



DIOCESE OF HAMILTON

700 King Street West, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada L8P 1C7

Third Sunday of Lent Children's Liturgy of the Word

The readings for the Third Sunday of Lent centre on thirst—physical and spiritual—and God's abundant provision of life-giving water, symbolizing grace, faith, and the Holy Spirit. They contrast human murmuring with trustful encounters, urging Lenten conversion.

In the First Reading, desert-thirsty Israelites test God at Massah and Meribah: *"Why did you bring us out of Egypt, to kill us with thirst?"* Moses strikes the rock; water flows, affirming God's presence amid trial—a type of Christ.

The Responsorial Psalm echoes this: praise the *"rock of our salvation,"* but *"do not harden your hearts, as at Meribah,"* calling for worshipful obedience.

Romans deepens this: faith grants *"peace with God"* and hope, as the Spirit pours divine love, proven in Christ's death for sinners.

The Gospel culminates: Jesus offers a Samaritan woman *"living water"* that gushes into eternal life, revealing himself as Messiah for worship *"in spirit and truth."* Her witness proclaims him *"Saviour of the world."*

These readings form a unified explanation of faith's exodus from aridity to abundance. The struck rock prefigures Christ's pierced heart; Lent invites us to quench our deepest longings through repentance, true adoration, and mission.

Background

Exodus 17:3-7 The Israelites were unhappy in the Sinai desert and continued to complain to God. Moses became very tired of listening to their complaints and spoke to God about it. God tells Moses to strike the rock with his staff, and water flows. The passage reveals that even in the midst of difficult circumstances, God is present for us. This passage foreshadows Baptism and is connected to the Gospel.

Psalm 95 recalls the same story as the first reading and invites us to respond by making our faith in God present.

Romans 5:1-2, 5-8 Paul's hymn highlights Christ's theological virtues of faith, hope and charity. This reading contrasts Adam with Christ. We are reminded that it is through God's action of our faith that we can access grace. Similar to water pouring over us in Baptism, the Holy Spirit pour love into hearts. The passage is a loving reminder that Christ died for sinners, proving God's trustworthiness.

John 4:5-42 Jews and Samaritans were not friendly to each other. Jesus, a Jew, asks a Samaritan woman for water. At the well of her ancestors, which provides the water she needs, the Samaritan woman engages Jesus in theological discussion, and the Lord is happy to talk with her, even though she holds different beliefs. Jesus crosses well-established boundaries by speaking with a Samaritan and a woman. Eventually, she realizes that Jesus is the living water and ultimately invites others to believe in Jesus. Water is an essential symbol in this Gospel and reveals to us the saving grace of Baptism.

The Liturgy

Procession from the main Church

After the opening prayer, when all are seated, the leaders come forward and stand facing the altar.

Priest: (in these or similar words)

Children, Jesus speaks to us today about life-giving water, which he pours into our hearts. Go with your leaders and listen to Jesus.

Once most of the children have formed a procession, the leader with the book proceeds to the celebration site. The second leader usually walks behind the children. Upon arrival at the CLoW room, the leader places the book on the prepared table.

Welcome.

The leaders assist the children in sitting and preparing. **Begin with the Sign of the Cross.** Help the children think and connect their actions as they touch their foreheads, shoulders, and stomachs. The leader may offer the following prayer, in these or similar words.

Holy Spirit, prepare us to hear you speak in the readings.

Let's quiet our hearts and make the Sign of the Cross!

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Amen.

Invite the children to listen to the readings. Proclaiming all the readings is unnecessary; however, the Gospel is required.

READINGS

FIRST READING

Exodus 17.3-7

A reading from the book of Exodus.

In the wilderness, the people thirsted for water, and the people complained against Moses and said, "Why did you bring us out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and livestock with thirst?"

So Moses cried out to the Lord, "What shall I do with this people? They are almost ready to stone me." The Lord said to Moses, "Go on ahead of the people, and take some of the elders of Israel with you; take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile, and go. I will be standing there in front of you on the rock at Horeb. Strike the rock, and water will come out of it, so that the people may drink."

Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel. He called the place Massah and Meribah, because the Israelites quarrelled and tested the Lord, saying, "Is the Lord among us or not?"

