



## Sunday of the Samaritan Woman (May 17, 2020)

### John 4:5-42

*"...whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst; the water that I shall give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life."*

### Genesis 1:6-8:

*"Then God said, "Let there be **a firmament** in the midst of the water, and let it divide the water from the water", and it was so. Thus made the firmament and God divided the water under the firmament from the water above the firmament.*

The firmament of our life ... The middle point of the feast. In the midst of the waters. In the middle of the day, when the soul is chewed up by lies, you go out. And looking for silence, you find the Truth.

Jesus was coming from Jerusalem, according to holy apostle John, after a confrontation with the religious system. He leaves Judea because of the Pharisees. We see why God was thirsty. It is the thirst of a fresh spring of water from which nobody wants to drink. The spring is thirsty because of the dry hearts of the people. God is not tired out of love. He loves those who reject his love. His love is everlasting and without blemish. We see it on the cross. He is rather tired of carrying the suffering of men. As a parent is for his child. This goes deep. It hurts you to see the lie embraced as truth, with the pain that comes out of it; and the death. A death which is not pleasing to Him. And so He looks to make us all holy. So our death can be pleasing to him. To become a spring of living water.



The Samaritan woman was coming out from her messy life in the middle of the day. Her soul had been betrayed. Maybe she betrayed as well. God knows all the details. But yet, she comes out of it in the middle of the day. She comes out of her complicity with the lie. She does not settle on it. There is something deep in her soul that did not betray God. When she meets Jesus she speaks to Him in Truth. Nothing fulfilled her deep love. She remained in pain because of this unfulfilled love. She might have been lying to others but not to her heart and not to Jesus. The encounter is in Truth.

We all see this complicity in our life and we have the desire to break through whatever it is we are living. To unsettle affairs of our souls. But then we meet God in Truth. And then we see each other. Because you just cannot compromise with the lie. When you go out with thirst, God meets you. And something is kindled in your heart.

How much more does it happen though when the encounter is done in Truth, not after breaking out from the complicity with the lie, but after you've been faithful to the Truth? Witnessing the truth against everything that the madness of a lying system threw at you.

The tomb of Christ is the fountain of incorruption also because His love, buried by humans, was without blemish. It had no complicity with death and no complicity with the system. The system had no power over Him. Because life cannot be encompassed by death, but also because as a human he was tempted like us in everything, but yet without blemish. The resurrection is the Truth because there was no compromise with the death and its servants.

In the movie about the life of St Franz (Jägerstätter) (the Austrian conscientious objector during World War II - about whose life a movie was made recently - *A hidden life*) he says that something fundamental happens when an innocent life is taken by death. Then when the man remains innocent and does not compromise. It touches something from the mystery of resurrection. In the movie, the first image after his martyrdom was one of a flowing river. Nothing really changed in the life of the community. The war did not stop out of the sudden. The bombs continued to fall and people continued to die. But when the bells were heard in the village, to speak about his death, all those who oppressed him kept a moment of silence. A different silence than the one that tried to silence the Truth.

The suffering for the sake of Truth touches everything because it is received in the joy of the resurrection. As the martyrs are buried in the empty tomb of Christ. *"The fervor of faith full of the Holy Spirit"*. The hot water of life in the holy chalice where the blood of Christ is prepared to be shared with those who believe for the salvation of all.

When the truth is received and witnessed without blemish, the system is looking to viciously silence it. Think about the fruit of love in the womb. Like the holy innocents. Their voice is silenced on earth but their voices are heard during the liturgy interceding for the broken love to heal within the kingdom of heaven. Together with the voices of the angels and the saints.

We were harmed as a community a few times. Two times very deeply (from what I know).

The witness that came out was firm. God will judge us if it was for the Truth (I deeply believed it was). It left wounds within the hearts and souls of those who confessed. Because they were humans. And humans do get hurt. For us, as a community, the fruits of it will give us a glimpse of the veracity of it.

But if it was indeed in the name of Truth (I deeply believe it is), then this will touch the hearts of those who were part of the scenario in a way that their hearts were never touched before. It is the only way for the community to become, in her heart, "*a spring of water welling up to eternal life.*" So that the wounds of the confessors may be healed and the hearts of the oppressors may be touched. This is a rare gift that God gives to those who dare try loving their enemies.

