

Third Sunday of Lent

March 8, 2026

A quarrelsome bunch.

Jesus said, "Give me a drink."

Love poured into our hearts.

-rvb.

Monday of the Third Week of Lent. -March 9.

2 Kings 5:1-5 – To kiss a leper/ Watery flesh brings new life/ Proclaiming one Lord.

Luke 4:24-39 – Unpopular words/ A leprosy of the heart/ Local boy makes good.

Prayer. I am called to be a prophet in today's world. Give me the wisdom and discernment of your Spirit.

Coping with stress. Turn needs into preferences. Our basic physical needs translate into food, water, and keeping cool or warm. Everything else is a preference, do not get attached to preferences.

Two Good Deeds for personal growth and the welfare of others:

- 1. Be Prudent. Be bold and daring, but at the same time exercise caution. A touch of practicality never hurts anyone; it helps you to be more ready for what is ahead.**
- 2. Be Purposeful. Pursue a cause that is higher and larger than you. When you do that, you will naturally grow into someone bigger than who you are today. Pursuing my purpose to help others grow has made me embark on journeys and make decisions that I would not have pursued if I was just living my life for myself.**

Quotation. “Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses, yearning to breathe free. The wretched, refuse of your teeming shore, send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed to me.” Emma Lazarus –Statue of Liberty

Tuesday of the Third Week of Lent. -March 10.

Daniel 3:25, 34-43 – Daniel, fiery red/ aflame with the love of God/ Forgive his people.

Matthew 18:21-35 – Three times and four times/ Merciful without ending/ Go and do likewise.

Prayer. Lord, give me the fire of your love. Set me aflame to consume others with gentleness and kindness.

Coping with stress: Simplify, simplify, simplify.

Two Good Deeds for personal growth and the welfare of others:

- 3. Be Peaceful. Where you have a choice, go for peace over violence. The latter solves nothing but creates more pain. The former is the start of a healing journey.**
- 4. Be Persistent. No matter what you do, never give up. You will achieve whatever you set out to do if you have the will to do it. The only time when giving up is the way to go is when your priorities change and you realize the goal you were pursuing is not what you want anymore.**

Quotation. “All the people like us are We. And everyone else is They.” Rudyard Kipling (1865-1936)

Wednesday of the Third Week of Lent. -March 11.

Deuteronomy 4:1,5-9 – Ears itchy for laws/ Cogitate and assimilate/ Share them with your kids.

Matthew 5:17-19 – A radical norm/ Jesus is the better way/ Follow Him, not it.

Prayer. God, you have made a covenant with me and have asked me to follow your law of love who is Jesus the fulfillment of your law.

Coping with stress. Promote friends with positive and up-beat individuals.

Two Good Deeds for personal growth and the welfare of others:

- 1. Be Sensitive to others' needs and feelings. Always check to make sure you are not neglecting anyone.**
 - Do not Impose. Imposing means forcing your opinion on others. It is okay to offer your opinion, but if others are not taking it, then there is no need to repeat it. Keep it to yourself.**
 - Do not give unwanted advice. One of the biggest problems people face in relationships is when the other party tries to dispense advice that is not needed. Many times, people converse as a way of sharing. Check if the other party is looking for advice first before you try to offer your two cents. It may help prevent unnecessary conflicts.**

- 2. Dedicate yourself to service. It is said that service to others is the highest thing one can ever do in life. Think about how you can contribute to others and this world. And dedicate yourself to it.**

Quotation. “America, it would seem, is miraculously both singular and plural, organized and scattered, united and diffused.” Henry Kariel (1924-1990)

Thursday of the Third Week of Lent. - March 12.

Jeremiah 7:23-28 – A motley people/ Cold hearts, stiff necks, and wild/ God is aborted.

Luke 11:14-23 – Good versus evil/ Peeling away Satan’s skin/ The kingdom stands firm.

Prayer. Loving God, it is in your presence that I sink or soar, continue to lift me on eagle’s wings.

Coping with stress: Get up from sitting and stretch limbs and quad exercises up and down slowly. I do quad exercises while brushing my teeth, waiting for the microwave to warm my coffee, and walking up and down the stairs several times. As we age, strong quads are important: we still must get on and off the toilet, in and out of a car, and up from and sitting in a chair.