The word of the Lord.

A period of silence is observed after the reading.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

Psalm 95.1-2, 6-7ab, 7c-9

R. O that today you would listen to the voice of the Lord.

Do not harden your hearts!

O come, let us sing to the Lord;
let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation!
Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving;
let us make a joyful noise to him with songs of praise! R.

O come, let us worship and bow down,
let us kneel before the Lord, our Maker!
For he is our God, and we are the people of his pasture,
and the sheep of his hand. R.

O that today you would listen to his voice!
Do not harden your hearts, as at Meribah,
as on the day at Massah in the wilderness,
when your ancestors tested me,
and put me to the proof,
though they had seen my work. R.

SECOND READING

Romans 5.1-2, 5-8

A reading from the letter of Paul to the Romans.

Brothers and sisters:

Since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand; and we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God.

And hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us. For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly.

Indeed, rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though perhaps for a good person, someone might actually dare to die. But God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us.

The word of the Lord.

A period of silence is observed after the reading.

GOSPEL

John 4.5-15, 19-26, 39, 40-42

A reading from the holy Gospel according to John.

Jesus came to a Samaritan city called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired out by his journey, was sitting by the well. It was about noon. A Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink." (His disciples had gone to the city to buy food.) The Samaritan woman said to him, "How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?" (Jews do not share things in common with Samaritans.) Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that 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 have no bucket, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water? Are you greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us the well, and with his children and his flocks drank from it?" Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life." The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water, so that I may never be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water. I see that you are a prophet. Our ancestors worshipped on this mountain, but you say that the place where people must worship is in Jerusalem." Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father seeks such as these to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth." The woman said to him, "I know that the Messiah is coming" (who is called the Christ). "When he comes, he will proclaim all things to us." Jesus said to her, "I am he, the one who is speaking to you." Many Samaritans from that city believed in Jesus. So when they came to him, they asked him to stay with them, and he stayed there two days. And many more believed because of his word. They said to the woman, "It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is truly the Saviour of the world."

The Gospel of the Lord.

REIMAGINED READINGS FOR CHILDREN

The reimagined readings below are intended for use after the children have heard the original reading. The intent is to allow the children to listen to the original reading and help them better understand it (not replace it).

Read at a minimum, the Gospel, which has the highest priority, and then ask the children to sit down. You can then read the reimagined reading. Leaders may not have time to read all of the reading. If time permits, after the Gospel, proclaim the Psalm, and then the first reading, if time permits.

Reimagined readers must always remain faithful to the original Scripture's intent, making it age-appropriate for children to understand.

FIRST READING

Exodus 17.3-7

God's people were travelling through the hot desert. They were very thirsty and had no water. They got angry and yelled at Moses: "Why did you bring us out of Egypt? You're going to let us, our children, and animals die of thirst!"

Moses was scared. The people were so mad that they might hurt him. He prayed to God: "What should I do? They're ready to stone me!"

God told Moses, "Go ahead of the people with some leaders. Take your special staff—the one you used on the Nile River. I'll be at the rock on Horeb. Hit the rock, and water will pour out for everyone to drink."

Moses did exactly what God said, right in front of the leaders. Water gushed from the rock. Everyone drank.

R. Listen to the voice of the Lord.

Let us sing to the Lord;

let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation!

Let us enter into his presence with thanksgiving;

let us sing songs of praise! **R.**

O come, let us worship and bow down,

let us kneel before the Lord, our Maker!

For he is our God, and we are the people of his pasture,

and the sheep of his hand. **R.**

SECOND READING

Romans 5.1-2, 5-8

Jesus gives us peace with God. He opens the door to God's love, where we stand strong every day. We can be happy about being with God in his wonderful glory someday.

This hope never lets us down. God fills our hearts with his love through the Holy Spirit. When we were not following God, Jesus died for us at just the right time.

Usually, no one would die for someone who's just okay, and maybe only for someone really kind. But God shows his great love: while we were still doing wrong, Jesus died for us.