From the Gospel during the week:

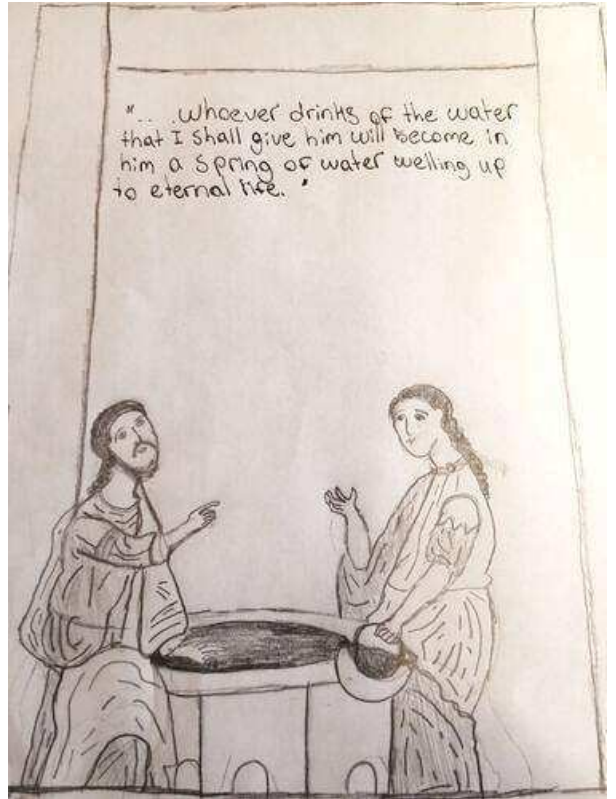
John 7:14-30: "**Why do you seek to kill me?**"

John 8:31-42: "**...yet you seek to kill me, because my word finds no place in you.** I speak of what I have seen with my Father, and you do what you have heard from your father." **...but now you seek to kill me, a man who has told you the truth** which I heard from God; this is not what Abraham did. **You do what your father did.**"

*The spring of water of eternal life is like the tears of joy on the face of an innocent soul who sees in his heart the true face of his enemies; who, with his eyes, penetrates the firmament of heaven while in his body he receives the marks of the unbelievers.*

For the sake of the science based approach - our experience with viruses

The big question that science based culture cannot answer right now, or could answer but not without lying, is whether the Covid-19 gives you immunity or not. From the history of the community, we can say that if it is a serious virus, it does not create immunity. It did not make us immune after the first time when it happened. Just those who did not compromise with it understood better the way it works. It did not save others. So we'd better try to take care of each other instead of waiting for miracles to happen. .



### Thoughts of the week:

1. At times you get to listen to the life story of a soul who experienced oppression in various forms, from an early age. And you are shocked that the soul makes all that experience a garment of guilt. The mantle of fear, that the system induced into him, so he can blame himself. Sometimes the system takes religious forms. So much so that the innocent honestly believes it and he does blame himself for the evil done to him. But where the innocent sees guilt, God sees a tireless desire to come within the light. A pure love for goodness of the soul. Of course, the walk is not robust, but the steps are firm.

2. It was not surprising to find out that only for doing good work at St John's you get to be humiliated outside of the community. Within the world. That the world is not worthy to receive the goodness done to it. I was surprised though to see how much it hurts. It never gets easy. We continue to be humans... However, the rejection becomes life giving for those who undertake it. How do we know? It is in the scriptures.

### Antiphon III.

**Let my heart be lifted up unto You, O Logos;  
and none of the world's delights will entice me to be earthly-minded.**

3. Nothing happens by chance. Life for sure does not. And neither does death. The same goes for sickness, sorrows or even bits of joy early in the morning. Or light that we see in abundance everywhere this time of the year. 'Why then, do we live by chance every day and why do we think our chance to live was great in the beginning but now it has been shrinking, according to our little faith? We live our lives like we won them by chance at 6/49 and live with the fear not to wake up and lose the prize. Is it by chance that we were born, as it is by chance that we are going to die?

These seem like silly questions for a Christian, but then why do our lives today look silly when brought in the light by something that the world, in its comfort, did not expect? Something affected our lives deeply. Did people die and were

services put on hold all over the world by chance? It is as though God fell asleep for a little while, and now He will wake up, apologize to us and make things straight.

If it is not by chance, then we need to blame somebody? Maybe God again? Morals dictate us not to do that. So then, should we blame the world? Our scapegoat when it comes to human mess. We can look for and find meaning without blaming anybody.

If we lost something delightful, maybe it is in order for us to rediscover our heart close to our Lord. Because we have forgotten that.

