

BECOMING THE PARISH GOD CALLS US TO BE

Lent seems to have taken off full speed. Here we are starting the third week. And if you are like me, I am not as far along as I thought I would be. The Stations of the Cross last week were led by families. I would like to thank Cathy and Julie and the families who prepared their children to be the voice that invited our community to prayer. I would like to thank Sister Margaret Anne and the Adult Faith Formation Team who provided the community with a simple pasta meal before our Stations. A simple meal goes a long way. Last Sunday we gathered during the afternoon with the SPICE Community. Our inclusion of those families who have been graced by God with children with special needs reminds us of the joy God shares with us in amazing ways. Once again having a special liturgy focusing on their desires to listen quietly, touch and feel the texture of the church that surrounds them is a blessing. Thanks to all who made this happen.

On Saturday all those who signed up to become liturgical ministers gathered for prayer and training. We are still in need of Ushers at all of the Masses. It is a commitment of just once a month and the ministry is open to couples. It is our hope to have everyone feel welcome. Our Worship Commission has been doing an awesome job behind the scenes to prepare for the high Holy Days that are approaching. Everyone pitching in helps to make our parish all that God calls us to be.

During the next weeks our Elect, those who have been called this year to celebrate the Sacraments of Baptism, Eucharist and Confirmation at the Easter Vigil will kneel with us in the rituals called the Scrutinies. We gather with them to call out sin in our lives. They are the ones leading us in these moments. May we participate in these rituals with an openness. I would like to thank Deacon Dave and his team for their hard work to prepare our entire group who will lead us to the joys of Easter.

Please keep them in your prayers.



Father John

LIVING THIS MOMENT IN OUR THIRST

How many times do we open the refrigerator door? How often do we fill our drink bottles? Thirst drives us. While our body thirsts for certain things, many times our hearts thirst for something different. In a simpler time when we were young, our cares and concerns were met by the food on the table, the roof over our heads and usually enough hot water to go around. So we longed and thirsted for other things. We might have been hungry for quality time when we could feel we were the only one who mattered in the world. We were thirsty for a love that was communicated in the warmth of a parent's affection for a child. Quality time fulfilled so much longing and it completed our very selves without us even knowing it.

As our journey takes us into more years of life, that for which we thirst changes, gets more complex and complicated. I think one of the reasons mission trips are so important to me is that they help me to get in touch with the simple, basic thirsts within me and others. I see in the eyes of the children a joy that comes from a scoop of rice and beans added to their plate. I see the dancing that takes place when a rain comes after a long drought even though it lasts for only ten minutes. I can remember being on these trips feeling afraid and wanting to wake up the next morning without cockroaches and lizards covering my body and my bed. There is a link between fear and thirst. The woman at the well was afraid of her sinfulness, embarrassed by her way of life. She avoided the crowd who would go to the well at an earlier time during the day. She sought to quench her thirst when no one was watching. Her sin was always before her. Her basic need of water drew her to the well, but the complications of her life and the fear of confrontation dictated the time.

In a time when she wasn't prepared, Jesus meets her at the well. Her dialogue is one of defense. She points out Jesus has no bucket and that He is breaking the law by talking to a woman. She mentions to Him that He is not on the right side of town. Jesus very patiently brings her back to the simplicity of what she is really thirsting for. Beyond the water, she longs for peace within herself and peace with others. As He offers her a drink of what she really needs and is afraid to ask for, Jesus transforms her life.

We long to have Jesus transform our lives. We long to have Jesus offer us life-giving water. We long so we can thirst no more, so that a wellspring can flow forth from us and just flood the streets of the hearts of all who surround us. But often times it seems as if the water was cut off, that we forgot to pay the bill. The source of the wellspring is dry. Jesus will never turn off the water; the wellspring is not dry and He already paid the bill by dying on the cross. So why do we not feel it? Why do we seem to be thirsting for the wrong things at times?

Thirst is simple. My journey to the wellspring is hard. I must strip away every false thirst, every deterrent. I must realize the things of this world cannot and will never satisfy me. I must touch a thirst within that needs God's love and I must be willing to make it such a priority that the mirage of thirsting for things of this world - comfort, success, security—fades away. Living in this moment, drinking up only what Jesus gives as a gift is the wellspring. The only compass we need to find it is simplicity.

May our thirst lead us to the only true wellspring owned and operated by the Lord.



Reverend John J. Ouper