



Sunday of the Samaritan Woman
The Gospel According to John 4:5-42



"If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him and he would have given you living water."

Apolytikion of the Feast.

O Lord, midway through the feast, give drink to my thirsty soul from the living waters of right belief. You, O Savior, proclaimed to everyone, "Let whoever is thirsty come to Me and drink." You are the fountain of life, O Christ our God. Glory to You!

Why is the fact that "God is giving Himself to us" a stumbling block, if not for all at least for some or for most of us. The fathers tell us that all our fears are rooted in the fear of death. How come then, when God becomes body and blood for us, eucharistic supper for eternal life, we are shy to partake of it? The gospels of this week, prior to the Samaritan woman, describe Jesus' attempt to tell people about how eternal life can become a reality of humankind: by partaking of the supreme act of love. However, what we see in the gospels this week is that the offering is rejected first by his apostles, most of them leaving Jesus from that very moment, apart from the 12 who were shaken in their belief. Jesus asks them if they are going to leave Him as well, which shows the tension that the eucharistic offering has caused in their hearts.

Secondly, Jesus is rebuked by his brothers, who do not really believe in Him and care instead for the world, for the same world that hates Christ because He exposes their deeds (Tuesday's gospel, John 7:1-13). Finally, Jesus is hunted by "Jews" in Jerusalem. All the dialogue with them reveals again a rejection of the offering that leads to an unconciliatory resolution: death. Jesus says many times to them: "You want to kill me", whereas the "Jews", as the religious authority of that time, tell Jesus that He wants to kill Himself (Friday John 8, 21-29). Just like today, those who do not want to compromise with a life mingled with death, which is what the world offers, are being told they would be better off dead, because they condemned themselves by choosing a path that is not familiar to the world.

You wonder why, "in the middle of the feast of feasts, the festival of the festivals", the church brings forth this unconciliatory dialogue between man and God, the only resolution of which seems to be death. The death of the Son of Man. But is this the only death that follows the rejection of the offering?

Again, we always agree that the fear of all fears is rooted in the fear of death. The scripture this week reveals to us that there is another fear that troubles our soul and that is the fear of eternal life. It seems like we are fine being alive as long as we are going to die. As long as life is not pierced by love that makes it eternal within our heart. We are ok living as long as we are not loved because this takes us out of ourselves and destroys the self fulfilling prophecy of one's lack of love for anybody, including his own soul. We are okay with the water as long as it quenches the thirst now and does not trouble it with everlasting life. We struggle to love so being loved becomes our fear and our enemy. We want to live but only in the shadow of death.

The lack of partaking of the Body and Blood of Christ not only keeps us at a distance from the everlasting life but also shortens and harms life as we know it here. When they refuse to partake in the offering given to us without the shedding of blood, more blood is shed in the world. To partake or to refuse the gift is a matter of life and death. And not only for us but for the whole world. That's what we see today with our eyes.

We often marvel at the fragility of life as we know it and at the way sin corrupts it and harms it now. It might be as well the other way around, the death that humankind chose is conquered by every single reality of life that receives the gift, becoming an everlasting presence within the kingdom today.

4th Monday after Pascha John 6:56-69

"He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him...Many of his disciples, when they heard it, said, "This is a hard saying; who can listen to it?"

After this many of his disciples drew back and no longer went about with him. Jesus said to the twelve, "Do you also wish to go away?"

From today's gospel

"If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him and he would have given you living water."

It is hard to say why those who are close to Jesus, the apostles, his brothers and the religious authority who was knowledgeable about the Law, are challenged unto death by the gift of God, while the stranger, the Samaritan woman who seems to have failed a covenantal love in her life, has within herself the fresh desire for everlasting life. Jesus names this desire when He talks to her.

For the first question, it is not easy for us to answer because we are indeed close to Christ and yet not fully alive. We can confess the desire of the marginalized to live eternally, since we witness it almost on a daily basis.

