Sacrifice of Praise

Third Sunday of Lent: *Exodus 17:3–7 / Romans 5:1–2, 5–8 / John 4:5–42*

Contrition Offers Us a Way to Approach the Lord

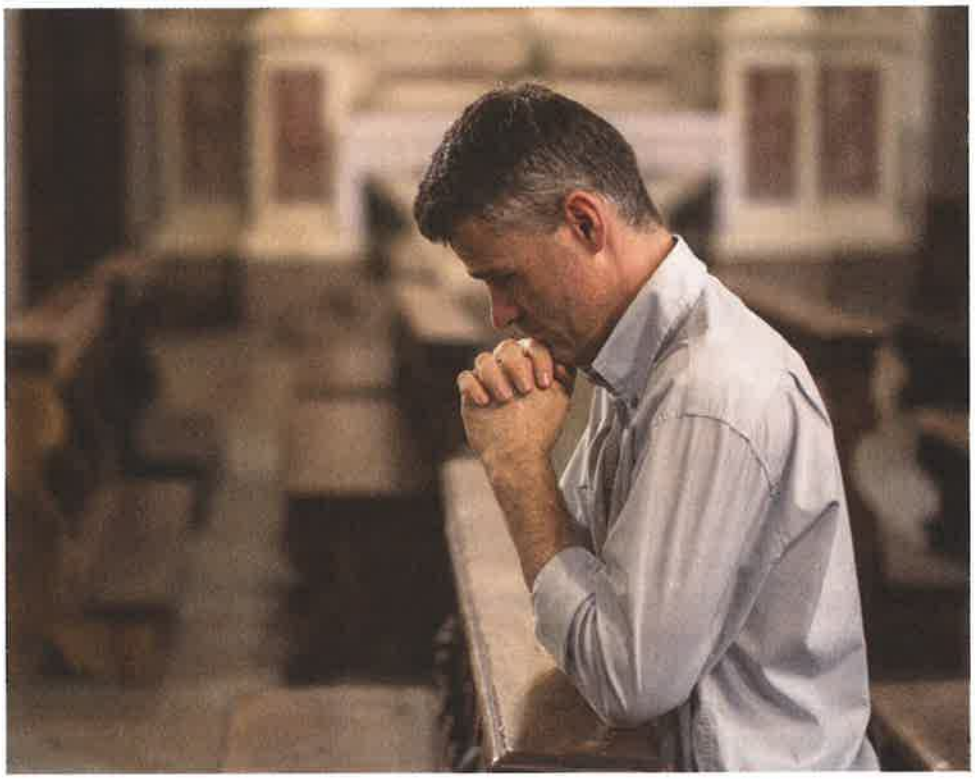
In today's Gospel reading, every detail of the encounter between Jesus and the woman at the well, a Samaritan woman, reveals Jesus' deep abiding love for all people.

First, let's look at the location and time of day when Jesus and the woman at the well meet. Jesus is in Samaria, home to people considered unclean by the Jews. Everything they touch, including the water in the well, would have been considered unclean. Note the time of day: It is the hottest time of the day; most of the women would have completed the task of collecting water in the cool of the morning. The Samaritan woman comes at this time to avoid others, specifically the judgment of others.

During their conversation, we can witness the progression of the woman's faith. (Perhaps you recognize yourself in her story?) Her relationship with the man seeking to have his thirst quenched is one with a stranger.

Next, Jesus reveals he knows the intimate details of her life. He gently but clearly states the truth of her current state of life, causing her to consider him a prophet. (Perhaps you, too, have experienced the Holy Spirit nudging your heart, gently revealing behaviors or choices that keep you bound and ashamed.)

After gaining her trust by showing the woman that despite all she has done or who she may be, he longs to give her the promise of salvation; she now sees him as the Messiah. Finally, accepting this invitation to be set free through the living water of his mercy and forgiveness, she proclaims him as Savior. She emerges from this encounter contrite and transformed, symbolically dropping her pot (see Jn 4:28) and with it her old way of life. From what situation can Jesus' mercy and love free you?



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FOR REFLECTION

- Sometimes we need to ask for forgiveness; other times we need to offer it. Recall examples of each in your life. Did you experience joy from offering or receiving forgiveness?
- When have you encountered God's mercy in your life?
- When you come to pray, do you first seek God's forgiveness for your sins?

As a true disciple, the Samaritan woman, known as St. Photina in the Eastern rite, finds others with whom to share the Good News. She runs to find others with which to share her story and invites them to encounter Christ for themselves. Many became believers because of her testimony. Remarkable are the words of those who returned to the woman to report, "We no longer believe because of your word; for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is truly the savior of the world."

Jesus thirsts for each of us to encounter him, to witness our relationship evolve from strangers to believers, to proclaim him as Savior.

Embracing contrition, we can be freed from our burdens through the gift of the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Pray for and with a heart of contrition to allow Jesus to gently show who you presently are and who he longs for you to be.

Prayer

Lord Jesus, thank you for the invitation during Lent to take a closer look at my life, to look deeply at the places in which I may be faltering or missing opportunities to show your glory in the world. Lord, thank you for the gift of the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Please strengthen my heart to make a healing, grace-filled confession before Easter.

How to Make a Good Confession

Has it been a while since you've been to the Sacrament of Reconciliation? Lent is the perfect time to rectify that. Here is a quick refresher:

- Examination of Conscience. Spend some time in prayer recalling your sins.
- Confession begins with, "Forgive me, Father, it has been X amount of time since my last confession." If you are nervous or unsure how to proceed, this is a good time to ask for assistance.
- Share your transgressions, listen to the priest's response, and receive your penance.
- Conclude with the Act of Contrition. Feel free to bring it written down if you don't have one memorized.
- Upon leaving the confessional, spend a few moments completing (if possible) the penance the priest has assigned you.

That's it. You are now a new creation in Christ. Allow the grace of this sacrament to guide your prayer, almsgiving, and fasting for the remainder of your Lenten season.

The Great Mercy of God

Bartolo Longo was a priest of Satan before his conversion to Catholicism. He feared, "As the priesthood of Christ is for eternity, so also the priesthood of Satan is for eternity. So, despite my repentance, I thought that I was still consecrated to Satan, and I am still his slave and property as he awaits me in hell. As I pondered over my condition, I experienced a deep sense of despair." Consolation came to him as he recalled this promise from the Blessed Virgin Mary, "One who propagates my Rosary shall be saved," and he recounted, "Falling to my knees, I exclaimed: 'If your words are true that he who propagates your Rosary will be saved, I shall reach salvation because I shall not leave this earth without propagating your Rosary.'"

Blessed Bartolo spent his life promoting the Rosary; in fact, it was from his writings that Pope St. John Paul II based the Luminous Mysteries of the Rosary, also known as the Mysteries of Light. If Blessed Bartolo's life could be used for such a splendid purpose, imagine what amazing things God can do with you?

"Lord Jesus, let my heart never rest until it finds You, who are its center, its love, and its happiness. By the wound in Your heart pardon the sins that I have committed whether out of malice or out of evil desires."

– St. Margaret Mary Alacoque

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