4. We were surprised by many acts of kindness during the last two weeks. People really want to do good. We received unexpected donations from people we don't know or hardly know. Many from the neighbourhood. People coming and supporting us with goods for the pandemic and donations. On top of that, lots of applications for volunteering work. I remembered complaining a couple of years ago that we didn't have enough volunteers. Whereas this week, we had to put on hold the orientation of 25 volunteers scheduled to visit us.

There is a lot of goodness and goodwill in people. And all of this in need of guidance.

Who is up to the task? Would it be the church? It does not look like that now. We are busy with other things. Don't make me guess with what.

It is important for us to say that we are as a church an essential service not because we do things better than other agencies. We couldn't, we are not an agency in the first place.

But we know what we do and why we do it. The church has the meaning and shares this with people. We welcome, eat and talk to the people during a pandemic as a church. People come to share and find their meaning in an unspeakable manner.

5. Every day at the mission is different. Like the gospel. Different things happen to different people. Also, you take what you can from the gospel. As much as your soul desires. I thought not much happened on Wednesday, whereas br. Luke was sharing with me how long the day was and how abundant in happenings:).

6. George shared with me how people are transformed into numbers. While in the early days of the pandemic, those who died had a face and a story in the media, in time, the more the evil grew, the more they transformed it in statistics, so everybody becomes desensitized. It always happens the same way, with the same end. People are numbered instead of being named. It might have started within the churches, when we grew big enough and forgot to call each other by name.

### **Br Luke - stories during pandemic (first part)**

During the plague everyone seems happier to work together and have something to do. There is nowhere to go and nothing to do. This is especially true for people with no homes to isolate in and no internet. They have nowhere to go. #StayHome has made having a house or apartment a badge of civic responsibility. The poor are stigmatized again and viewed as reckless for the disease that the rich and the mobile have brought to them. During COVID-19 people are more thankful to do busy work and have a quiet place to sit and work than before. One day, I was working upstairs and looking at the group working on the saints and I realized that they were all homeless, one way or another. One was working to put off returning to her shelter as long as possible. Another to avoid a relationship at home and "stay out of the house." Another told me he was here because the libraries were closed and would otherwise be sleeping there. Another worker told me she had access to many spaces where she should go and spend time-- some professional and other domestic. "She preferred to be here," she told me, "because she needed to keep busy and enjoyed the cozy and calm environment." I later learned that she had a somewhat traumatic past involving religion and "the martyrs" which was the subject matter of the task I had given her to sort-- binders and binders full of martyrs, in fact. This only came out later and the atmosphere of the setting and the people seemed to override her attitudes to the subject matter. I was struck at how all the workers were there because they could not return to their homes. For most of them this was a refuge from wandering the city for hours, or hanging out in a park or alley for quite some time. Return was impossible and we were all trying to fill the time the best we could.

During the slow hours of the plague I've been able to spend more time with an Asian man and learn from him. In his middle ages he was foreman back in Singapore and in charge of large teams of men building condominiums. He is in his sixties but has a great work ethic and still thinks he has a few years of work left in him before he goes and sits around with his children and his grandchildren. So he sleeps in an alley and looks for work. He says this has been the hardest time of his life. He says there's a Chinese expression that relates to his life now: "when you have horse you can ride it but when it dies (from exhaustion or whatever) you have to get off and walk," so that's what he's doing right now. He says that his recent experiences have showed him what people are like.

It has shown him, he tells me, which ones are good and which ones are kind of good and which ones are nasty and which ones are ugly. He describes how a Chinese man he met in the library lets him come to his apartment and share the room with him. He suspects this man of being a bit crazy from having smoked too much marijuana but he is also touched by his generosity. The man is living off a small amount of money from the government but spends it on rent and food both of which he shares with him. "He cooked four packs of noodles for me," the man exclaims, "what is he crazy! no one can

eat four packs of noodles!" The man says that when his next job starts he will return and repay him for his kindness. When he heard that someone needed a sleeping bag at the mission, the man offered to give one of the two he had stuffed under the stairs in the alley where he sleeps. When he went back to get it, he found that it had been taken. "People are always going through there," he explains. There is a sense of integrity in him and

he takes pride in not taking any money from the government and only taking what he needs. He has a sharp eye toward the people in the community. In Singapore he says there is no help for the people. He describes how one night his son saw someone stealing vegetables from his garden and that it was because he was a father of a large family of eight and could not otherwise feed them. He is contemptuous of the entitled attitudes of people receiving government assistance in Canada. "They get money from the government and housing and they use their money to go to Casinos or for drugs, he says. "Then they go to "the church" (St. Johns) and complain about everything and take more food than they need." In this time of scarcity he is willing to do whatever is needed at the mission and is there without fail every day (unless he is running an errand for a friend). He is up for most jobs but his favorite seems to be mopping the floor at 9 am when the crowd has cleared from the breakfast program. He dozes in his chair until that time comes.

