

3 Lent A – Fr. Val Handwerker

March 19, 2017

Cathedral

8:00 and 10:00

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The Apostle Paul teaches us this Lenten Sunday about true hope. **“Hope does not disappoint,”** he writes, **“because the love of God has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.”**

It was the hottest part of the day in the sweltering Middle East, and the woman was alone at the well. She was *the* outsider—a Samaritan despised by the Jewish faithful. And she was a woman. Thirsty himself, Jesus comes to the well and crosses all the social boundaries. He was a man speaking to a woman in public. Men didn’t do that. And he is a Jew requesting a drink from the unclean jar of a Samaritan. Putting his lips to that tainted jar would make Jesus ritually impure. (1)

In all the four Gospels, this is the longest conversation which Jesus had with any one person.

**“Hope does not disappoint.”** In that noontime sun that woman never imagined that Jesus would change her life and give it true meaning. He was patient with her. She didn’t bail out with him. They talked—a lively back-and-forth. At first she called him, **“Sir.”** Then she saw him as **“prophet.”** Oh, Jesus was patient with her, and eventually, she named him as the longed-for **“Messiah.”** Finally, she joined with all the townspeople in claiming this Jesus as **“Savior of the world.”**

Friends: **“Hope does not disappoint.”** *This* Lent, *this* Sunday—will we allow Jesus to step across all the barriers and defenses in each of our lives, and let him offer us hope? True hope, not that artificial version which doesn’t quench the deepest thirsts of our soul. And Jesus is likewise patient with us, no matter what we call him at this point in our lives.

Ah, Jesus recklessly poured his love into that woman’s soul, her deepest reservoir—with his living Spirit. Yes, **“Hope does not disappoint.”** Sisters and brothers: this is not just a story from centuries ago. It can be *our* story now, if we let Jesus step over all our defenses and excuses.

With this story told again and again over the centuries, I wonder: Did she ever give Jesus that drink of water? You know, the Gospel never tells us. (2) All we

really know: Jesus was thirsty for that woman's faith, and he splashed "**living water**" into the reservoir of her soul.

This Lenten Sunday, Jesus is thirsty for *our* faith. Shall we let Jesus step over all our defenses and boundaries, and then allow him to drench our parched souls with his "living water," *his* own Spirit?

(1) See Edward P. Hahnenberg, "A Deep and Still Moment," in Give Us This Day—March 2017 (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2017), pg. 201.

(2) See Mary M. McGlone, "A Samaritan apostle," in National Catholic Reporter (March 10-23, 2017), pg. 25.