

Homily - 3rd Sunday Lent YA

As we are about half way through our Lenten pilgrimage, amidst the many disciplines that we have imposed upon ourselves...the sacrifices that we are making, our attention is turned to one of the images that fill the pages of Sacred Scripture and captures the heart of God: *God is Love*. It is from this image of the heart of God, love, that we come to understand what He is doing for us...His Father's work - a rescue mission, to save us, liberate us from our sins and give us the fullness life. The well known passage from the Gospel of the encounter that the Samaritan woman has with Our Lord is the first example of many which we will be exploring in the next few weeks that shows us this execution of the divine rescue mission.

The first line of the Gospel gives a clue that Our Lord is actively seeking out those who need to be rescued, he went through Samaria. The Jewish people would have normally traveled a longer route from Judea to Galilee by skirting around the eastern side of Samaria along the Jordan River. There have been centuries of animosity between the Jewish people and the Samaritans. The Jewish people believe that the Samaritans had defiled themselves by assimilating the practices of the pagan people that had been settled in the land and intermarrying with them. Both groups took steps to avoid interaction with each other...and this meant that they would take a longer route to get to their destination just to avoid interaction. We see in this move by Our Lord, to cross the boundaries, going through Samaria that He is searching for those who need to be rescued.

No greater person who needed to be rescued would be the Samaritan woman that He would encounter at the well. Everyone in the town knows her story...her messy life...why else would she be out fetching the water from the well at noon time rather than with the rest of the woman in the morning. But as we see, the interaction between Our Lord and this woman plunges into her personal life...Our Lord reads her soul and breaks through her personal boundaries. She is probably thinking, "Here comes another man who is going to judge me." Rather, Our Lord doesn't look at her through her eyes...He doesn't judge...He loves. As the story unfolds, the divine love of Our Lord begins to change this woman. Her faith increases...and so does her perception of Our Lord's identity....it becomes more clear: prophet...Christ...Saviour of the World. At the end of the encounter, she is a believer and a missionary, accepting Our Lord as the Messiah and sharing that belief with her hometown.

Throughout our lives, especially in the season of Lent, Our Lord is on a mission to rescue us. We were made for God...and through sin we had lost that...and through the great love of our Heavenly Father, we are being brought back to Him. In many ways, like the Samaritan woman, we are thirsting for something so much greater than what this world offers. But our sinfulness moves us to go to the stagnant well water of the world that always leaves us coming back for more. If we are honest with ourselves, we go to the well because deep down, we think God doesn't love us, that he cannot love a sinner like me. We think God looks at us through the same eyes through which we look at ourselves. We see our mess. We see our sin. We see our brokenness. And so what do we do, we make excuses that God has abandoned me...or we run away to false idols, things that bring us a fleeting pleasure rather than the life giving love of Our Lord.

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All of this stems from the fact that our image of God, deep down, is a God of justice....not a God who is love. The good news that we hear today is that God is not looking at you with your eyes...He is looking at you with His eyes...eyes that are perfect, eyes that are filled with mercy and love. This is not cheap mercy or cheap love...it is a love that goes beyond our boundaries into the messiness of our life to bring about change...to bring about conversion...to turn away from sin and return to Our Lord...a new way in which we see the world and us within it.

As we progress through the Lenten season, desire to grow in this relationship with Our Lord... for us to know the God who is love....and to receive that love offered particularly for you.