If you approach him, he might greet you but he won't start really talking until it's clear that you're focused on him and are ready to listen. Then he leans forward and the words spill out in fast and hurried sentences. One day he had a terrible experience at the mission when his wallet went missing from the coat where he had left it hanging in the hall. "That day," he shared with me "I was walking across the bridge over the Don river and I almost threw myself over." The wallet had his passport to Singapore and many other valuables in it. He couldn't understand why the person who took it wouldn't take the money and then return the wallet and documents of that nature that could have no value to them. The day his wallet was stolen the man ended up visiting good neighbors in Scarborough with us on an errand. He came to Canada originally to work in construction but the man he came to work for ended up borrowing money from him and so when he got an offer to work in the restaurant business here up at Sault St. Marie he took it and has been working at restaurants ever since and learned a lot. He tells many parables about people not listening and getting their comeuppance and about life on street. He told me that if you're ever in a street fight that you need to strike fast and ruthlessly by stomping on their toe or punching them in stomach. I never saw the man spend any money but he enjoyed sharing his cigarettes. He showed me a pack that was down to a couple and said it had been the full the previous night. He's cagey about it, though. He does not give to everyone he asks. He saves them for people he says who are "like himself," of disheveled appearance, old and with bent backs—not people working, "homeless people," he says. One day we were having breakfast and he remarked "Some people have gold flakes in their windows while other people don't have cornflakes on their tables." This man had a heart for the people without cornflakes. He lived out in the open air and wind blew him into their lives more often than I would expect. Most of his stories were about the people who were helping him or people he was helping. He was very interested and involved in their lives and remembered what they did. Before he left Toronto to take a job in a restaurant in another city the man described a man who he had met in the library one day and was helping. The man was in his 50s and had had a stroke. My friend would get things for him and look out for him. He described how the man would often offer to buy him a coffee in exchange for walking across the street to get him one. He would never accept the man's money. "I get enough coffee at the church," he says "I don't need to accept anything else from anyone else." He likes to talk about the people he's helping and how he has improved how they do one thing or another. As a former construction foreman, he was used to overseeing things and offering unsolicited feedback. Naturally, he seemed very much in his element at St. John's. He liked sticking his nose into all the projects going on and giving his two cents and recounting what other people were doing. When he came for his last meal before he left he refused all the food I had in the house. He said he'd eaten a donut in the morning. He ate a piece of shared, blessed bread I give him from the Lamb.

I remember when I first met him he was asking me for money for a calling card. In the end, the most commonly held food seemed to satisfy him the most. He had lots of theories about COVID coming from biological weapons programs in China. As we watched the park full of people playing in the weather he said that young people didn't have to worry. We sit with dirty people for months and we're okay. I gave him an icon I had made of John the Baptist to thank him for all his efforts with the saints. I told him they both lived in the wild. He said he would light a candle in front of it.

I met an old woman one day on the steps who had been here once before 8 years ago. She hadn't come back since and had a hazy idea of what went on here other than that it was a church with an Italian priest she had spoken to once. She said she was caring for her elderly mother and a disabled brother and that the relationship was sometimes abusive and that today she just had to get out and go someplace to go anywhere even in spite of the Corona virus. I got the impression that she had just rushed out of her house and got on a streetcar to anywhere. She sat on the red steps for a long time. She was still sitting there when I left holding a palm branch in her hand and some sourdough bread.

One guy said that it was so quiet in the streets that he heard a raccoon snoring and he was serious.

Life in Scarborough during the pandemic was very surreal and good. Because it was Easter season Br. LK kept the hours in the chapel. Cassandra, Mary, Misty and Connie and sometimes Hannan ran a food Bank for most of the day as well as a drop-in. Father Roberto ran around like crazy in the back and front greeting people and distributing food,

praying, working on the computer and more. Because the chapel is in the middle of the small shop and the ceiling does not extend all the way to the ceiling, the prayers and bell ringing are faintly audible even during the busyness of the drop in and food bank. At the end of the Paschal hour, a chorus of "Indeed, he is risen," would rise up from different corners of the building. With all the busyness and compression of the schedule there was a great sense of purpose in the work. The drop in section was full of people most of the day and others had to be served outside. The ladies have become very organized and authoritative in their work up there. Alain never disappoints with fine cuisine and lots of it.