GOSPEL

John 4.5-15, 19-26, 39, 40-42

Jesus was tired from walking and sat by Jacob's well at noon. It was hot outside. A Samaritan woman came for water. Jesus said, "Give me a drink." His friends were buying food.

She was surprised: "You're a Jew—why ask me?" Jesus said, "If you knew God's gift, you'd ask me for living water that lasts forever."

"Sir, you do not have a bucket! How can I give you water? Are you greater than Jacob?" she asked.

"Well water makes you thirsty again. My water gives you eternal life," Jesus explained.

"Give it to me!" she said. "Our families pray here, but you say we worship in Jerusalem."

"Soon, you will be able to worship God anywhere—with your heart and truth," Jesus replied.

"The Messiah will teach us everything!" she said.

"I am he," Jesus told her.

She ran to town. Many believed and said, "He is the Saviour!"

Reflection

The leader may offer this reflection in these or similar words. Remember the amount of time available to return to the main assembly. The leader may wish to reduce the number of questions. An excellent place to begin is the question:

Alternate Reflection

What did you hear? Allow children to respond.

What do we use water for? Drinking, bathing, swimming, etc.

In Jesus' time, especially in the desert, water was much harder to get than it is today. People needed buckets to bring it home.

Have you ever been thirsty and wanted water?

Jesus became thirsty while walking, too. He came to an ancient well and stopped to drink. He met a Samaritan woman and asked her for a drink. The woman was surprised because Jewish people did not talk to Samaritans then. Also, the woman had to travel far to the well as it was out of town. She wasn't expecting anyone to speak to her, and it was unusual for a man to speak to a random woman. Jesus teaches us to talk about God to everyone and know that everyone is a child of God.

Jesus explained that while the water from the well quenched her thirst only for a short while, because Jesus is the living water, God satisfies our spiritual thirst. He tells her that he is the Messiah, and she, in turn, tells others that Jesus is the Messiah. People came to know Jesus through her.

What do we use water for at Church? Baptism

When we are baptized, the priest or deacon uses Holy Water, water that Jesus blesses and makes us part of Jesus' family. Baptism helps us to live like Jesus and have eternal life with God.

Have you seen a Baptism?

Baptism helps us continually learn more about Jesus throughout our lives and to listen to the Holy Spirit.

During Lent, we take more time to focus on Jesus by praying, fasting and giving our time to help others. This week, as we focus on the water and Baptism, we thank God for our Baptism and our Church family. Share the good news.

Following the reflection, the prayer leader invites everyone to stand to profess their faith. Recite the Creed or use the sample below to ask the children to respond.

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The Creed

Depending on the time, a simple profession of faith may be made (see below).

Leader: Do you believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth?

All: I believe.

Leader: Do you believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, who gave his life for us?

All: I believe.

Leader: Do you believe in the Holy Spirit who lives in our hearts and gives us everlasting life?

All: I believe.

Leader: This is our faith. This is the faith of the Church. We are proud to profess it.

Prayer of the Faithful

Leaders may begin the intercessions by announcing the needs they know. The leader may need to repeat and paraphrase the petition, concluding it with the cue for the response: 'We pray.' All respond to each petition by saying, "Lord, hear our prayer." Sample intercessions are below.

The intercessions are said. The Leader introduces them, and an assistant announces them.

The leader says:

Let us bring our prayers to God. After each intercession, we all say, 'Lord, hear our prayer.'

R: Lord, hear our prayer.

Assistant:

For the Church, that we may always see Jesus as God. We pray to the Lord. R:

Assistant:

For our families, that we may trust God as Moses did. We pray to the Lord. R:

Assistant:

For people who are afraid or worried, the lonely or rejected, that they may hear Jesus say, "My water gives you eternal life." We pray to the Lord. R:

Assistant:

For us, that during Lent we grow closer to Jesus. We pray to the Lord. R:

Assistant:

In the quiet of our hearts, we offer our own prayers... [pause]. We pray: Come, Lord Jesus. R:

The Leader says:

Loving God, thank You for showing us Your Son. Help us to listen to Him every day. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Return to the church

Ask the children to return to the main assembly. Ask them to return quietly and reflect on what they have heard and what they are now doing. Be mindful of children who may have difficulty finding their families.



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