

- St. Jerome once said that: “A vice in the heart is an idol on the altar.” If you think about it, it’s really a marvelous quote. As it is our human nature to worship, we must guard our hearts carefully against worshipping anything other than God, especially the things of this world.
- This happens when we inordinately seek out worldly goods and pleasures, allowing them to become the primary object of our desires, rather than God.
- And doing so makes us idolaters – an offense against the very first commandment – by worshipping something other than the living and true God.
- Any vice that we have, any sin that we commit regularly, is really – at its root – a form of idolatry because it is a manifestation of us loving something more than we love God.
- You see, deep within the heart of every person is a thirst, a longing for something more than this world can give. It is a longing for God Himself and for our home in Heaven where we will gaze upon His glory for all eternity. This is why worship comes so naturally to us.
- We worship because of our thirst. Man knows instinctively that there is Something greater than himself, something upon which he can set his greatest hopes.
- And in that eternal moment when the veil separating Heaven and earth is torn asunder, and we see God face to face, we’ll find the complete fulfillment of all our hopes, and our thirst will be eternally quenched.
- But for now, as we continue our life-long pilgrimage toward our heavenly homeland, we must contend with that eternal thirst that God Himself has placed in our hearts. And that thirst is the theme of our readings this third Sunday of Lent.
- Sadly, while all of us experience this thirst, this longing in our hearts and souls, we do not always recognize that it is God Whom we are thirsting for.
- Because of the busyness of our lives and because of the weakness of our flesh, we are often blind to this reality, and in our spiritual blindness we seek to slake our spiritual thirst with an earthly good.
- And while that earthly good may satisfy our thirst for a time, whether it be something like power, money, fame, or something more temporal like material goods, food, or even another person as it was for the Samaritan woman at the well, we will always thirst again.
- Nothing in this world can ever relieve us of the thirst that only God Himself can quench. We can try with all our might to find solace in the things and people of this world, but as St. Augustine tells us, our hearts will always be restless until they rest in God.
- And the way that we find God, the way that we rest in Him while we live on earth, is through prayer and through the Sacraments, for in receiving the Sacraments we receive our Lord.
- In our first reading from Exodus, we hear of Moses providing water for the Israelites in the desert, bringing an end to their quarrelsome discontent. This powerful event foreshadows the Sacrament of Baptism, which ends our dissension with God that is the fruit of original sin.
- In baptism we are plunged into the springs of God’s life-giving water, and we are given to drink of His grace and mercy.
- True union with God is established in our souls, and the sacramental life of the Church is opened up to us so that we may continue to drink of His life-giving water contained in all the other sacraments as well.
- Baptism unseals for us the well that contains the life-giving water we so desire. With every sacrament we receive worthily, we drink from this cistern of life-giving water.

- Every time we make a good confession, we drink deeply of this living water that our Lord speaks about today to the Samaritan woman.
- As with the Samaritan woman, our sins are revealed plainly in the sight of the Lord, and He lovingly forgives them and strengthens us with the grace to sin no more.
- Every time we receive Holy Communion worthily, the cup of salvation dips deeply into that cistern of life-giving water and we are given to drink of God's mercy and grace that heals our souls and unites ever us more closely to Him.
- When we are confirmed, when we are married, when we are ordained, when we receive the anointing of the sick, we drink anew of this life-giving water that our Lord promises.
- Receiving the Sacraments worthily causes heaven and earth to come together in our souls, and a spring of water welling up to eternal life flows within us as we begin to worship our Lord in Spirit and truth.
- When we drink of this life-giving water that Holy Mother Church provides for us through the Sacraments, we are made holier because they fashion us ever more closely into the image of God Himself.
- And then we can, in the words of St. Paul, boast in hope of the glory of God. And our hope does not disappoint because the love of God has truly been poured out into our hearts through the power of the Holy Spirit.
- Again this year, we have people awaiting this life-giving water by preparing to enter into communion with the Church through the Sacraments of Initiation. Today the Church celebrates the first of three scrutinies for those preparing for baptism.
- The scrutinies are meant to uncover and then heal all that is weak, defective or sinful in the hearts of those preparing for baptism, so that all that is upright, strong and good may be strengthened.
- The scrutinies are celebrated in a particular order: first to deliver the catechumens from the power of sin and Satan, to protect them from temptation, and finally to give them strength in Christ, Who is the way, the truth, and the life.
- For those of you undergoing this scrutiny today, you must have the intention of achieving an intimate knowledge of Christ and His Church. You are called to examine your lives to uncover your own personal sinfulness and then work toward true repentance.
- Today you will be instructed about the mystery of sin and your spirit will be filled with Christ the Redeemer, Who is the living water we heard about in the Gospel. All of this is done so that you may be prepared fully to enter into union with Christ and His Church.
- My dear friends, all that we need for salvation is found here within the bosom of Holy Mother Church.
- Through the Sacraments, most especially the Sacraments of confession and Holy Communion, we are given to drink of God's grace, which is the life-giving water for which all our souls thirst.
- Let us pray for our brothers and sisters who seek to be one with us through initiation into the Church. And like the Samaritan woman, may all of us humbly acknowledge our sins and seek out that life-giving water of salvation that Holy Mother Church holds out to us through the Sacraments.