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PRAY WITH ME

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Lord,  
in your thirst for relationship with us  
you reveal a love and longing greater than  
anything we can ask for or imagine.  
Teach us to thirst in the depths of our  
souls for you, O Lord,  
and through you, to thirst for more loving  
and just relationships with others.  
Above all, help us to be advocates for justice  
and peace in our workplaces  
and in the families and communities in  
which you have planted us.  
In your blessed name we pray.

AMEN.



THIRD WEEK OF LENT



**“A woman of Samaria came  
to draw water.  
Jesus said to her, ‘Give me a drink.’”**

JOHN 4:7



## Thirst for water is an unpleasant experience and, at the extreme, can be excruciating.

While the average person can survive for up to 30 days without food, this drops to 10 days without water. Spiritual thirst is equally uncomfortable. It reminds us of our dependence on something or someone beyond ourselves.

We should cultivate the truth of our spiritual dependency during the Lenten retreat. The more we befriend this thirst in our lives, the more we will experience a solidarity with one another and the world itself (see Romans 8:19-20). Thirst for God, for the spiritual and for the sacred is a common image in Scriptures. Recall the experience of the Israelites in the desert or the thirst that runs through the psalms.

We are taught that we are made in the image and likeness of God. This is nowhere more true than in our thirst for relationship with our Creator and one another. It was God who first thirsted for us, who longed us into being at the beginning of our great covenant story. God initiates, always, and we can only respond in kind — to receive love and long to return it. For this we were made and in this we are our most God-like. Where God longs out of God's fullness, we long and thirst out of our incompleteness.

This Sunday's Gospel speaks directly to this dynamic in the encounter at the well between Jesus and that splendid woman of Samaria. If we pay close attention, we discover that even before she recognized her own thirst for Christ, Jesus already thirsted for her. His "Give me a drink" was more than just a physical request. It was also a divine appeal, a longing for a saving relationship with this person and with her community of outcast Samaritans. He thirsted so deeply to touch that chord within her that he persisted in the dialogue, perhaps even chuckling at her attempt at ego deflection, "Sir, I can see that you are a prophet." He awaited her own heart's movement toward him, longed and thirsted for it out of an unimaginable love.

This is not a "me and Jesus" relationship. At stake in Jesus'

persistence with the woman of Samaria was God's thirst for justice for the outcast and despised people of Samaria. God is forever partial to such as these, and so too are we called to be partial. Our thirst for God must translate into our thirst for justice for our patients and their families, for more just access to health care, for advocacy on the behalf of the hungry and the homeless. This is why Catholic health care has never been content simply to care for those in need. We also look to the causes of unjust levels of need and we advocate just, systemic solutions in our civic and political culture.

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### FOR REFLECTION

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*"But let justice roll down like waters,  
and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream."*

(Amos 5:23)

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- ◇ What are you thirsting for spiritually, and how will you cultivate that thirst?
- ◇ What relationships in your life do you long to mend, and how can you begin?
- ◇ Who are the outcasts you encounter, and how can you show them God's partiality for them during Lent and Easter?