



3rd Sunday of Lent



Date: Sunday, March 8, 2026 | **Season:** Lent | **Year:** A

First Reading: Exodus 17:3–7

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 95:1–2, 6–9 | **Response:** Psalm 95:8

Second Reading: Romans 5:1–2, 5–8

Gospel Acclamation: John 4:42, 15

Gospel Reading: John 4:5–42

Preached at: the Chapel of Emerald Hill Children's Home in the Archdiocese of Harare, Zimbabwe.

Today the Scriptures tell us that God gives living water to people who are thirsty in body, heart, and spirit.

Have you ever noticed how many wars in the world happen in dry places where water is scarce — places where the ground is cracked, the sun is hot, and every drop of water matters?

And in our own country we know how precious water can be.

When the rains fail, or when the taps run dry, everyone feels the worry.

When the land is harsh and water is hard to find, fear quickly grows. People become anxious about survival, and tensions rise. In today's readings we meet people who are thirsty in the desert, and their thirst begins to turn into anger and doubt.

In the first reading from Exodus, the people of Israel are wandering in the wilderness. There is no water. They are frightened and exhausted, and they complain to Moses: “Why did you bring us here? Are we going to die of thirst?”

Anyone who has been very thirsty knows how quickly fear can grow. When people think they will not survive, they become angry and suspicious. The people even ask, “Is the Lord really among us or not?” They begin to doubt God because they are afraid.

Yet God does not abandon them. Moses strikes the rock, and water flows out. In a dry place, God brings life.

Their thirst for water also reminds us of a deeper thirst — the human heart's thirst for God.

The psalm remembers that moment: “If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts as at Meribah.” In the desert the people let fear and anger close their hearts.

And that brings us to the Gospel, where we meet another moment of thirst — this time beside a well.

Imagine the scene. The sun is high and the air is hot. Jesus sits beside a well, tired from the journey. Now imagine you are the one standing there with the bucket, and Jesus looks at you and says, “Give me a drink.”

The one who made all the oceans and rivers is asking a woman for a drink of water.

Jesus is thirsty.

The Son of God shares our human life. He knows what it is like to be tired and thirsty.

An early Christian teacher once said something beautiful about this moment: the one who was thirsty was the one who gives drink. Jesus asks for water, yet he is the one who gives the living water of God.

The woman who comes to the well is someone whose life has been difficult and complicated. Jesus tells her that she has had five husbands and is now living with a man who is not her husband. People judged her harshly, and that may be why she comes alone to the well at the hottest time of the day.

Today the world marks International Women's Day. The Gospel reminds us how often women have been judged or ignored. Yet Jesus does something different. He speaks to this woman with respect, listens to her, and gives her the message that brings her whole village to faith.

Jesus offers her something greater than the water in the well. He speaks about living water.

At first she thinks he means ordinary water that would save her from returning each day. Many people in our communities know that work of fetching water, or buying it when the taps run dry. But Jesus is speaking about something deeper: God's Spirit living in our hearts.

It is the gift that helps us love, forgive, tell the truth, and keep hope alive even when life is hard.

Living water is the life of God flowing through an ordinary human life.

St Paul says in the second reading, "God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit."

During the conversation the woman asks about worship. Should people worship on the Samaritan mountain or in Jerusalem? Jesus answers that the time is coming when people will worship the Father "in spirit and in truth." What matters most is not the place, but the heart.

The woman senses something extraordinary. She says, "I know that the Messiah is coming."

Jesus answers, "I am he, the one who is speaking with you."

Instead of closing her heart like the people in the desert, she listens. She opens her heart to Jesus.

She came to the well looking for water, but in truth Jesus was searching for her.

When her heart opens, everything begins to change. She runs back to the village and tells the people about Jesus, and many come to believe because of her witness. The outsider becomes the messenger.

