

FLOWING WATER, LIVING WORD:

A BAPTISMAL JOURNEY OF DISCERNING GOD'S MISSION
FOR THE CENTRAL STATES SYNOD

LENT 4: CUP OF COLD WATER, YOU NOURISH US

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FROM THE FONT, GOD'S SPRING OF LIVING WATER FLOWS FREELY AND POWERFULLY THROUGHOUT THE GATHERED ASSEMBLY, ITS RIPPLES EXTENDING INTO EVERY DAY OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE. THE STREAMS OF THE BAPTISMAL SPRING INCLUDE NURTURE, FORMATION, INITIATION, RETURN, AFFIRMATION, VOCATION, REMEMBRANCE, AND, ULTIMATELY, THE COMPLETION OF GOD'S PROMISE IN THE LIFE TO COME, WHEN THE WELLSPRING OF BAPTISM OVERFLOWS IN NEW LIFE.

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In John's gospel, Jesus does much more than merely ask a Samaritan woman, an outsider and a sinner, for a drink of water. By engaging the unnamed woman in conversation, Jesus eventually directs the conversation to the topic of "living water," declaring that this gift will become a spring inside of her.

The promise of "a spring of water gushing up to eternal life" (John 4:14) is also associated with the promises made in baptism. The imagery of never-ending streams of life-giving water gushing up abundantly to nourish us and quench our thirst is a powerful one. But the encounter between Jesus and the Samaritan woman is much more than imagery, isn't it? "The gift that Jesus gives and that Jesus is," notes Richard John Neuhaus, "is given, received, and now fully possessed by the woman at the well. Her transformation is complete, purposeful, and joyful" (God For Us, p. 55). This is the function of baptism. This is the purpose of Lent.

John 4:11-14:¹¹ The woman said to him, "Sir, you have no bucket, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water?"¹² Are you greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us the well, and with his sons and his flocks drank from it?"¹³ Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again,¹⁴ 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."

Matthew 3:16-17:¹⁶ And when Jesus had been baptized, just as he came up from the water, suddenly the heavens were opened to him and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him.¹⁷ And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased."

Questions for Reflection

Trusting in Jesus' promise of living water, in what ways do you draw strength from the means of grace (word and sacrament)?

- One of the unspoken dimensions of baptism is that the baptized, like Jesus before them, become "public figures" marked by the Holy Spirit, to serve the reign of God in our world today. If this is the case, then how are you being called to serve the reign of God?
- How is the Holy Spirit at work nourishing and strengthening your congregation?
- Where do you see God's activity at work in the wider church?

Prayer

LIVING WATER WHO REFRESHES OUR WEARINESS, YOU ARE THE RIVER OF LIFE, YOU ARE THE EVERLASTING WELLSPRING. SATISFY OUR THIRST WITH YOUR LIVING WATER, JESUS CHRIST, AND EMPOWER US WITH THE GIFT OF YOUR SPIRIT, THAT THE PROMISES YOU MAKE TO US IN BAPTISM MIGHT BECOME FOR US A WELLSPRING OF CONFIDENCE AND ONGOING RENEWAL. NOURISHED BY THE LIVING WATER THAT ONLY YOU CAN GIVE, SEND US OUT INTO THE PLACES WE LIVE, WORK, AND PLAY TO BOLDLY SERVE YOU AND OUR NEIGHBORS IN NEED.

AMEN