We cannot know how God's love nourishes such a desire in the poor and marginalized, but we are asked instead to be attentive to it :*"Others have labored, and you have entered into their labor."*

Such people are excluded but do not settle on the rejection or lack of success in human dealings, but they rather live with the expectation and desire of a perfect life. At times they are themselves unaware of this desire. They go to the well on a daily basis without taking from the eternal one. Like the people who come to the mission and eat or look for real human connection. You have the sorrow in your heart seeing the genuine desire for real life that does not know what to ask for in order to be fully embraced.

However, their exclusion is not one that knows, it is one that has yet to discover because their desire is kindled by the love of God in a forgotten human being. This desire for life, that is not satisfied with the failures, rejections or successes of the world, keeps the reality of the dialogue free within the fabric of the community that wants to stay real at the margins. We are truthful and real if the community dwells on this desire of people to live without knowing, refusing the harm brought by the knowledge that rejects the offering because it looks for satisfaction in itself .

From today's gospel

"The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water, so that I may not thirst, nor come here to draw."

"I sent you to reap that for which you did not labor; others have labored, and you have entered into their labor."

People's lives at the mission do not change often from a social, economical and cultural perspective. The real hope for us is people's desire to live and search for the purity of love. When this desire is attacked, as it happens today, we feel that hope itself is endangered. People who come our way have often lost everything that the world values today - health, family, stable mental

condition, food, clothes and so on - being given in return drugs and social abandonment. Many times, we witnessed that the real problem is the abandonment of those half dead with the desire to live, more than the theft and beatings that happened in the first place. Today, neither of the two seems to be the most important danger. The desire to live a human life seems to be under attack today. If this is successful, which seems to be the case so far, then the catastrophe will be hard to stop.

On Tuesday I talked to K. I have not spoken to her one on one for years. We used to meet more often five or six years ago. Lately, she has started to come more often to the mission. On Tuesday she wanted to talk more about personal matters. Among other things she said that she realised she needed to learn to love herself. "You cannot love others if you don't love yourself, the bible says." She realised that she needs to be kind to herself when the neighbors do not give her any reason to believe that life is meant to be lived in communion.

I thought that was a sign for real hope. The poor are taught to love themselves so they can embrace their neighbours who harm them. With all this lack of hope in life, with the threat that settles down in people's hearts that life is not enough, when death is presented as being the answer, the poor find within themselves the source of water that is going to be poured out on those who are weary and grow old.

They discover this gift of love within their heart because they desire to live. This is what we need to witness and to learn to "reap", understanding that we have sown nothing but we are entering into a reality that teaches us how to become a source of living water from within. It is again the poor who are teaching us that.

Bulletin humor

The ongoing story of the relics of St. John the Compassionate (divine humour).

While the patriarchate of Venezia has released a relic of St. John's incorrupt body, this remains in quarantine at La Serenissima due to Covid. Meanwhile, the reliquary that is almost finished could be held up because of the international airplane blockade against Belarus.

Once again, St. John the Merciful is at the heart of world events!

Fioretti by Br. Luke

More beautiful than any royal palace did your tomb appear, O Christ

After our Pascha celebration a woman lingered in front of the icon of Christ in the main hall. She was a middle-aged woman from Rwanda who had recently completed her social service worker placement at the mission. She lingered to talk about what she had been experiencing in her school. During her time at the mission she had been extremely professional. Now that her placement was over, she told us, making a careful distinction, she was no longer here as a student, she was coming as "just me." On Pascha she talked about how she was afraid for her daughter growing up in the west, where the culture is so strong that it is taking over the world. Her daughter doesn't eat African food at all, she says. Only Western food. She had experienced the genocide in her home country and she compared what she sees happening in her social work classes to the brainwashing that took place in Rwanda teaching that Christianity is evil. She

doesn't want her daughter to grow up with these views. She was further bothered by the intolerance she found in the West. She described seeing street preachers on the street at Yonge and Dundas square being attacked and spit on for expressing their opposition to current social values. She said that in Rwanda she had lost faith in the catholic church that she was raised in. She saw many people running into churches for protection and the churches being burnt. "If God was there then why wouldn't He save them," she asked? When she came to the West she became a born again Christian but stopped going after she asked a pastor to pray for her daughter and he forgot to do so. "I can do better than that, she said." She said that this was the first time she had come to church since then (over 20 years ago).