Two Good Deeds for personal growth and the welfare of others:

- 1. Be Organized. The state of your life now reflects how organized you are. If everything is constantly in a mess, it suggests you are disorganized in how you manage yourself. When you are organized, you create structure, stability, and predictability — which frees up your resources to pursue new goals.**
- 2. Be Patient. Do you get irritated when someone is late? Time is fluid; it’s a construct created to help us organize our schedules. Learn to be present and live in the moment instead. Impatience breeds anxiety: Patience brings calmness.**

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Friday of the Third Week of Lent. -March 13.

Hosea 14:2-10- Exhausted with guilt/ God refreshes them with love/ Mercy flows freely.

**Mark 12: 28-34 – Love the Lord your God/ with all your heart and mind/
Hear O Israel.**

Prayer. Look into my heart, draw forth the spirit of my Love, and let your tender mercies flow freely upon everyone.

Coping with stress. Seek the recommended number of hours for sleeping – 7 to 9 hours, depending upon your circadian rhythms.

Two Good Deeds for personal growth and the welfare of others:

- 1. Be Optimistic / Positive. For life is too short to be negative.**

Do not complain. Complaining generates all this negative energy that makes you no different than an “energy vampire.” While it is okay to vent occasionally, be conscious of the times when you do that. Cut down on the time you spend complaining and think about what you can do about the situation instead. Transform a problem into a solution.

Smile. How often do you smile a day? Smiling is something we do not do enough. Whether you are out on the streets or at work, it is more common to see people with stoic expressions and hard frowns than smiles. The next time you see someone, even a stranger, smile at them. You will be surprised how many people will return the smile. Even if they do not, trust that they have been warmed by your smile.

- 2. Laugh. As they say, laughter is the best medicine. Learn to laugh at the jokes people make, at the obstacles you are facing, at the mistakes you are making, and at the mystery that is life.**

Quotation. “We have just enough religion to make us hate. But not enough to make us love one another.” (Jonathan Swift (1667-1745))

Saturday of the Third Week of Lent. – March 14.

Hosea 6:1-6 – Schizophrenic God/ One who loves and chastises/ Purifying rain.

Luke 18:9-14 – Oversized ego/ Like Alka-seltzers dissolves/ In God’s wet presence.

Prayer. God, it is mercy, love, knowledge, and compassion that you desire, not mere words from the lips of my busy and distracted head.

Coping with stress. Create order out of chaos or disorganization. Handle each piece of paper only once or know exactly where items are, cars hanging on a hook in the laundry room.

Two Good Deeds for personal growth and the welfare of others:

- 1. Be Nurturing. There’s always ability in everyone. How can you nurture it and bring it out of each person?**
 - Recognize the strengths in others. Our society today has eased into a state where we keep looking at what we *lack* or do not have, as opposed to what we *already have*. The former is a scarcity mindset, while the latter is one of abundance. Rather than think about what is missing in someone (be it a character trait, knowledge, ability, or something else), focus on their *strengths*. What do they have? What are they good at? What do you like about them? Focus on these vs. what you do not like.**
- 2. Be Open-Minded. Be ready to accept different beliefs, attitudes, personalities, cultures, practices, rituals, lifestyles, habits, races, nationalities, diets, etc., for everyone is different. No one thing is right; it is just a matter of what works best for the individual.**

Quotation. “Anti-Semitism is a noxious weed that should be cut out. It has no place in America. William Howard Taft (1857-1930)

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Reading I

[Exodus 17:3-7](#)

In those days, in their thirst for water,
the people grumbled against Moses,
saying, “Why did you ever make us leave Egypt?
Was it just to have us die here of thirst
with our children and our livestock?”

**So Moses cried out to the LORD,
“What shall I do with this people?
a little more and they will stone me!”**

The LORD answered Moses,
“Go over there in front of the people,
along with some of the elders of Israel,
holding in your hand, as you go,
the staff with which you struck the river.

I will be standing there in front of you on the rock in Horeb.
Strike the rock, and the water will flow from it
for the people to drink.”

This Moses did, in the presence of the elders of Israel.

The place was called Massah and Meribah,
because the Israelites quarreled there
and tested the LORD, saying,

“Is the LORD in our midst or not?”

A reflection, exegesis, and commentary on the scriptures.

