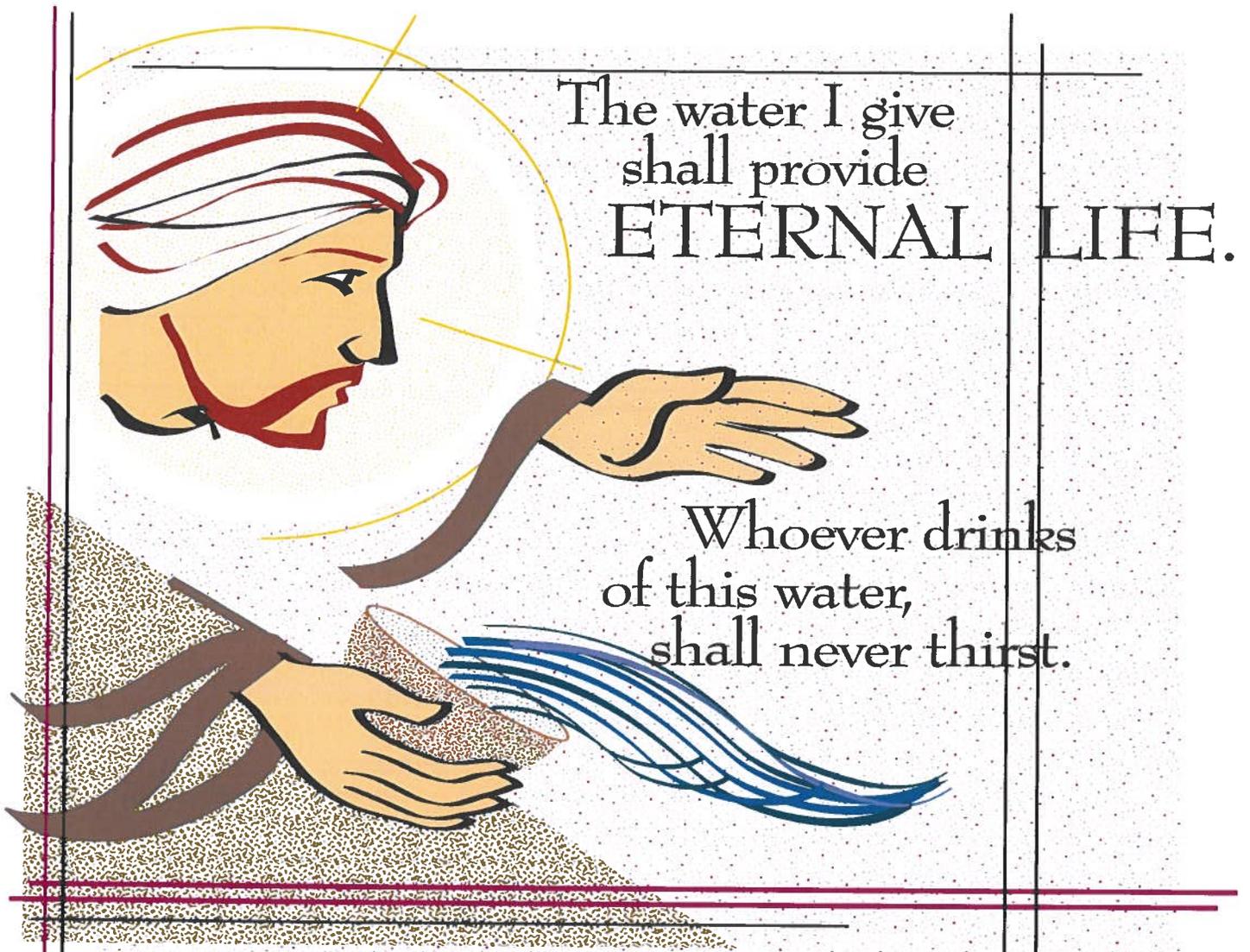


The Roman Catholic Parishes of
St. Margaret Mary, Herscher
St. James the Apostle, Irwin

THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT

MARCH 7-8, 2026



The water I give
shall provide
ETERNAL LIFE.

Whoever drinks
of this water,
shall never thirst.

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Weekend Masses:

St. Margaret Mary Sat. 5:00 pm Sun. 10:30 am

Sacred Heart Sun. 7:30 am

St. James Sun 9:00 am

Confessions:

St. Margaret Mary Sat. 4:15 pm -4:45pm

Church Mailing Address: 207 E. 5th Street Herscher, IL 60941 Phone: 815-426-2550

Quotable: "Start being brave about everything, driving out darkness and spreading light as well. Don't look at your weakness but realize that in Christ crucified you can do everything."

