**3rd SUNDAY OF LENT [23rd March, 2014]**

READINGS: Exodus 17:3-7 / Romans 5:1-2, 5-8 / John 4: 5-42

THEME: THE LIVING WATER

By Very Rev. Fr. John Louis ([http://frlouis.com](http://frlouis.com/))

Water sustains life. Hence the slogan, “water is life”. One could, therefore, understand the desperation of the multitudes of Israelites who were thirsty but could find no water in the desert. God, however, had an already-made answer to the water shortage situation. He, who miraculously made a way through the Red Sea and provided the hungry thousands with manna, would soon perform another miracle. Water would flow from where it was least expected – from the hard rock. In other words, God, who has the power to stop the flow of the waters of the Red Sea, has power to make water gush forth from the rock (Exo. 17:5-7).

St. Paul gives a spiritual meaning to this event. He says Jesus Christ is the spiritual Rock from which the spiritual water flows (1 Cor. 10:1-4). This could help us understand today’s gospel reading in which Jesus told the Samaritan woman that He is the giver of living Water (John. 4:10). If Jesus is the spiritual Rock, who then is the living Water? St. John provides us with the answer. He writes: ‘On the last and greatest day of the Feast, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink.Whoever believes in me, asthe Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him." By this Jesus meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified’ (John 7:37-39).

So the Holy Spirit is the living Water. Secondly, according to St. John, only after the glorification (i.e. death and resurrection) of Jesus did the Holy Spirit, the living Water, begin to flow into the lives of believers. In other words, just as the (wooden) rod of Moses became the instrument to let water flow for the Israelites, so the (wooden) cross of Calvary has become the instrument by which the Holy Spirit, living Water, flows from Jesus, the spiritual Rock.

Even today the living Water flows in abundance. The sacrament of baptism is the first occasion of special grace in which the living Water flows in abundance into our lives. At every baptism the cross of Jesus opens the spiritual Rock for the living Water to flow. For, as St. Paul says, in baptism we die and rise with Christ (Rom. 6:3-4). Thus, while ordinary water is being poured on us, the living Water flows in us. Secondly, the sacrament of confirmation is another occasion of special grace for the abundant flow of the living Water in our lives.

Sin is, however, an obstacle to the flow of the living Water; whereas by repentance and God’s forgiveness this obstacle is removed away. That is why Jesus, who assured the Samaritan woman that He is the giver of the living Water, was interested in her conversion. Eventually, the woman acknowledged her sins of having lived with several men. Then the prospect of receiving the living Water made her so excited that she literally abandoned the ordinary water she had gone to fetch from Jacob’s well. She immediately went to the town to tell her townspeople, and soon many of them were also converted: they believed in Jesus as the Messiah.

Beloved in Christ, the season of Lent is a special opportunity to reflect on how the Holy Spirit, the living Water, is working in our lives. Are there venial sins in my life which have reduced the flow of the living Water to that of a trickling stream? Or have mortal sins become like the great walls of a dam preventing the flow of the living Water in my life? The living Water is most powerful and yet most gentle. He can remove every obstacle; He can destroy every dam, yet He is so gentle that He does not act against our wish. He wants us to call upon Him to act. Therefore, today, let us pray that He will break down every obstacle or dam in our lives and flow in abundance. Amen!