

Striking the Rock

After Jesus spoke to the Samaritan villagers, they said to the woman who had told them about him, "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 Savior of the world." We need to be able to say this to the Church, the "woman" we met at the well of Baptism. Our faith in Jesus must be the result of personal encounter with him. We cannot truly know him through others' experience of him, through what we have been told by our parents, friends and community. The witnesses to Christ invite us to come and see; it is only when we have "heard for ourselves," when we have "seen with our eyes" and "touched with our hands" that we can say we truly know Jesus as the Word of life (see John 1:39, 46; 1 John 1:1).

This requires discipleship: reading and reflecting on Scripture, thinking about Jesus, talking to him, interacting with him in all the ways we interact with friends and teachers and those whom we love, encountering him in the sacraments of Reconciliation and Eucharist, celebrating in liturgy his life and recognizing the continuing impact of his self-offering for the world's salvation.

Faith is the foundation of discipleship; discipleship turns faith into experience. Do we recognize God's gift? Do we believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Anointed One who will tell us everything? Do we believe that Jesus will give us living water that will become in us a "spring, gushing up to eternal life"? If we believe, why do we not come and drink? Why do we fail to keep coming to see for ourselves?

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MARCH 8, 2026

3RD SUNDAY OF LENT

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

Hope is what keeps discipleship going. We must not doubt as Moses did when he struck the rock in Horeb. Because he feared that God would not keep the promise, Moses asked the community, "Listen, you rebels, shall we bring water for you out of this rock?" (Numbers 20:10). And then Moses struck the rock a second time, just to be safe.

We have to pray, to read and reflect on Scripture, not as an experiment to see if it will work, but realizing that it will work if we persevere. Jesus is the rock; he has promised us "living water." Unlike Moses, we have been told to strike the rock calmly and consistently, not expecting instant results but trusting absolutely that if we ask, we will receive, if we seek, we will find and, if we keep knocking, the heart of Christ will open to us.

Christ's love is the reason for our hope. We dare not expect to find living water in the word of God because we are good at praying or because we are especially virtuous or have a special gift for understanding Scripture. It is because Christ loves us. He wants to share his

heart with us, to teach us the truth which sets us free, to lead us into deeper love, joy and peace—into the fullness of life. This is why he came. Saint Paul says, “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.” (See John 8:32; 10:10; 14:12-27; Romans 5:5.)

It is true that the more we love God, the more clearly we will be able to understand his word. “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God” (Matthew 5:8). But the real source of our hope is that God “proves his love for us in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us.” It is God’s love, demonstrated through Jesus’ death on the cross, which gives us confidence, hope and strength to persevere. God’s love for us sweetens even what is bitter in the waters of life (see Exodus 15: 22-25).

REFLECTING ON THIS WEEK'S GOSPELS

Third Week of the Lent

Pray daily: Father, you have taught us to overcome sin by prayer, fasting and works of mercy. When we are discouraged by our weakness, give us confidence in your love.

Monday: Luke 4:24-30. Jesus said, “Truly I tell you, no prophet is accepted in the prophet’s hometown.” Are you so used to having the word of God that you fail to read it? So, used to having Jesus as Teacher that you do not consult him?

Tuesday: Matthew 18:21-35. Jesus said that Peter must forgive “Not seven times, but I tell you, seventy-seven times.” Do you believe that the right, the best response to hurt and injustice is forgiving as God forgives us? Are you waiting to forgive someone? Who has hurt you “just one time too many”?

Wednesday: Matthew 5:17-19. “Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets; I have come not to abolish but to fulfill.” Have you seen how

each of the Ten Commandments has been transformed and perfected by the teaching of Jesus? What concrete choices in your life show that you aim at more than just avoiding sin?

Thursday: Luke 11:14-23. “Every kingdom divided against itself becomes a desert.... Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters.” Do you try to be “with” Jesus in your daily actions or do you seek simply not to go against him? How can you seek nothing except “the Kingdom of God and his righteousness” in your work, social life, family life?

Friday: Mark 12:28-34. One of the scribes asked Jesus, “Which commandment is the first of all?” Which commandment is first for you? First in your consciousness? How do you show that?

Saturday: Luke 18:9-14. “[F]or all who exalt themselves will be humbled, but all who humble themselves will be exalted.” According to Jesus, in what does your true value consist? Do you need to win the approval of others to believe you are good and lovable? Do you feel a need to explain away your faults? Do you act as though you must “win” God’s love or do you accept it as a totally free gift?

SEVERAL SUGGESTIONS FOR LENT

Prayer: Read the Gospel for each day this week. Ask yourself what point in it you would preach on if you were giving the homily at Mass. Then practice what you would preach.

Fasting: Ask if there is any sacrifice you could make which would let God work through you better at home, at work, in your social life.

Almsgiving: Each day share with another person the living water you receive from Jesus Christ.