Wow, God bless Moses for his patience with these grumblers and mumblers who sound like “spoiled brats” or “trust babies.” How quickly the Israelites had forgotten the crossing of the Red (Reed) Sea, and their freedom from the weight of the brick yards where they were enslaved. While not necessarily within the faith purview or experience of the Hebrews, God is a covenant God, a faithful, loyal, and saving God. In this reading, he is a nourishing God, a parent, a father, and a mother to them. Unfortunately, the ungrateful ones forgot their source, the life, and the covenant God initiated with them. What a letdown and disappointment God had to endure. He is like the comedian Rodney Dangerfield and his famous comment, “I get no respect!”

The wilderness is a place of testing. Being thirsty, they put God to the test. The water struck from the rock is the symbol for life, the life-giving presence of God. In a sense, they are “sick souls” whose brokenness will eventually move them in the direction of being made whole. They more than likely continue to be tested and attempt to put God on the spot. They will continue to experience sadness, despair, tears, and moans and groans of pain. “No one is as whole as he who has a broken heart,” says Rabbi Moshe Leib. For our own mental health, in the classic work “The Varieties of Religious Experience,” William James

distinguishes between the “once-born,” or the “healthy-minded” and the “twice-born” or “sick souls.” The “once-born” knows no doubts. They are self-confident and self-possessed, confident that all will work out for the best. The “sick souls” have no direction, unity, or coherence in their lives. For to be human is, after all, to be other than God. It is only in embracing our torn selves that one can hope for whatever healing is available, and thus they can become as “whole” as possible. There is hope for the Hebrews. Scriptures do offer great insights into becoming a psychologically healthy person and nurturing a “sound mind in a sound body”.

Responsorial Psalm

[Psalm 95:1-2, 6-7, 8-9](#)

R. (8) If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts.

Come, let us sing joyfully to the LORD;

let us acclaim the Rock of our salvation.

Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving;

let us joyfully sing psalms to him.

R. If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts.

Come, let us bow down in worship;

let us kneel before the LORD who made us.

For he is our God,

and we are the people he shepherds, the flock he guides.

R. If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts.

Oh, that today you would hear his voice:

“Harden not your hearts as at Meribah,

as in the day of Massah in the desert,

Where your fathers tempted me;

they tested me though they had seen my works.”
R. If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts.

Reading II

[Romans 5:1-2, 5-8](#)

Brothers and sisters:

Since we have been **justified by faith**,
we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,
through whom we have gained access by faith
to this grace in which we stand,
and **we boast in hope of the glory of God.**

And hope does not disappoint,
because the **love of God has been poured out into our hearts**
through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.
For Christ, while we were still helpless,
died at the appointed time for the ungodly.
Indeed, only with difficulty does one die for a just person,
though perhaps for a good person one might even find courage to die.
But God proves his love for us
in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us.

A reflection, exegesis, and commentary on the scriptures.

The following phrases from Romans highlight the three theological virtues—

“Justified by **faith**,” “and we boast in the **hope** of the glory of God;” -
“But God proves his **love** for us.” These virtues are the life-giving presence of God fundamental to the Christian life. Christ has given access to God’s presence, and a new experience of divine grace, which means God’s willingness to have dealings with sinful humanity, and in

this sense is the same as His love for us. This creates a new outlook on life and the hope of ultimate salvation.

For Paul, the Christian faith life involves justification, reconciliation, and the hope of salvation. In verses 1 and 2, we are promised peace and joy in hope. Verses 3-5 speak of Christian hope, “God’s love poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit.” Finally, in verses 6-8, Paul emphasizes the foundation of Christian hope, “God shows his love for us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” Like St. Paul, John Climacus, in The Ladder of Divine Ascent, stresses the centrality of faith, hope, and love: John Climacus expresses it this way -

“And now, at last, after all that has been said, there remains that triad: **faith, hope, and love binding and securing the union of all. But the greatest of these is love since it is the very nature of God himself.” As we journey through life, says William of St. Thierry, we are sustained by faith and hope; and if we do not have them, our lives begin to crumble and fall apart. On the other hand, John Climacus believes that faith and hope do more than sustain our life as it moves us towards perfection. “Faith and Hope are the power behind Love. Faith and Hope are what causes us to look**

**forward to the reward of Love...when faith and hope fail, so does
love.” -William of St. Thierry.**

Verse Before the Gospel

[John 4:42, 15](#)

**Lord, you are truly the Savior of the world;
give me living water, that I may never thirst again.**

Gospel

[John 4:5-15, 19b-26, 39a, 40-42](#)

**Jesus came to a town of Samaria called Sychar,
near the plot of land that Jacob had given to his son Joseph.
Jacob’s well was there.
Jesus, tired from his journey, sat down there at the well.
It was about noon.**

A woman of Samaria came to draw water.