Reading At the Mission

We very rarely stop and have someone read something to us aloud. This activity is at the very heart of the church. There is the famous story of St. Augustine being amazed that St. Ambrose of Milan was reading the scripture to himself (i.e. not aloud). This speaks to the practice of reading the scripture aloud even when alone that was all but universal in the early church. There is something so beautiful in someone reading something to another person. This is one of the earliest acts of love that a parent does for a child. It expresses an intimate care and attention for that child and that child responds with its own attention and gratitude. Children are taken out of themselves so easily by the story and can treasure it well. I remember a woman who came to the mission who would often get extremely agitated. We found that we were sometimes able to nip these fits at the bud by sitting beside her and forcefully reading a story about Catherine of Aragon and King Henry the VIII that she had liked. Sometimes it felt hopeless because she would be blurting out words and her attention would be taking her other places. But gradually, with time, the rhythm of the reading had a soothing effect on her. Sometimes it would put her to sleep. I can see that the church brings peace in the same way by gently overpowering us with another voice, leading us away from the dark voices within toward a peaceful person we could not reach by ourselves. These days it seems like an act of grace whenever someone is willing to sit or listen or to read to someone at any length (other than a baby). On holy Wednesday at the mission we experienced such a grace. On Wednesday we had what Father Nicolaie described as "a rich well of Scripture" in the chapel where people took turns reading through the gospels at the beginning of the day. There was so much happening at the mission that day but it seemed like the choicest place was right beside the lectern where one could rest and listen to the sound of the moving water...

SHARE THE GOOD NEWS AND REJOICE WITH US

The whole community rejoices at the good news of Karine and Eli's marriage that is going to take place on **Saturday, June 5th (this coming Saturday)**. Please keep them in your prayers during all this time. As they witness to each other the light of the resurrection that shines on their faces and warms their hearts.

Keep in your prayers the catechumens:
Eliana, Wayne, Atty and Madison, Valerie.
Hearer: Veneranda and her daughter and Zachary

Please pray for:

The sick

Vimaladevi
Tharsini and her child.
Sana's Sister going through cancer treatment.
Ann T. Husband
Lynn
Michelle
Emanuel (Mani)
Stefanie
Geoff
Joey
Evangelia
Sophia
Melanie
Césare
Tanya
Piper
Darius
Zamalk; Nelly; Nahla; Mira; Sandral
Brenda
Anna Avairo's daughter going regularly to the emergency room.
Vol Gomaz heart condition and immigration matters
Levlin's two children who are sick
Sri's mother passed away, he is depressed
Helen
BettyAnn and Paul.
Wafaa and Sana sister (cancer)
Rejoice
Romana, Colin, Michael, Peter, Henry, Joanna, George, Kelly; Tom;

Please pray for health and salvation:

Mom waiting for baby Tejasree
Prashastha
Maria and Dingo
Crisent
Helen
Greta

Elizabeth

Dean

John

Liz

Crisent

Ann Brown

Elizabeth

Sifie

Allen

Leon

Ricky and his family from back home for the hope of reuniting

Aaron, Anastas, Olivia, Gelly, Frank, Eva, George, Rebecca, Andreas, Cathyann, Reigan, Stephanie, James, Peter, Christine; Christian family from Bangladesh, Sandra. Peter, Angel, Bless, Grace, Swetha family; Atlaw single mom at shelter, Vernevil family; the family of Kenide

Saathiya; Sena

Vinothiny

Yvienne

Abdul

Sakanthalathevy

Junke

Naimi

Anish

JOSHUA DANIEL -REALLY HEARTFELT REQUEST FOR PRAYER AS HE IS STRUGGLING TO KEEP ON A GOOD PATH

Maria Lolita Soliman Torres, Jonathan , Richard, Richard, Mary , Elizabeth, Michael, Bill, Robert, Alan, Joanne

Please pray for the deceased: Pauanasuy Kamthasang, Maria (Covid), Andrei Agostina ,Carmina, Vimaladevi sister; Sri's mother