—Saint Catherine of Siena

Fourth Sunday of Lent				March 14-15, 2026	
Liturgical Schedule	St. Margaret Mary Saturday, March 14 5:00 pm	Sacred Heart Sunday, March 15 7:30 am	St. James Sunday, March 15 9:00 am	St. Margaret Mary Sunday, March 15 10:30 am	
Celebrant	Fr. Ron	Fr. Ron Deacon Ron	Fr. Ron	Fr. Ron	
Ushers	Bob Schultz Roger Jensen Gery Wright Dave Emling	David Kirkpatrick Kyle Ferris	Dallas Ferris Jeff Martin Jeff Steinke Arlen Hansen	Larry Wolles Joe Smolkovich Wayne Bisailon Sean Riordan	
Lector	Rob Landeck	Cindy Gagnon	Mary Peerbolte	Mary Hope Pleckam	
Eucharistic Minister			Carrie Abrassart	Susan Feller	
Servers				Avery Adams	
Greeters			Greeter—Donna Bernicky R. Leader—Rita Thiesen	Julie Splear	

Mass Intentions for the Week

Monday, March 9 (SMM)

8:00 am +Laura Jensen (Howard & Jan Schonhoff)

Tuesday, March 10 (SH)

8:00 am +Adam Andrzejewski (Jackie Cross)

Wednesday, March 11 (SJ)

8:00 am +Jacob Peters (The Family)

Friday, March 13

8:00am +Cindy Frerichs (Larry & Judy Hansen)

Saturday, March 14 (SMM)

5:00 pm +Mary Polvere (Jackie Eberle)
+Jeanne Alice Regnier (Pat Gray)

Sunday, March 15

7:30 am (SH) +Leland Denault (Joe & Tina Petersen)
+Duane Ferris (The Family)
9:00 am (SJ) +Pat Perreault (Gene & Pattie Storer)
+Jeff Cooley (Maryanne Cooley)
10:30 am (SMM) All the Parish Family

Looking Ahead

Monday, March 16—SMM CCW meeting 7pm
Monday, March 30—7 Last Words 7pm SH
Tuesday, March 31—Confessions 7PM SJ
Wed., April 1—Tenebrae 7pm SMM
Thursday, April 3—Holy Thursday 7pm SH
Friday, April 4—Good Friday 7pm SMM
Saturday, April 5—Easter Vigil 7pm SJ
Thursday, April 9—SH CCW Spring Luncheon
Thursday, April 16—SMM Night in Italy

Pastor— Fr. Ron Neitzke- 815-426-2550
Deacon – Ron Gagnon— rjgckg@aol.com
Home—815-933-4077
Parish Email – smm_sja_sh@yahoo.com
TriParish web page – www.triparishcatholics.org
Like us on Facebook [triparishcatholiccommunities](https://www.facebook.com/triparishcatholiccommunities)
Tri Parish Church office –Barb Riker 426-2550
Julie Bisailon 426-2550
Bulletin – Debbie Jensen - 426-2550 debjen04@gmail.com
Religious Education –
St. MM – Jill Fulton jfulton.stmm@gmail.com
Sacred Heart – Rhonda Berns – 426-5015
St. James—Tanhya Osenga tosenga81@gmail.com
Parish Nurse – Jackie Eberle – 815-421-4048
Prayer Line—
SMM -Janice 815-426-2574 Jdstreefarms@aol.com
St. James— Mary Offerman—602-670-8888 (call or text)
Sacred Heart-Marilyn Pfeiffer 815-955-8246 (call or text)
Terri Weakley— 815-514-8171



Collections Weekend of March 1-2, 2026

St. Margaret Mary—\$1.997

St. James—\$2.689

Sacred Heart— \$ 1.933

Sacred Heart Kids Helping Kids Fundraisers

The Sacred Heart Religious Ed students will be selling 50/50 raffle tickets after mass on March 8.

There will be a "Donut Sunday" on March 15 in the Hall after 7:30 mass. We will be serving donuts, coffee cake, muffins and bagels. There will be a "free will" offering for this with 100% of the proceeds benefiting Ronald McDonald House. There will also be raffle baskets and the drawing for the 50/50 winner. Please join the kids in helping raise money for Ronald McDonald House.