Jesus said to her,

“Give me a drink.”

His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.

The Samaritan woman said to him,

“How can you, a Jew, ask me, a Samaritan woman, for a drink?”

—For Jews use nothing in common with Samaritans.—

Jesus answered and said to her,

**“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.”**

The woman said to him,

**“Sir, you do not even have a bucket and the cistern is deep;
where then can you get this living water?**

**Are you greater than our father Jacob,
who gave us this cistern and drank from it himself**

with his children and his flocks?”

Jesus answered and said to her,

“Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again;
but whoever drinks the water I shall give will never thirst;
the water I shall give will become in him
a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”

The woman said to him,

“Sir, give me this water, so that I may not be thirsty

or have to keep coming here to draw water.

“I can see that you are a prophet.

Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain;
but you people say that the place to worship is in Jerusalem.”

Jesus said to her,

“Believe me, woman, the hour is coming
when you will worship the Father
neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem.

You people worship what you do not understand;
we worship what we understand,
because salvation is from the Jews.

But the hour is coming, and is now here,
when true worshipers will worship the Father in Spirit and truth;
and indeed the Father seeks such people to worship him.

God is Spirit, and those who worship him
must worship in Spirit and truth.”

The woman said to him,

“I know that the Messiah is coming, the one called the Christ;
when he comes, he will tell us everything.”

Jesus said to her,

“I am he, the one who is speaking with you.”

Many of the Samaritans of that town began to believe in him.

When the Samaritans came to him,
they invited him to stay with them;
and he stayed there two days.

Many more began to believe in him because of his word,
and they said to the woman,

“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.”

A reflection, exegesis, and commentary on the scriptures.

The Gospel story of the woman at the well is a powerful story of a woman who gradually drinks from the source of living water as she arrives at the threshold of her faith life. There is a movement from the physical to the spiritual. Jesus’ dialogue with the woman takes place on two levels in verses 4-26:

1. A discourse on living water, and 2. A discourse on the nature of true worship. In verses 27-38, Jesus dialogues with his disciples who remain mired in the physical world. Finally, in verses 37-42, the woman rushes to the village where the villagers are converted, accept and confess Jesus as their savior.

The story paints a portrait of Jesus as he is identified as Lord, man, Jew, prophet, messiah, healer, master, sanctifier, and savior. As a savior, Jesus interacts with the sinner (verses 1-30); with the sower (31-38); with the Samaritan (39-42), and finally with the sick (43-54). The well is deep, but we have been given Jesus, the bucket, to help us draw water from the source. As the saying goes, “When you drink from the well, remember the source.” John Shea, theologian and storyteller,

shares his own vision of “The Woman at the Well” as he begins: “Give me a drink,” she whispered. “What,” said the man, “you, a woman and a Samaritan, ask me a Jew and a man for a drink.” With her lips still wet she said to the man, “Sometimes the yoke and buckets cut into my flesh so bad I want to yell with pain, but I never do.” It was just as he had finished his revelation of her to herself that she saw the other men. His friends were coming towards them. “They will be scandalized to see me here with you,” she said. “Probably,” the man responded. Then she could not get to the village quickly enough. Once there, she went from house to house and told people about a man who was not just another man who taught her how to drink. She stood in the middle of the people and proclaimed: “I met a man who told me everything I did.” She laughed high and long. Some of the villagers said it sounded like she had a fountain of living water springing up inside her. Let those who have ears to hear, hear this story. Let those who have eyes to see, see this scene. Let those who have buckets of faith drink from this well of eternal life.

Final Prayer: Well, Lord, anything can happen at a well. Your son, Jesus invites us to the Eucharistic springs of new life. May we drink fully of

your Son's words of life and real presence as we exclaim, "I am one with the Lord."

Roger J. Vanden Busch – Wishing blessings for you and your loved ones.