

■ The 128th Invitation to Live by the Word Commentary and Meditation

● First Reading: Exodus 17:3-7

The people of Israel, during their journey of the Exodus, had just experienced the grace of the Lord many times crossing the Red Sea and being nourished by manna. Yet immediately afterward, through the lack of water, they learned two things: the faith of the people in the midst of crisis, and the call to live by trusting in the Lord.

More than physical thirst, their fear for their lives was expressed as thirst. Their attitude of doubting and denying the Lord turned into complaints, and their suspicion of God's goodwill became the accusation: "Did you bring us out here to kill us with thirst" thus revealing their distrust of the Lord.

Hearing the people's complaints, Moses cried out to the Lord, "What shall I do with this people" The crowd was ready to stone him. The Lord answered Moses' desperate prayer and ensured that the miracle would not be hidden by having several elders accompany him as public witnesses. Moses was instructed to go ahead of the people with them.

Furthermore, the Lord declared that life-giving water would be brought forth using the staff that had been used in the judgment upon the Nile (Exodus 7:14-25) and in the salvation at the Red Sea. The place where God appeared was Horeb (Mount Sinai), called the mountain of God.

The Lord stood before the people and Moses, showing that He would bear full responsibility, and commanded Moses to strike the rock in trust of His command. The reasons for striking the rock were: to make them understand that God was truly with them,

to show through Moses' staff both God's judgment and His life-giving power, and as it is written, "They drank from the spiritual rock" (1 Corinthians 10:4).

In this understanding, Jesus is the rock, the striking represents the cross, and the water signifies the grace of life.

The Lord's grace can appear even from places beyond human imagination. Moses' faith acting in obedience to the Lord's word saved the people. The people's sin was engraved in the place names Massah ("testing") and Meribah ("quarreling"), becoming a memorial both to God's grace and to human unbelief.

Although they had seen miracles many times, they still doubted. When circumstances worsened, they lamented that the Lord was not with them. Through this event, they were meant to learn that the Lord is indeed with them Immanuel.

● Second Reading: Romans 5:1-2, 5-8

Both Jews and Gentiles are under sin. Even though the Law was given, human beings cannot perfectly keep it. Just as Abraham was justified by faith, people too are justified only through faith in Jesus.

This passage teaches that the fruits given to those who are justified (made righteous) are that they live in peace, grace, hope, and love.

Being made righteous not by one's own efforts but through Jesus is called justification by faith. Through this, reconciliation with God is established and we receive peace. Through Jesus we are led into continuing salvation; at the end of time salvation will be completed, and we will share in the glory of God.

This hope is the certainty that God will surely grant what He promises, and to speak joyfully of this certainty is our pride (boast). Hope does not disappoint us, because God Himself is at work. The Holy Spirit dwells with those who are saved, and the love of God revealed in Jesus' cross has been poured abundantly into our hearts.

When we were still powerless and unable to attain salvation by our own strength, at the time determined in God's plan of salvation, Jesus died as a substitute even for the ungodly who had turned away from God. Even if people can understand such love in theory, no one easily gives up their life and dies for another. Someone might risk their life for love, but while we were still sinners before repentance Jesus died for us unconditionally, thus demonstrating His love.

● Gospel Reading: John 4:5-15, 19-26, 39, 40-42

In this passage three aspects of salvation are revealed:

Jesus gives the water of eternal life.

True worship is offered in spirit and truth.

Jesus is the Messiah (the Savior).

The land that the ancestor Jacob gave to his children had become a Samaritan town in conflict with the Jews. Jesus, weary from His journey, was sitting there. Around noon He asked a Samaritan woman for water even though Samaritans were forbidden to associate with Jews.

The woman asked why He would request something from someone with whom relations were severed (as could be seen from His speech and clothing). Jesus replied that if she knew the gift of God and who the Messiah was, she would have asked Him for the gift of water, and He would have given her living water.

The woman asked how He could obtain living water without a bucket, and questioned whether He was greater than Jacob, recounting the history of the well. Human beings continue to thirst because of their desires, but the water (the life of the Spirit) that Jesus gives becomes a spring welling up from within, filling the heart. When one lives in love for one's neighbor selflessly forgetting oneself for the joy of others the thirst disappears.

The woman said, "Give me this eternal water." The ancestors (the Samaritans) worshiped on this mountain, while the Jews worshiped in Jerusalem, but what is more important is believing in Jesus. The new age of the Messiah has come, and the time has arrived when people will worship the Father as His children.

In the Old Testament, worship centered on specific places. But with the coming of the Messiah, people are led to true worship. Worship through the Holy Spirit and through Jesus is already beginning now, and God Himself seeks such worship.

Not bound by material things or by location, God is Spirit. Filled with this Spirit, we direct our lives toward God and worship the Lord in spirit and in truth.

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