Sometimes those who have suffered the most become the ones who bring hope to others. But suffering can also turn into anger and revenge. So we pray that in places wounded by war people will choose healing, not the cycle of violence. The early Christians believed that suffering can become the seed of new life when people choose mercy instead of revenge.

There is also a small detail at the end of the story. After meeting Jesus, the woman leaves her water jar behind beside the well.

She came looking for ordinary water. But after meeting Jesus, the deeper thirst of her life had been touched.

That is what the living water of Christ does. It does not remove every difficulty, but it fills our hearts with God's Spirit, with hope, courage, and love.

This began for each of us at baptism, when water was poured over us and God gave us his Spirit. As St Paul says, God's love has been poured into our hearts.

And the same Christ who offered living water to the woman will come to us today in the Eucharist, strengthening us again with his grace.

When that love fills a heart, something else begins to change. People who once avoided each other begin to speak. Enemies begin to see one another as human beings. Peace often begins in small places, like a conversation beside a well.

Our Holy Father, Pope Leo XIV, urges the world to move away from the logic of weapons and toward the difficult work of peace. The wars we see today in places like Gaza, Ukraine, and now Iran show how much the world still thirsts for peace.

Here at home, Christian leaders in Zimbabwe have also called the nation to prayer, justice, and respect for the voice of the people. Leadership, they remind us, must serve the common good.

They warn that when leaders hold too tightly to power, peace is put at risk. When power is protected at all costs, fear and division follow. But when leaders use their authority to serve people, the way opens for justice and reconciliation.

And Jesus reminds us that true worship is rooted in truth. In a world where lies and fake news spread quickly through media and social networks, they can stir fear, anger, and hatred. Those fears can help drive the wars we see around us today.

Jesus himself shows us a different kind of leadership. He does not cling to status or power. He sits beside the well and speaks with someone others had rejected.

Their message ends with a prayer:

May the God of peace grant us courage to do what is right, wisdom to preserve justice, and love to bind us together as one people.

And they remind us of the words of Scripture:

“Seek the peace and prosperity of the city... pray to the Lord for it.”

Then the prophet Amos gives us an image that sounds very close to today’s Gospel:

“Let justice run down like waters, and righteousness like a mighty stream.” (Amos 5:24)

God wants fairness and goodness to flow through our world like a river of living water. That is the kind of water our world needs.

And that is what happens when the living water of Christ begins to flow through human hearts.

Christ offers living water not only to quench our thirst, but to renew our hearts so that justice, peace, and mercy may flow through our lives like a stream that never runs dry.

Most of us spend our lives drawing water from many wells: success, possessions, approval, many different things. Yet those wells often leave us thirsty again.

Jesus offers something different. He offers living water that becomes a spring within us, a spring of faith, hope, and love that keeps flowing even in difficult times.

The woman came looking for water.
But she discovered something greater.
She discovered the source.

And Christ still meets thirsty hearts today.

So during this Lenten week we might quietly ask ourselves:

- Where in my life do I most need the living water of Christ?
- Is there someone who feels alone or rejected whom I could welcome with kindness this week?
- And how can I help bring a little more peace into the world, beginning in my own home, my own family, and my own community — so that living

water may flow through us all?

Source: <https://sj.mcharlesworth.fr/homilies/2026-03mar-08-ya-lt-03/>

This homily is shared for personal and pastoral use. Please attribute the author and do not alter the meaning when quoting. If you wish this homily to be translated - there is an option on the website which will allow you to translate it into the language of your choice.

Licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-ND 4.0) license.

The author does not speak for the Society of Jesus or for the Catholic Church.



Receive Fr Matthew Charlesworth's Homilies on
WhatsApp



Receive Fr Matthew Charlesworth's Homilies on
Telegram



Receive Fr Matthew Charlesworth's Homilies on
Signal



Scan for Website



Scan for Onion Mirror

In preparing this homily, I consulted various resources to deepen my understanding of today's readings, including using Magisterium AI for assistance. The final content remains the responsibility of the author.