Gospel Shorts- Dirty Rags Transformed

In these days of worldwide evangelistic crusades and televised ministries to millions, we sometimes miss the power of a simple act of unconditional love offered in Christ's name. Think about the people you have lunch with, or your neighbor who has been beaten repeatedly by her husband. You are the one Christ calls to offer his gift of cleansing love to their thirsty hearts.

Jesus did the same thing himself. He met a woman who came to a well for a drink and encountered a source of Living Water she never knew existed. It all began when Jesus cared enough to speak lovingly and affirmingly to her.

Reflection— Use Your Uniqueness

Each of us has been uniquely created. None of us has all the "talents"; it takes all of us to be Christ to the world of today. Since "evangelization" is defined as spreading the word to others helping them grow and put on Christ, each of us must do our evangelizing using our uniqueness. Some may be "apostles, preachers, teachers." Others may be "healers, peacemakers or listeners."

THE SEASON OF LENT

Prepare your heart for the Lord

Every Friday of Lent is an obligatory day of fasting and abstinence for Catholics. Fasting is required for individuals between the ages of 18 and 59. On fasting days, a person may eat one full meal and two smaller meals, which together should not equal the amount of the full meal.

The obligation of abstinence from meat applies to all Catholics age 14 and older. Those who are exempt from fasting and abstinence outside the specified age limits include individuals who are physically or mentally ill, such as those with chronic conditions like diabetes, as well as pregnant or nursing women.

Lenten Devotions for the 3rd Week of Lent

Tuesday March 10th Evening Prayer 7PM at SJ

Wednesday March 11th Scriptural Stations of the Cross 7PM at SJ

Friday March 13th Traditional Stations of the Cross 3PM at SJ

Parish News:

All Parishes—

- ⇒ Herscher Council of Churches is looking for drivers to deliver meals in Herscher please call Jackie Eberle 815- 421-4048
- ⇒ Tri-Parish Office Hours— Our office hours are Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Friday 9am—12 pm.

St. Margaret Mary-

- ⇒ CCW meeting March 16 at 7pm

St. James-

- ⇒ Our St. James Lenten Project is Georgie's Closet. Georgie's Closet is an organization that is dedicated to providing children in foster care and their foster families the essentials needed to feel loved and supported. We will be collecting monetary donations to aid in scholarships for families to cover kids' sports, extracurricular activities, hair care and other random expenses. Donations can be dropped off in the hall or in the Sunday collection. Checks should be written out to Georgie's Closet.
- ⇒ The Spring Forward Donut Breakfast will be Sunday, March 8 after mass at St. James. All are invited!

Sacred Heart—

- ⇒ The week of March 8th, the Blessed Virgin Mary candle burns in prayer for Baby Schultz and the St. Joseph candle burns in memory of Emma Cranfill
- ⇒ "SPRING IS COMING" and that means so is Sacred Heart C.C.W.'s Spring Luncheon with Bunco. The date is Thursday April 9th, 11:00 a.m. in Sacred Heart's parish hall. There will be a delicious lunch, bunco with prizes, cash & basket raffles,

Obscure saint of the week: St. Felix of Burgundy (March 8) was a priest and a monk. He befriended, converted and baptized King Sigebert, who was in exile from East Anglia. When Sigebert returned to East Anglia in 630, he invited Felix to bring Christianity to his people. Felix was ordained bishop by Saint Honoratus of Canterbury, and then sailed up the River Kent, Vapparently starting his work in the area now known as Felixstowe. He evangelized throughout East Anglia, building a cathedral and school at Dunwich, stone churches throughout the region, and the college that became the University of Cambridge. With Saint Sigebert he founded the Bury Saint Edmunds abbey c.637. Felix worked with Saint Fursey and was the spiritual teacher of Saint Audrey.



Other obscure saint of the week: St. Felix of Burgundy (March 8) was a priest and a monk. He befriended, converted and baptized King Sigebert, who was in exile from East Anglia. When Sigebert returned to East Anglia in 630, he invited Felix to bring Christianity to his people. Felix was ordained bishop by Saint Honoratus of Canterbury, and then sailed up the River Kent, apparently starting his work in the area now known as Felixstowe. He evangelized throughout East Anglia, building a cathedral and school at Dunwich, stone churches throughout the region, and the college that became the University of Cambridge. With Saint Sigebert he founded the Bury Saint Edmunds abbey c.637. Felix worked with Saint Fursey and was the spiritual teacher of Saint Audrey.



