

- It was St. Jerome who once, very memorably, said: “A vice in the heart is an idol on the altar.” Recognizing that it is our human nature to worship, at least in some measure, those things that we desire in our hearts, his words make a lot of sense.
- St. Jerome’s point is that we must guard our hearts carefully, cultivating within ourselves a true detachment from worldly goods and pleasures.
- Otherwise, we run the risk of being idolaters – an offense against the first commandment – by worshipping something other than the living and true God.
- Any attachment 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 ourselves, 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 beatific splendor for all eternity.
- That beatific vision that we will enjoy in Heaven will not be merely a matter of looking upon God in all His glory, but will be the actual possession of Him whom we are beholding.
- And in that eternal moment when, finally, the veil that separates Heaven and earth is torn asunder and we see God face to face, we will find the complete fulfillment of all our hopes and desires. Nothing more shall we want, for indeed, we will at that moment possess the All.
- But for now, as we walk by faith along the pilgrimage of life toward our heavenly homeland, we must contend with that eternal thirst that God Himself has placed in our hearts, which is the theme of our readings this third Sunday of Lent.
- Sadly, while all of us experience longing in our hearts and souls, we don’t always recognize that it is God whom we are thirsting for.
- Because of the weakness of our flesh, our hardness of heart, or even just our bad formation, we are often blinded to the reality of our spiritual thirst, and in our blindness, hardness of heart, and ignorance, 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 is 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 by turning to the sacraments of the Church, for in receiving the Sacraments we receive Jesus Christ.
- In our first reading from Exodus, we hear the story of Moses providing water for the angry Israelites in the desert that brings an end to their quarrelsome discontent.
- In this powerful event we see a foreshadowing of the Sacrament of Baptism, which ends our dissension with God that is the fruit of original sin.
- In our 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 font 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.
- In those sublime moments of our spiritual life in which heaven and earth come together in our souls, a spring of water welling up to eternal life flows within us and 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. We come to know Him, and to see in Him the answer to our eternal thirst.
- 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.
- My dear friends, all that we need for salvation is found here within the Church. Through the sacraments – most especially the sacraments of reconciliation and Holy Communion, which we can receive whenever we want – God's grace is communicated to us. His grace is the life-giving water for which all our souls thirst.
- So then, let us drink deeply from the cup of salvation that Holy Mother Church holds out to us. Like the Samaritan woman, let us meet Christ here at the well and drink of His life-giving water.
- St. Jerome, pray for us!