

Homily – 3rd Sunday of Lent C (RCIA – Scrutinies: Cycle A Readings)

Beloved in Christ, as the Christian Community we have a responsibility towards supporting our prospective new members in the catechumenate period and beyond. Like the Samaritan woman in our Gospel passage ([Jn. 4:5-42](#)), they could be saying, “I know that the Messiah is coming, the one called the Christ; when he comes, he will tell us everything.” It is our duty to guide them to hear this reply of Jesus clearly, “I am he, the one speaking with you.” Thus, they will never be confused with modern day errors that want to equate Jesus with Mohammed or Buddha. Not at all! Jesus is God. According to Pamela E. J. Jackson, “Since the Church is a People with a story, the catechumenate is the process of absorbing the catechumens into that story, until the People’s story becomes their story, and they are definitely part of its story” [Pamela E. J. Jackson, *Journeybread for the Shadowlands: The Readings for the Rites of the Catechumenate, RCIA*, Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1993], p. 9].

Two weeks ago (the First Sunday of Lent), we celebrated the “Rite of Sending” of our Catechumens to the Bishop for the “Rite of Election”. Now they are called “the Elect” because they have been enrolled for the celebration of the Sacraments of Initiation. Today, we begin the Period of Purification and Enlightenment. It is marked by three scrutinies celebrated on the Third, Fourth, and Fifth Sundays of Lent. The presentation of the “Creed” and the “Our Father” will take place within the week of the Third and Fifth Sundays of Lent respectively.

Dear Elect, our First Reading ([Ex 17:3-7](#)) somewhat portrays your curiosity and thirst. The Israelites were nervous and thirsty for water while in the desert. They queried Moses, saying, “Why did you ever make us leave Egypt?” As Elect, you are probably nervous and wondering, ‘what are these “Scrutinies” about?’ Am I going to be questioned publicly and be ridiculed? I should have been left where I was before rather than face public disgrace. Beloved, may we never return to Egypt; may we never return to slavery to sin and the devil. The scrutinies are only a personal examination and purification of your minds and hearts from sin; the presentations will strengthen you through a deeper faith and knowledge of Christ. This stage will end with the celebration of the Sacraments at Easter Vigil. Thereafter, we shall have the Period of Mystagogy, which will end at Pentecost.

God is already at work in you. He will lead you to the Fountain of Living Waters, through his Word and Sacrament. God told Moses, “Strike the rock, and the water will flow from it for the people to drink.” God can make a

way where there seems to be no way. So never desire a return to your previous life. Jesus who can provide what you really need is the one reaching out to you. He addresses these same words to you, the words he spoke to the Samaritan woman, “If you knew the gift of God and who is saying to you, ‘Give me a drink,’ you would have asked him and he would have given you living water.” He alone can fulfill our deepest longings and give us inner peace and joy. He alone can give us true values and treasures that last.

Like the Samaritan woman, we also want this drink that lasts: “Sir, give me this water, so that I may not be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water.” Ah! Not so fast! Have you wondered why we have all these rigorous steps toward the celebration of Christian Initiation? Have you wondered why we cannot just give the Holy Eucharist to anybody no matter the religious belief or affiliation?

Have you wondered why the Church insists on giving the Eucharist to only “baptized and practicing Catholics who are in the State of Grace”?

Have you wondered why the Church insists on giving the Eucharist to only “baptized and practicing Catholics who are in the State of Grace”? Here is one answer. To this Samaritan Woman requesting for the Spiritual Drink, Jesus says, “Go, call your husband and come back.” She said, “I do not have a husband.” Jesus replied, “You are right in saying, ‘I do not have a husband.’ For you have had five husbands, and the one you have now is not your husband.” Beloved, can you see how Jesus addressed the problem of broken marriages and families? This woman is now with the sixth man; she had divorced five times already. Does this appear similar to our present day marriages? Jesus does not want us to live as we like; we must become witnesses to the dignity and sanctity of the marriage covenant. He makes it one of the prerequisites to receive the Living Water, to receive HIS Sacraments.

Finally, Jesus wants us to “worship the Father in Spirit and truth; and indeed the Father seeks such people to worship him”. Are you going to respond to the Father’s quest? Or are we going to do whatever we want? Isn’t it wonderful how the Samaritan woman experienced a turn around? Instead of arguing, she changed her life and invited others to change permanently. No one truly encounters Jesus and remains the same. Let the Jesus we encounter in the Sacraments day after day and week after week help us achieve true repentance this Lenten Season. May our Elect achieve a genuine conversion experience and confess like the Samaritans in today’s Gospel: “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.”