Sacred Heart Confirmation student, James Beedle's confirmation project benefiting Harbor House.

DO YOU HAVE concerns about falling?



Many older adults experience concerns about falling, and notices these activities. **A MATTER OF BALANCE** is an award-winning program designed to manage risk and increase activity levels through practical programs.

YOU WILL LEARN TO...

- Walk with confidence
- Safely use stairs
- Make changes to your home to reduce risk of falls
- Recognize when to call a professional to remove a tripping hazard

WHO SHOULD ATTEND?

- Anyone 65 and older
- Anyone who has had a fall
- Anyone who has been told to be careful
- Anyone who has a fear of falling

DATES: Monday afternoons
 March 2nd through April 20th, 2026
TIMES: 1:00 pm - 2:30 pm
LOCATION: St. Margaret Mary's Catholic Church
 410 N Main St., Merscher IL, 60941

To register, call Natalia (815) 233-7781 ext. 9254

A free program for adults 65+

While still sinners
CHRIST died for us

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The Sunday Gospel in Everyday English

To get there, he had to pass through Samaria. He came into Sychar, a Samaritan village that bordered the field Jacob had given his son Joseph. Jacob's well was still there. Jesus, worn out by the trip, sat down at the well. It was noon.

A woman, a Samaritan, came to draw water. Jesus said, "Would you give me a drink of water?" (His disciples had gone to the village to buy food for lunch.)

The Samaritan woman, taken aback, asked, "How come you, a Jew, are asking me, a Samaritan woman, for a drink?" (Jews in those days wouldn't be caught dead talking to Samaritans.)

Jesus answered, "If you knew the generosity of God and who I am, you would be asking me for a drink, and I would give you fresh, living water."

The woman said, "Sir, you don't even have a bucket to draw with, and this well is deep. So how are you going to get this 'living water'? Are you a better man than our ancestor Jacob, who dug this well and drank from it, he and his sons and livestock, and passed it down to us?"

Jesus said, "Everyone who drinks this water will get thirsty again and again. Anyone who drinks the water I give will never thirst—not ever. The water I give will be an artesian spring within, gushing fountains of endless life."

The woman said, "Sir, give me this water so I won't ever get thirsty, won't ever have to come back to this well again!"

He said, "Go call your husband and then come back."

"I have no husband," she said.

"That's nicely put: 'I have no husband.' You've had five husbands, and the man you're living with now isn't even your husband. You spoke the truth there, sure enough."

"Oh, so you're a prophet! Well, tell me this: Our ancestors worshiped God at this mountain, but you Jews insist that Jerusalem is the only place for worship, right?"

"Believe me, woman, the time is coming when you Samaritans will worship the Father neither here at this mountain nor there in Jerusalem. You worship guessing in the dark; we Jews worship in the clear light of day. God's way of salvation is made available through the Jews. But the time is coming—it has, in fact, come—when what you're called will not matter and where you go to worship will not matter.

"It's who you are and the way you live that count before God. Your worship must engage your spirit in the pursuit of truth. That's the kind of people the Father is out looking for: those who are simply and honestly themselves before him in their worship. God is sheer being itself—Spirit. Those who worship him must do it out of their very being, their spirits, their true selves, in adoration."

The woman said, "I don't know about that. I do know that the Messiah is coming. When he arrives, we'll get the whole story."

"I am he," said Jesus. "You don't have to wait any longer or look any further."

Just then his disciples came back. They were shocked. They couldn't believe he was talking with that kind of a woman. No one said what they were all thinking, but their faces showed it.

The woman took the hint and left. In her confusion she left her water pot. Back in the village she told the people, "Come see a man who knew all about the things I did, who knows me inside and out. Do you think this could be the Messiah?" And they went out to see for themselves.

In the meantime, the disciples pressed him, "Rabbi, eat. Aren't you going to eat?"

He told them, "I have food to eat you know nothing about."

The disciples were puzzled. "Who could have brought him food?"

Jesus said, "The food that keeps me going is that I do the will of the One who sent me, finishing the work he started. As you look around right now, wouldn't you say that in about four months it will be time to harvest? Well, I'm telling you to open your eyes and take a good look at what's right in front of you. These Samaritan fields are ripe. It's harvest time!

