

HOMILY FOR THE FIFTH SUNDAY OF PASCHA
THE SAMARITAN WOMAN
May 10, 2015

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Christ is Risen! Indeed He is Risen!

When I was growing up, as most if not all of you know, I grew up on a farm, in the country. I especially enjoyed summer on the Farm, the nice weather, being able to spend all day outside. I remember as a young boy going out in the fields with my Dad and helping him with the haying. It was hot and I used to like to find a shady spot under a tree to take a break from the sun. Before going out with my Dad, my mom would send us out with something to drink and sometimes a snack. My Dad insisted that it be water – not soda, not juice, but water. My mom would carefully fill up one or two orange juice jars with tap water, that came from our well. She would let it run for a while until it was ice cold. She would wrap it in if you remember the insulated icecream paper bags that A&P used to give out, and put some ice in it. When we were out in the fields all hot and thirsty, how wonderful that water was. How refreshing it was. That delicious well water. Its funny how we remember things like that some 40 years later....

Why I am telling you about this today, is because today on the Fifth Sunday of Pascha, we hear the account of our Lord's conversation with a woman when he, tired and thirsty, stopped to take a drink at a well, Jacob's well.

If you recall the rather long Gospel reading that I just read, Our Lord, had a very long conversation with a woman. This conversation was very odd, because (A) a man did not speak to a woman who was a stranger, (B) a Jew did not speak to a Samaritan who was considered their enemy because the Samaritans, departed from the faith of the Jews, and adopted some forms of pagan worship.

Our Lord being thirsty asked her for a drink, and she was amazed that he would ask her to do so. While protesting that she should not be talking to him, rather than run away or be rude, she stayed to talk to our Lord, she sensed something different about him. Our Lord turned the question around and told her, that in reality she should be asking Him for living waters.

Clearly confused, the woman stayed to talk to the Lord, inquiring as to what he meant by living waters. So that she would know that he was indeed the Son of God, he started talking to her about personal matters, that only someone who had powers of discernment knew. He talked about her immoral life how she was

living with a man outside of wedlock and how she had previously five other husbands. Most of us would be insulted, or uncomfortable, maybe we might have told him to mind his own business, or just walked away from him in anger or in shame. But she did not, she stayed, she drank from the living waters.

The Samaritan women, by the end of the rather long conversation, made a life changing decision, she turned to the Lord, she became a true believer, she left the error of her ways. Church tradition tells us she became a Christian and eventually died a martyr's death. She is known in the Church as St. Photini in Greek or Svetlana in Slavonic. The Name in either language means light. She is known then as the one who became enlightened by Christ. She converted from paganism to the true faith. But why?

The answer is, she was thirsty, like I was as a young boy on the farm. She was seeking the cool living waters of Godliness that would quench her inner burning thirst for the Kingdom of God. You see she tried to quench this fire, she tried to satisfy this craving by seeking earthly pleasures, an immoral life, but to no avail. She turned to the reservoir of the Faith, to the Lord God and Saviour Jesus Christ, who enlightened her, and imparted to her the grace of the Holy Spirit.

The fathers of the Church tell us that this story of our Lord's encounter with the Samaritan women has a deeper meaning - it is a conversation of our Lord with our souls. He is speaking to you and I, He sees our inner thirst and burning desires of our hearts for the kingdom of Heaven. I see it in your eyes as I speak to you now, I see it in the faith that emanates from this parish.

I am so grateful to be the pastor of this parish and to be able to work with people who truly love God and desire the Kingdom of Heaven. This makes my life and my priesthood sweet. However, it is true we live in an age and time, where the sun is beating down on us very strongly, and the thirst is getting greater. In our daily lives we come in contact with many Samaritan men and women outside of the household of the faith who are also thirsting for something greater, for change that they truly can believe in, not one that is found in any of many different political ideologies, but a change, a turning over and surrender of our hearts to the Lord. And as I said, I am glad that we are thirsty in this parish for the things of God,... However, I caution you on the dangers of not satisfying this thirst with the living waters of Godliness. We must instead feed our souls with spiritually healthy food, the sacramental life of the Church, the Fountain of Immortality, Holy Communion, the Bread of Life: with Sacred Scripture, and the bread of compassion, in giving of our selves to the lonely, the sick, the maimed, the

handicapped, the lonely, the mentally ill, the least of our brethren. If we have gotten off track with the celebration of Pascha and relaxed our disciplines of fasting, prayer, scripture reading and almsgiving, now is the time to return.

It is a fact that a person cannot live long without drinking water or liquids. Although we could live 6 weeks or more without food, most nutritionists and doctors agree that one cannot last more than a week without water. Indeed to live, to survive, and thrive we need to drink a lot of water. An person who lives to the age of 80, I recently read will drink on average 14,600 gallons of water. Imagine that. 14, 600 gallons. When all is said and done at the end of our lives, how many gallons of living waters will we consume – how many prayers will we have piously uttered in our lives? How many times in our life will we have received the precious body and blood of our Lord? How many lives will we have touched, how many cups of cold water will we have given to the thirsty, how many coats will we have given to the needy? How many lonely people will we have visited? How many people who can no longer drive, will we have taken to Church, the doctors and the store?

Let us then, put ourselves in the place of the Samaritan women in this morning's Gospel and pray that the Lord indeed enlightens our hearts and minds,

with the light of His holy Resurrection and that he quenches our thirst for the holy with the waters of Godliness. Let us today, leave this church, not only thirsting for the Kingdom of God, but committed to drawing from the deep reservoir of the Spiritual Life, of Holy Orthodoxy, and strengthening and nourishing our souls and those around us.

May each and everyone of us rise to the challenge that is before us, to seek first the Kingdom of God, to continue to pay attention to the spiritual life as we have done during Lent. To continue to water the tender shoots of the new spiritual growth that has been planted in the Garden of our souls this Paschal season. Let us continue our preparation for the Great Feast of Holy Pentecost which is on Sunday May 31, where we will be empowered by the living water, the Holy and Life Creating Spirit to do great things for the glory of God, the building up of this holy parish. Amen.