

3rd SUNDAY in LENT (A-7) Are we bucket-fillers?

She went to the well as always, expecting the usual put-downs and jibes, y then found herself before Jesus. The Messiah had been promised to both the Jews and Samaritans, but no one expected to see him during the Roman occupation. He's willing to break all traditions and no-nos by speaking to her in public. It was all so unexpected.

Jesus always appears when we least expect it. In this great Gospel the Samaritan woman makes us reflect on how we tend to judge a book by its cover. She has judged Jesus, and the disciples her. She brought a bucket, while Jesus has none. In the book: How Full is Your Bucket?, the author asks, are we bucket-fillers or bucket-emptiers?

What fills our buckets are the living waters of positivity, those that build up. What empties our buckets are words and actions of negativity. So are we bucket fillers or people who tend to empty the buckets of the people we encounter or live with? Why do I ask these questions?

Jesus encounters the woman and asks her to fill his bucket and give him to drink. He sees in her someone whose buckets are empty, her well bucket, and the bucket of her life. It's empty because all she has heard are negatives about herself. She's been with 5 men already and the one she is with now is not her husband and we all know how people talk. That's why she went out at noon, the hottest part of the day, to avoid hearing what emptied her bucket of life.

She is a woman, a Samaritan, and an adulterer. Away with her! That is what her town thought and what Jesus' disciples thought as they came and saw Jesus breaking all the rules by talking to her in public. He risks his reputation to fill her bucket. By returning her self-respect he fills her bucket. By showing her a mirror to see what she had become he gave her a hope for a better future by also showing her he loved her.

She no longer cared what people thought about her and took her full bucket to the very town that had emptied it, and she took it to fill theirs. “Come and see a man who told me everything I have ever done. Could he possibly be the Christ?” There is nothing like hope to fill one’s bucket emptied by despair, self-hate, and negativity.

I pray that one reason we come to Mass, to the Catholic well of living waters, is to fill our bucket with hope, self-love, and positivity. A good parish can be judged by the way people come and leave the church. Nothing is more attractive than people leaving smiling, happy, and energized. That is what we have here, and I am proud of that fact.

We come as disciples, as learners, first to be filled, and then to leave here as apostles, as fillers of each other’s buckets with what fills us: love. Christ tells us what we’ve done and he wants us to empty our buckets of negativity and sin, and replace them positivity and God’s grace. Christ asks us to give him to drink of the very waters that fill us. Those waters can only come from living out our Mission Statement: to discover God’s love through Worship, Prayer, Study and Good Works.

Jesus tells his disciples that his food is to do the will of God who sent him. If that is his food, then ours is to do the will of the one who sends us. We must fulfill Christ’s mission, which we find in Luke 4: to preach Good News to the poor, free the captives and the oppressed, return sight to the blind, and to proclaim the favorable year of the Lord. Fulfilling his mission is to be apostolic bucket-fillers.

Christ thirsts for our getting his message: “I love you. I forgive you. Now go out to the world and tell them of that reality and fill their buckets with the joy that comes from loving hope.”

Christ invites us to the Eucharist just the way we are: loved and forgiven sinners. He wants to fill our buckets so that we can do the same for the world. Are we ready and willing to do so? Then let’s celebrate.