

# Do all things without Grumbling

## **Lectio Divina of the third Sunday in Lent A**

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**Opening Prayer:** Heavenly Father, we bless and glorify Your name for Your graciousness towards us and for Your day by day provision You have faithfully provided for us and our families all our lives. Thank You that you are always faithful to Your promises of provision. Lord, it is a great comfort to know that You know everything about us and You know the needs we have before they arise, and You faithfully set in motion the answers to my prayers even before we call. Lord, even though the answers to our prayers may sometimes be delayed, we so often see Your hand of blessing in so many other ways. Thank You for the way that You have used difficulties and delays to perfect and develop our trust in You. And Lord, although we do not always understand when things do not work out the way that we expect, we do thank You that You have always been there to provide for our needs in Your time and in Your way. Keep our heart ever thankful for Your gracious provision and loving kindness towards us and may we grow in grace and come to know You more and more in the days that lie ahead. **In Jesus' name we pray - Amen.**

**First Reading:** A reading from the book of 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?" (**The Word of the Lord / Thanks be to God**)

**Commentary:** Grumbling, murmuring and complaining have become part of human life. Some complain about everyone and everything. They show how worldly we are (James 4:1-3). A complaining spirit leads to fighting and quarreling because complaints come from unfulfilled desires, which lead to envy and strife. The Israelites complained to Moses about lack of water in their journey although they had witnessed the miraculous provision of water and Manna earlier. Moses is asked to strike the rock to quench the thirst of the people and Moses did and the Lord provided water for the people. In spite of the mighty deeds God had done for their liberation from Egypt, the people continued to complain. It is astounding to see their lack of Faith. The Lord tells us that we should not complain in Philippians 2:14-15: Do all things without grumbling or disputing, that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast to the word of life.

**Responsorial Psalm 95 *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.**

**Second Reading:** A reading from the book of 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 **(The Word of the Lord/Thanks be to God)**

**Commentary:** St. Paul is reiterating that since we have faith in God, we are counted as righteous. He emphasizes that we are made righteous in God's sight apart from anything we do. Christ did not die for us because we were good people; He died for sinners which includes everyone. Faith is the admission that we cannot justify ourselves. It is God who will grant us justification by His grace.

**Gospel Reading:** A reading from the gospel according to St. John 4:5-42 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." Jesus said to her, "Go call your husband and come back." The woman answered and said to him, "I do not have a husband." Jesus answered her, "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. What you have said is true." The woman said to him, "Sir, 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 speaking with you." At that moment his disciples returned, and were amazed that he was talking with a woman, but still no one said, "What are you looking for?" or "Why are you talking with her?" The woman left her water jar and went into the town and said to the people, "Come see a man who told me everything I have done. Could he possibly be the Christ?" They went out of the town and came to him.

Meanwhile, the disciples urged him, "Rabbi, eat." But he said to them, "I have food to eat of which you do not know." So the disciples said to one another, "Could someone have brought him something to eat?" Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of the one who sent me and to finish his work. Do you not say, 'In four months the harvest will be here'? I tell you, look up and see the fields ripe for the harvest. The reaper is already receiving payment and gathering crops for eternal life, so that the sower and reaper can rejoice together. For here the saying is verified that 'One sows and another reaps.' I sent you to reap what you have not worked for; others have done the work, and you are sharing the fruits of their work."

Many of the Samaritans of that town began to believe in him because of the word of the woman who testified, "He told me everything I have done." 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." (**The gospel of Our Lord Jesus Christ/ Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ**)

**Meditation:** Who were the Samaritans? After the northern kingdom, with its capital Samaria, fell to the Assyrians, many Jews were deported to Assyria and foreigners were brought in to settle the land and they lived with the remaining Israelites (2 Kings 17:24). The intermarriage between those foreigners and the remaining Jews resulted in a mixed race. The Jews in the Southern kingdom considered this mixing as an impure and thus the pure Jews hated this mixed race and called them Samaritans because they felt that their fellow Jews who had intermarried had betrayed their people and nation. So what we need to know is that the Samaritans were originally the Jews. The animosity between the Jews and the Samaritans grew in all aspects. The Jews would not accept them in their religious worship places and that is why the Samaritans had to set up an alternate center for worship on **Mount Gerizim** to parallel the temple at Jerusalem. The Jews did everything they could to avoid traveling through Samaria. When the Samaritans wanted to help the Jews to reconstruct the temple under the leadership of Nehemiah, the Jews would not accept even their help (Ezra 4).

