

Homily for March 26, 2000
3rd Sunday of Lent Cycle B

By Father Charles Bowes

Exodus 17:3-7
Romans 5:1-2, 5-8
John 4:5-42

God touches one person through another.

When have we felt most in need of the touch of others? In moments of loss? Of grief? Moments of triumph? Of joy? A grandmother on her way back from visiting her son and daughter-in-law and new grandchild, wept as she narrated her ineffective efforts to be part of that family. I touched her hand in a gesture of support. Later she thanked me for that comfort.

In a moment our elect for the waters of baptism will feel a touch of a hand upon their head. What makes us so bold? What lets us touch another in their journey? Is it not that we journey with them – experience the same things, the same doubts, the same sins? Joys? Sorrows? Is not God found in all the efforts to be with one another as we travel?

In John 4, the woman says of Jesus: “He told me everything I ever did.” No he didn’t. He didn’t tell her everything...but what he told her touched her; what he said was acceptance of what mattered most...acceptance of her shame...and for her that was everything. Does God do any less for us...ever refuse to touch those who search or struggle? Are not those to be baptized the courageous ones for allowing us to touch them and so

awaken in us our need to open and receive what God already and always wishes to give? Our elect for the Easter sacraments have named our common needs, our sins and struggles. Will not this holy food nourish us for a journey in which we are ultimately never alone?

A boy consistently came home late from school. There was no good reason for his tardiness, and no amount of discussion seemed to help. Finally, in desperation, the boy’s father sat him down and said, “The next time you come home late from school you’re going to be given bread and water for supper – and nothing else. Is that clear, son?” The boy looked straight into his father’s eyes and nodded. He understood perfectly.

A few days later the boy came home later than usual. His mother met him at the door without a word. When he approached the dinner table he saw his parent’s plates heaped high with food. At his place, however, sat a plate that held a single slice of bread. Next to that was a lonely glass of water.

The father waited for the full impact to sink in. Then he quietly took the boy’s plate and placed it in front of himself. He took his own plate and put it in front of the boy. Years later the boy said, “All my life I’ve known what God is like by what my father did that night.”

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