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Our Lady Queen of Peace

Long before there was reality TV, there was TV about reality. You might remember: Shows that struggled to portray families struggling through life, marriage, divorce. There were shows that reminded us that there was a bit of original sin in all of our families, as we understood what it was to be in *all in the family* of humanity. Some shows made us laugh, others made us laugh at ourselves, and others made us cringe at the thoughts of who we could be. And, some just helped us to relax.

Perhaps you remember one of my favorites from reruns on TV Land or one of those rerun channels. Its song tells us what it is all about:

(Choir sings song:)

*Making your way in the world today takes everything you got.  
Taking a break from all your worries sure would help a lot.  
Wouldn't you like to get away?  
Sometimes you wanna go where everybody knows your name,  
And there always glad you came.  
You wanna be where you can see  
Our troubles are all the same.  
You wanna be where everybody knows your name.*

The TV show *Cheers* portrayed a community of friends who had one thing in common: their loneliness and their struggles to trust each other with its pain. In the end, they never let each other down. They were always there to reassure each other, with a lot of humor and even more humility. They listened and accepted each other just as they were: Often silly, self-important, and struggling for love or acceptance or affirmation. And, they got it at a place called Cheers, a basement Boston bar owned by a recovering alcoholic and former baseball player.

I suppose I mention this TV show because its thirsty patrons remind me an awful lot like Jesus and the Samaritan woman in today's gospel. Both were thirsty. Both came to a place known for its beverages, and both had their thirsts quenched by the other. Jesus needed water; the woman needed acceptance, affirmation, and wholeness. Both found what they were looking for. And, it all happens in the beauty of one of those life-changing conversations over a refreshing drink. This time, God was buying! I guess you could say that drinks were on the house.

It is interesting that Jesus takes his lead from this woman. He was also a very judged man, and he was assuredly tired of the expectations that so many people placed on him. Maybe this is why the Samaritan woman didn't judge him. And, he, in turn, didn't judge here. Like he took his lead from the woman who first washed his feet with her hair before washing the feet of the disciples, Jesus once again is led by women in this conversation.

I think we are pretty familiar with life-changing conversations:

“I love you.”

“Will you marry me?”

“We are going to have a baby!”

“I don’t love you anymore.”

“Mommy and Daddy are getting a divorce.”

“It’s cancer.”

We can remember these moments and these conversations, for our lives were altered by their contents. We are different people because of the words we spoke to each other, whether we initiated the conversation or not.

As vital as these talks are, though, there are even more memorable conversations, ones that literally quench some of our deepest thirsts and address our deepest questions: who we are, whose we are, and are we loved. These “thirst-quenching conversations” clarify our lives, they help us to see where we are going and who we may be going with. They aid us in making sense of the nonsense of our lives. Very simply, they help us grow, and they do it without judgment.

“I need you to accept me just as I am.”

“I don’t blame you.”

“You never said you were sorry.”

“I forgive you.”

“I will not drink today.”

“I am afraid, really afraid of what lies ahead.”

In today’s gospel story, the Samaritan woman’s deepest thirsts are quenched, for she is shown just who she is. A woman who is loved. She is identified by Jesus ultimately as one who is loved by God, not as one who has had five husbands. Jesus doesn’t ask her for an annulment or even for her sorrow; he asks her for a drink because he is thirsty for water **and** for her conversation. He wanted her to be with him.

This is the same thirsty man who expresses this need at the end of his life on the cross. “I thirst,” the dying Jesus spoke. Yes, a broken man needed water and a suffering God was thirsty for connection with a human race that had abandoned him. God is thirsting for us!

It is easy to remember our life-changing conversations, but how about those thirst-quenching ones? When was the last time we deliberately were vulnerable whether with a loved, a dear friend, or our God in prayer to put ourselves into someone else’s hands so that some of our deepest thirsts could be quenched, our lives could be clarified, and the nonsense of our lives be eased?

During this Season of Lent, we are called to go deeper in prayer. Maybe we need to say some difficult things to the Lord in prayer, perhaps we are being called to speak some

words about our sins to a priest in confession, or to seek or give forgiveness to someone with whom we have been alienated. Our brothers and sisters who are journeying in the RCIA are deep in these conversations in prayer and with their sponsors. Who is getting us our water?

I began our reflection today by mentioning a song, one that mentions a place where we can forget our troubles, where everybody knows our name. It has been said that anytime someone significant in the Scriptures remains nameless, that person points to a universal person—to all of us. Each and every one of us has a few things that we would not want announced in the light of day. Yet, when Jesus does it, he does so without judgment. He does this so that this woman can move forward with freedom from her past and love for her life to come.

It is only in heaven where everyone will know our name, and we shall know everyone else's. There will be no more thirst, no more fear, no more alienation, and no more sadness. It will be an experience where Jesus, once again, leads us to celebrate who we are and whose we are. Until then, let us quench our thirsts and drink abundantly, speaking and listening without fear and without judgment—just the way it is when we are *all in the family* of God.