"The Harvester isn't waiting. He's taking his pay, gathering in this grain that's ripe for eternal life. Now the Sower is arm in arm with the Harvester, triumphant. That's the truth of the saying, 'This one sows, that one harvests.' I sent you to harvest a field you never worked. Without lifting a finger, you have walked in on a field worked long and hard by others."

Many of the Samaritans from that village committed themselves to him because of the woman's witness: "He knew all about the things I did. He knows me inside and out!" They asked him to stay on, so Jesus stayed two days. A lot more people entrusted their lives to him when they heard what he had to say. They said to the woman, "We're no longer taking this on your say-so. We've heard it for ourselves and know it for sure. He's the Savior of the world!" (from John 4).

Catholic Snacks, Get Fed

What is the significance of the number 40 in Holy Scripture?

The significance of numbers in Sacred Scripture doesn't stop at 40. It runs throughout the Bible.

No matter how excited and determined we are as Lent starts, the high of Ash Wednesday can start to slide away as the reality of the next several weeks sets in.

"I have to go without candy until Easter?"

"I need to keep up this new prayer routine for 35 more days?"

One question probably continues to pop up: "Why is Lent so long?"

Why is it 40 days? Why not 30? Why not a week?

The answer lies deep in Scripture, where the number 40 appears again and again at pivotal moments of trial, testing, and transformation.

In the Bible, 40 is the number of preparation before something new. It marks a period of purification before renewal, of struggle before mission, of surrender before promise. Lent follows this ancient pattern.

One of the earliest and most dramatic examples is the flood in Genesis. Rain fell for 40 days and 40 nights upon the earth. At first glance, this seems only like destruction. But the flood was also a cleansing. Corruption and violence had overtaken humanity, and through those 40 days the world was washed clean. When the waters receded, God established a covenant with Noah; and thus a new beginning emerged from this time of trial! The key here is that the 40 days were not meaningless suffering; they were preparation for renewal.

We see the same pattern in the story of Israel's 40 years in the desert. After God freed His people from slavery in Egypt, they did not immediately enter the Promised Land. Instead, they wandered. The desert was a place of testing. Hunger exposed their complaints. Thirst revealed their fears. Hardship uncovered their longing to return to slavery rather than trust God. Yet it was in the wilderness that they learned dependence. God fed them with manna from heaven and water from the rock. He formed them into a people who knew His law and relied on His providence. The desert stripped away false security and shaped them into a nation ready to receive the promise. Forty years transformed former slaves into God's covenant people, fully prepared and on fire to do His will.

Then we come to Our Lord Himself.

Before beginning His public ministry, Jesus fasted for 40 days in the wilderness. There, He faced temptation from the devil. He experienced hunger and isolation. Where Israel had failed in the desert, Christ remained faithful. He resisted the temptation to turn stones into bread, to test God, to grasp earthly power. After those 40 days of preparation through self-denial and union with the Father, He emerged ready to proclaim the Kingdom. His ministry was prepared in silence and sacrifice.

Other biblical moments echo the same meaning. Moses spent 40 days on Mount Sinai before receiving the Law. The prophet Jonah warned Nineveh that it had 40 days to repent before destruction. Again and again, 40 marks a merciful space: time to be purified, time to turn back, time to prepare for what God is about to do next.

This is why Lent lasts 40 days. The Church is not being arbitrary, but deliberately placing us within a biblical rhythm.

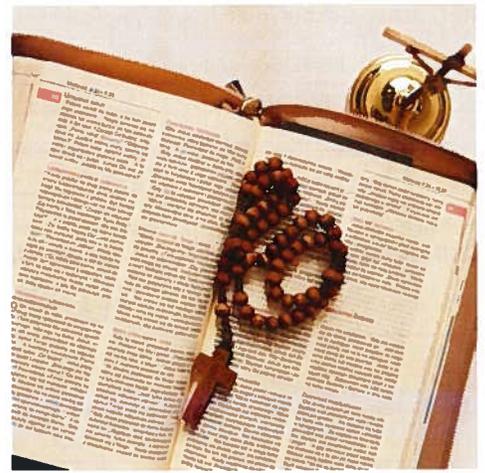
If Lent were only a few days, we might grit our teeth and power through. 40 days, though, is a long time...long enough to stretch us, to expose our attachments, and to reveal how much we rely on comforts instead of God.