Even during Jesus' time this hatred feelings, bitterness and enmity were very strong. Even the disciples of Jesus hated them. We see the hatred feeling in the words of the apostle John who said, "**Lord, do you want us to call fire down from heaven to destroy the Samaritans?**" (Luke 9:54) But Jesus had a different perspective of the Samaritans. In the parable of the Good Samaritan, Jesus presents the Samaritan as a compassionate, kind and caring person for the wounded Jew to whom the Samaritans were untouchables. In this Samaritan woman episode, Jesus presents her as the one deserving grace no matter what she had been before. Jesus went beyond the cultural restrictions of his time.

Women used to fetch water from the public wells twice day morning and evening. This woman came at noon, probably to avoid meeting people who knew her reputation as a sinner. Secondly, she was an untouchable to the Jews. No respectable Jewish man would talk to a woman under such circumstances. But Jesus did. The tiresome and thirsty Jesus initiated personal dialogue with her asking, "**Woman, where is your husband?**" **The woman said, "I don't have a husband."** Jesus said, "**I know. You have had five husbands and you are messing up with the sixth one.**" Jesus' knowledge about her personal life would have been a great embarrassment for her but the intention of Jesus was not to shame her publicly but to make her aware of her immediate need. What did she need? She needed life giving water from Jesus, not physical water from the well. The amazing part of the conversation is neither condemnation nor judgment for her immoral life but tenderness and compassion for her. And this is the way Jesus dealt with so many sinners like Zacchaeus the chief tax collector, woman caught in the act of adultery. Love for the sinner, no condemnation absolutely and at the same time not condoning the sinful life. This is what we do towards those who are away from God and Christian faith and Morals. And that is the way that Jesus feels about us.

Jesus loves us in spite of our sinfulness that does not mean he condones our sinful behavior. He did not condone the sins of the woman and he does not condone us when we commit sin. What he does during our sinful moment is giving what we need at that moment. So instead of condemnation, Jesus offers his compassion and understanding towards her by giving life giving water. The second insight that we must notice in this story is Jesus' personal knowledge about each of us. we can cheat people but not God who knows the ins and outs of each of us even before we were born. When Jesus became personal with her and started asking embarrassing questions about her five husbands, she tried to cleverly change the subject and talk about religion. She didn't want Jesus to get into her personal stuff but Jesus wanted to free her, forgive her and shape her life in a new direction. Jesus wanted to offer this woman the living water. And that is the way God works with us. **Jesus comes into our personal lives, not to embarrass us, not to judge us, not to condemn us but to free us and change us and offer us what we really need: living water.**

**But what is this living water?** Jesus is the living water and the Samaritan woman not only accepted Jesus as the prophet but also became an instrument to bring many Samaritans to accept Jesus as their Messiah (Jn 4:39- 42). Jesus is our living water to quench our spiritual thirst. The living word, Jesus Christ, and the written word, the Bible can satisfy our hungry and thirsty souls. When we read and meditate his eternal word, when we pray, receive him in the Holy Communion, when we turn to his mercy in the Sacrament of Reconciliation we receive living water from Jesus. As our bodies hunger and thirst, so do our souls. Jesus's body and blood is our soul food.

**Concluding Prayer:** O, heavenly Father, we thank you for your goodness and for your blessings over us. Thank you for your great love and care, mercy and grace. Lord, may we cultivate the attitude of gratitude for your blessings and providential care instead of grumbings, complaints and murmurings. May we look back and thank you. We thank you for food and remember the hungry. We thank you for health and remember the sick. We thank you for friends and remember the friendless. We thank you for freedom and remember the enslaved. May these remembrances stir us to service, that your gifts to us may be used for others. (Hail Mary..Blessings)