that we say and we do may promote life in the world.

The Holy Season of Lent offers us immense scope and possibility of responding to the Christian Call to become life giving water to quench the thirst of livelihood needs of our

sisters and brothers. There are millions of people in our country who do not have sustainable livelihood options. Christians as we are, we have a social responsibility to reach out and support people to build up their lives. During this season of lent, let us resolve to do whatever is possible within our capacity to become life giving water to needy sisters and brothers in terms of brightening their lives and livelihoods.

**Amen**

(This homily was prepared by Fr. John Britto, Executive Director, Delhi Regional Forum)

**Prayer of the Faithful:**

**Celebrant:** God's mercy is without limit. His love is for everyone regardless of one's status, class or caste. Let us give glory to God, whose kindness knows no limit and pray to him, saying:

**Response: Lord, help us to be the life-giving water**

1. For Pope Francis, bishops, priests, and all our leaders in the church, who must respond to the demands of the people, that God may stand with them as He did with Moses, providing the water of life to the thirsty people through their ministry.

**We Pray to the Lord. R/-**

2. We pray for the leaders of our country that they may take proactive steps to meet the needs of the people in all honesty and sincerity. For this

**We pray to the Lord. R/-**

3. That Jesus, who gently led the Samaritan woman to salvation, may help the sick and the needy, in sustaining their livelihoods.

**We pray to the Lord. R/-**

4. For the poor, the homeless and the unemployed, and for all who suffer under persecution, may their cry of suffering not go unheard because of our indifference, but be met instead with fraternal concern and assistance.

**We pray to the Lord. R/-**

5. That we may live our lives sustainably by using our natural resources judiciously, teach us to restrain our greed for earthly goods, and to have concern for the needs of others.

**We Pray to the Lord. R/-**

**Celebrant:** Heavenly Father, you have created us in your image and likeness, and have given us a beautiful world to live in. Strengthen us in unity, may all of us work with renewed trust for the building up of your Kingdom. Through Christ, our Lord.

**Amen.**

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**Fasting**, that is, learning to change our attitude towards others and all of creation, turning away from the temptation to "devour" everything to satisfy our voracity and being ready to suffer for love, which can fill the emptiness of our hearts.

**Prayer**, which teaches us to abandon idolatry and the self-sufficiency of our ego, and to acknowledge our need of the Lord and his mercy.

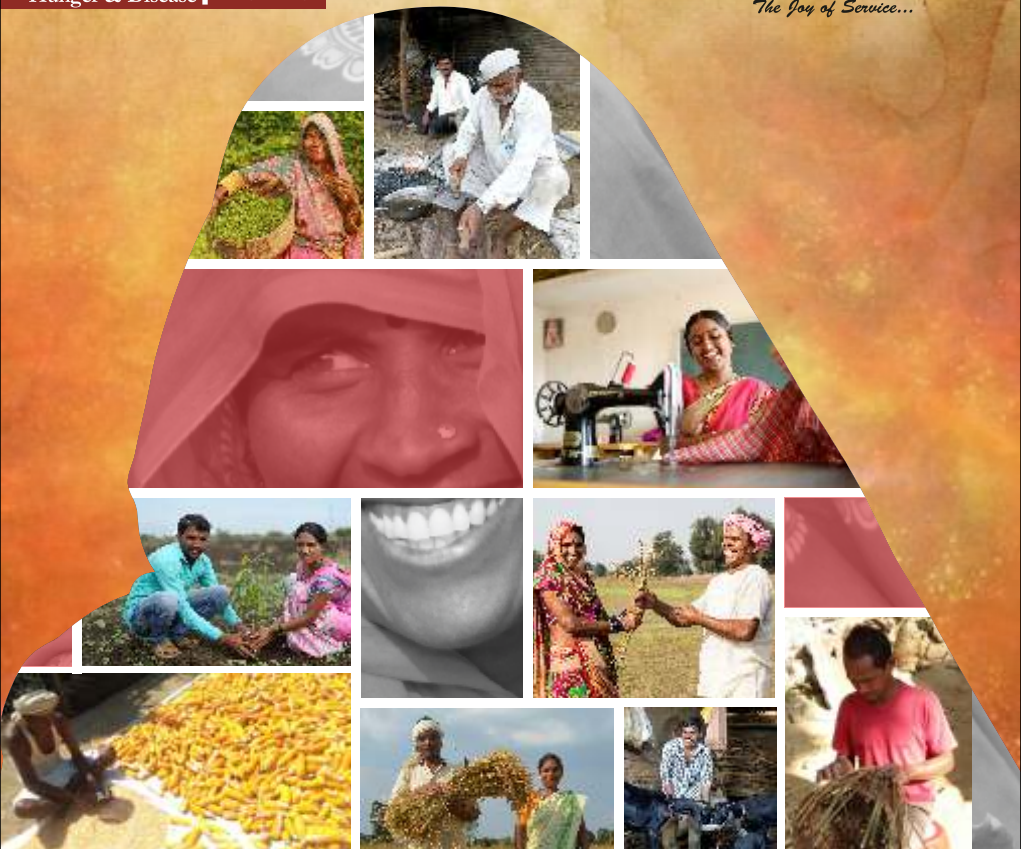
**Almsgiving**, whereby we escape from the insanity of hoarding everything for ourselves in the illusory belief that we can secure a future that does not belong to us.

Let us leave behind our selfishness and self-absorption and turn to Jesus' Pasch. Let us stand beside our brothers and sisters in need, sharing our spiritual and material goods with them.

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# Sustain | Sustainable Life | Livelihood

समृद्ध जीवन: सतत आजीविका

**C**aritas India, through its annual Lenten Campaign 2020, focussing on the theme – Sustain Life: Sustainable Livelihood invites everyone to join hands and come together to be a catalyst – a change agent - to adopt “Each one Help one” approach in reaching out to attain a sustainable livelihood.

Let us pledge during this Lenten Season to contribute (financially/non-financially) towards enabling a sustained life. This doesn't only mean poverty eradication, but also building the capacity and capabilities of others to withstand the trends and the shocks. It also means that all of us start living our lives with a sustainable approach – by sustainable use of natural resource, reducing carbon emissions by using eco-friendly methods of traveling, reducing/recycling the waste products, enabling community-led initiatives.