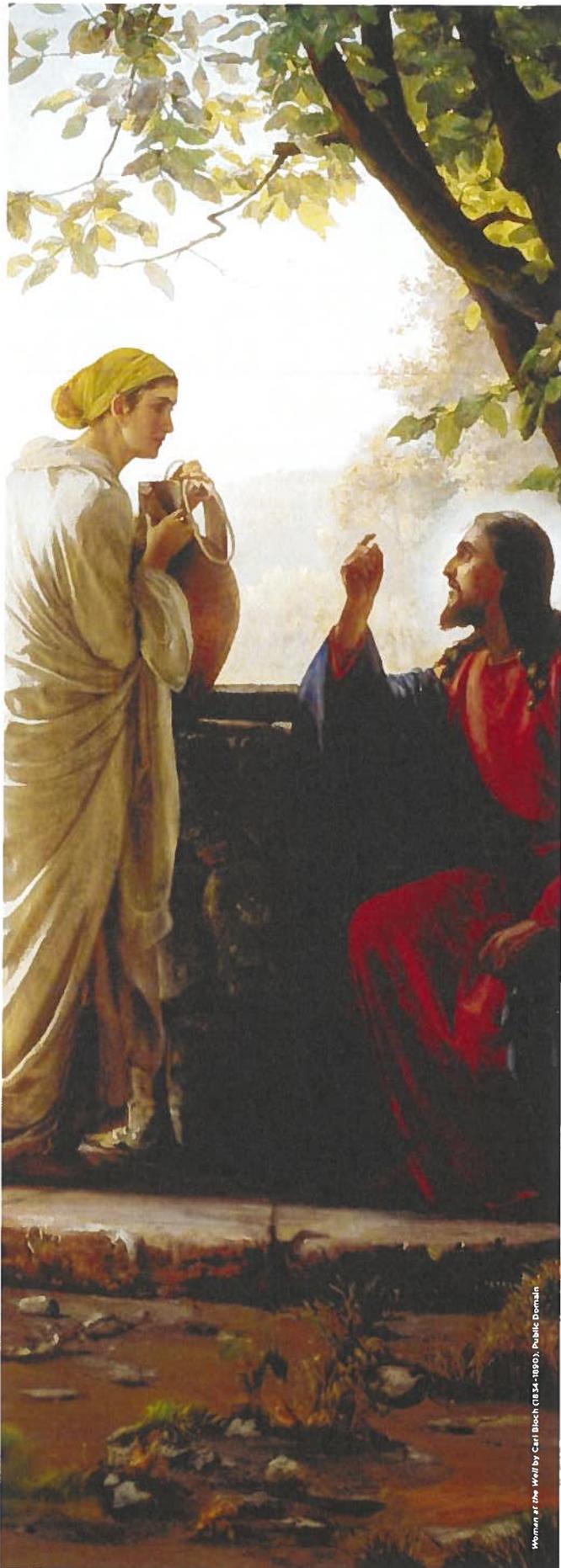
But 40 days require something deeper than willpower. They require surrender. Over time, fasting begins to uncover what controls us. Extra prayer reveals how distracted we are. Acts of charity challenge our self-protection.

The number 40 tells us that trial is not pointless. It is purposeful. In Scripture, 40 never stands alone. After 40 comes renewal. After the flood comes the covenant. After the desert comes the Promised Land. After Christ's 40 days comes the proclamation of the Gospel. And after Lent comes Easter.

When the days feel long, remember: this is what 40 does. It clears away what is unnecessary and readies the heart for resurrection!

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Women at the Well by Carl Bloch (1854-1890), Public Domain

March 8, 2026

Third Sunday of Lent

Ex 17:3-7 | Rom 5:1-2, 5-8 | Jn 4:5-42

Written by
THE
FAITHFUL
DISCIPLE

GROW AS A DISCIPLE | PRAY, STUDY, ENGAGE, SERVE

As the Israelites wandered in the desert, Moses heard their cries and recognized their deeper need, not simply for water, but for hope. And so Moses calls upon the Lord, who gives them water in the desert, revealing his trustworthiness. In the big and little ways that we ask the same question - "Is the Lord in our midst or not?" - our loving and generous Father reminds us that he has not abandoned us and that his goodness will ultimately prevail. It's easy to become disgruntled like the Israelites when there is great pain and suffering around us. But through the ways that we care for one another and the peace that we find in prayer, the Father reminds us that he stands with us, granting us sustenance and grace.

GO EVANGELIZE

PRAYER, INVITATION, WITNESS, ACCOMPANIMENT

When Christ told the woman at the well that those who drink the water he gives will never thirst again, she thought he was offering literal water. Christ was instead revealing his own identity as the Son of God. This woman, who hears the words of Christ and knows God's promise of a Messiah, is filled with hope as she comes to recognize that the Lord indeed was in her midst. And I find it interesting that when she told people in town of her encounter with Christ, she told them of how he saw the mistakes of her past. Jesus loved her, and called her to step into the fullness of who she could be by turning away from the past that she clung to. We live in a world where we have very real physical needs, like the Israelites who thirsted, and the need to be seen in love, like the Samaritan woman. Ultimately, at the core of both of these needs is the desire for the hope that only God can give. When we serve our neighbors and look upon others with love, we can also be the vessel through which the presence of God is made known.

WITNESS

In our world, people are constantly asking the question, "Is the Lord in our midst or not?" Reflect on one way that you can share the Good News of the Gospel through word or action to make the presence of God known to those in your community.

SPIRITUALITY

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

cf. 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 4:5-42; L28A

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?"

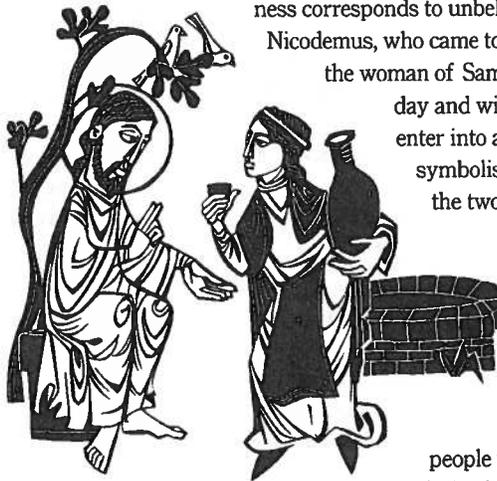
Are you greater than our father Jacob,
who gave us this cistern and drank
from it himself
with his children and his flocks?"

*Continued in Appendix A, p. 273, or
John 4:5-15, 19b-26, 39a, 40-42 in Appendix A,
p. 274.*

Reflecting on the Gospel

Today's gospel account opens with a tired and thirsty Jesus asking a woman of Samaria for water. Like millions of women who even today spend hours of their day collecting water, the Samaritan woman comes, perhaps for a second time that day, to draw water. Most women would come to the well early in the morning, not at the hottest part of the day.

Most likely the Fourth Evangelist intends the noontime detail to be taken symbolically. In this gospel, light signifies coming to belief, while darkness corresponds to unbelief. In contrast with the preceding story of Nicodemus, who came to Jesus at night, and who is unable to believe, the woman of Samaria comes at the brightest part of the day and will come to full belief. Jesus and the woman enter into a deep theological conversation, laden with symbolism. As often happens in the Fourth Gospel, the two are cast as representative characters for the whole of their people. They begin by speaking of their thirsts, their shared human need, and this enables a conversation by which they can begin to break down the enmity between their two peoples. Elsewhere in the gospel, Jesus speaks of his thirst to draw all people to God through himself (12:32) and of his desire for all to be one (17:21).



Step by step Jesus and the woman reveal themselves more deeply to each other. They speak of some of their deepest thirsts: for worship, salvation, and the search for truth. They listen intently and allow their perceptions of the other to shift, just as we may need to change our former impressions of the Samaritan woman. The focus of the dialogue is not on her marital history nor is she said to be a sinner. Jesus does not tell her to go and sin no more, as he does to the man at the pool of Bethesda who had been paralyzed (John 5:14) or to the woman caught in adultery (John 8:11).

The woman's understanding of Jesus progresses from the simple observation that he is a Jew to pondering whether he is greater than Jacob. Another step is her recognition of him as a prophet when he uses the marital metaphor favored by Hosea to speak of the peoples' relationship with God. Finally, she arrives at the conclusion that Jesus is the Messiah, which she shares with her townspeople in question form, so that they too can enter into the process of discovery that will culminate in faith.

This encounter illustrates a process by which enmity can be transformed into friendship. The two start by focusing on common thirsts that spring from their shared humanity. They had to let go of their ingrained stereotypes of the other. They had to be willing to stay in the conversation and not give up when they stumbled over their differences. They had to be willing to overcome the objections of some of their own people. As the waters of understanding wash away ignorance and fear, the gift of living water wells up within them, making each one a spring from which others who thirst may drink.