This week, many of us have probably been slammed by the news concerning the coronavirus outbreak across our city, our region and this country. Many of us, including some of our governing officials might have been caught off-guard and that all of a sudden has exploded exponentially. Certainly “March Madness” has taken on a whole different meaning, in light of what’s happening around us.

 This pandemic crisis is no longer an Asian, or an European one, but a global one because as we have seen in the past couple of weeks, we are ALL connected socially directly or indirectly one way or another, in this global village that we live. Regardless of what age you may be or how physically in shape you think you are, it affects how we conduct our work, study, play or as simply as doing our grocery shopping.

 Over the past few months, we’ve also seen some of the best and the worst of our human social behaviors, both from abroad or locally. We’ve seen how some communities coming together in lending support among those who are most vulnerable - the elderlies, the low-income individuals who could not find any face-masks to protect themselves or could not go out to purchase their regular household items. On the other hand, we’ve also seen the worst of humanity from price gauging on certain items at the store, long line around the block waiting for masks and hand sanitizers, massive hoarding at the supermarkets on rice, or toilet paper, to a more serious note…hate crime and physical assault committed against targeted race or ethnic groups of fellow citizens.

Our social relations and tolerance with one another have surely been challenged and tested during this crisis. This global pandemic has demonstrated the best and the worst of humanity. Now is not the time to be selfish but to live communally in order to get through this challenging time. As scripture reminds us that, *“if one member suffers, we all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, we all rejoice together with it.[[1]](#footnote-1)*

 This is the new reality that we live in going forward, as we journey into this new and uncharted territory, with a long, long road ahead to reestablish normalcy once again. Undoubtedly, we may be asked upon to make some drastic adjustments in going about our business. There may be some obstacles and barriers that we must overcome, but with our perseverance and faith, we shall overcome many of these challenges together.

 Ironically our passage this Sunday is challenging us to do just that…how we must live with one another, in spite of our differences and social stereotypes that might have distanced us from one another, and I’ll explain what I mean by that.

 From our reading today, Jesus was encountering this woman from Samaria – a Samaritan. As it turned out, this Samaritan woman turned out to play a significant role, as a trailblazer, in revealing God’s plan of salvation for humanity, not just for the Jews but for ALL of God’s people as well.

 It was about noon on a hot summer day. Jesus came upon this well outside of the city of Samaria famously known for its ancestor - Jacob. Jesus, like anybody else, he became thirsty and requested a drink from this woman at the well. What seemed to be the big deal, right? Well, it was a BIG deal!!!

 It was a BIG deal because Jesus really had no business whatsoever to be talking to this woman because 1) she was a Samaritan AND 2)she was a woman. He’s a Jew, a Rabbi and who is she? They were NOT supposed to interact with one another. They were supposed to be socially distancing from each other. But yet who would’ve thought a deep theological conversation would take place under those extraordinary circumstances? Many social barriers had been broken and the distance had been narrowed between God and humanity in general. As Jesus said, ***“whoever who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life.”[[2]](#footnote-2)***

 Surprisingly without hesitation whatsover, this Samaritan woman took up on Jesus’s offer. *“Give me this water, [my LORD] so that I may never be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water [again]”[[3]](#footnote-3)*

This had been what she was yearning for. She has been thirsty not just physically but spiritually as well. “Yes! I want some of this! Give it to me.”

 As Jesus and this Samaritan woman continued their conversation by the well, more of this woman’s personal background began to surface. She might be an unidentified person by name but Jesus knew all about her past…that she was an adulterer and she even lied to cover up the truth.

 What started off as a random encounter between a passerby asking for a drink from a local woman turned into a profound theological debate of who this Messiah really was…well, she was looking and talking to him right there!

 God works in a mysterious and unexpected way through our lives. Not only did this Samaritan woman believed in Jesus but she got all so excited and went back into her town and started telling everybody about what she experienced. God chose this Samaritan woman to be an evangelist, that is literally someone who tells the good news. God called this Samaritan woman in order to reveal and to proclaim Jesus’s true identity and His mission here on earth…even though she was considered an “outsider”, someone who has been marginalized on the fringe of society.

 Jesus reached out to this un-identified Samaritan woman at the well despite her backgrounds and personal flaws…like we ALL have our share of those, no one is exempt. This only goes to show that **God could use anyone, at any time, in anywhere, and under any circumstances in order to carry out God’s greater mission and purpose here on earth.**

 **If you or me or anybody else were at that well, would we have responded the same way as this woman did? Would we be socially distancing ourselves because we think we are not worthy enough to receive God’s grace and to be used by God for God’s greater purpose and plan?**

 Despite the woman’s shortcoming of faith and her sinful past, she was chosen to become a proclaimer and witness to the true Messiah and Savior of the world. She said YES to God and God used her to the fullest!

 **Furthermore, our passage today challenges us to think more “outside the box”**…outside of our own social comfort zones and boundaries to be exact, both visible and invisible boundaries that often limit our faith potential and our trust in our sovereign God. **We worry about who’s IN and who’s OUT, who belongs and who doesn’t belong, while all God requires of us is to lay our trust upon Him in being His faithful witnesses, building up and equipping the community of faith around us.** Jesus is offering us a drink of the living water that will quench the thirst for everyone and not just for a few elites.

 Jesus exposed this “woman-at-the-well” of her personal baggage, her unconfessed sin. This woman needed help and she was getting desperate. She had been trapped by her own sinfulness waiting and wanting to be rescued, but she didn’t know how…that is until she finally met Jesus. Jesus made her feel vulnerable and uncomfortable by disclosing her sinful past…perhaps something that she may not even wanted to hear. Jesus offered the woman a second chance, a new beginning, and she fully embraced the moment.

 Through her liberation and freedom, the Spirit gave her a renewal sense of boldness and courage to share her re-discovered faith with others. She even left her water jar as a symbol of her liberation, just like those disciples dropped their net, their fishing boat and their family behind, when they decided to follow Jesus as His disciples. There’s no need for her to go back to draw water from that well anymore, because she has been quenched not only physically but spiritually by the Living Water.

 Some of us might find ourselves being trapped just like this Samaritan woman? We come religiously at the well, looking to draw water when no one is watching, due to our shameful past. We may be trapped by our very own existence - who we are, where we come from, how we were brought up through our own history and past experiences. Our faith may be inculturated by drawing the same water from the same well from generation to generation. Even if our spiritual well might be running dry, we would still try to draw from a well that’s running on empty, while we squander the opportunity to explore a new well or to seek a new source the living water.

 **When Jesus met this woman-at-the-well, He offered her a new source of water...the spring of the living water that will never run dry.** He took a huge risk by breaking down social barriers and overstepping boundaries in order to reach out to her. Conversely she also met Jesus half way by offering him a physical drink. **Through our water of baptism, we have been drawn together as one body and in one Spirit.** During this season of Lent, as we continue to journey through the wilderness of LIFE, may we strive to seek Christ first in unexpected places, into unfamiliar and uncharted territory, due to our uncertain circumstances and challenge upon our horizon, as we are facing today. God has extended an invitation for all of us today to drink from the fountain of Living Water. Will we accept his invitation to this new Living Water or do we go back to the same well that will soon run dry? Instead of distancing ourselves socially with our neighbors, let us draw closer to God through our humble spirit, by lending our hands and showing our love and support to one another, during these trying and uncertain days ahead.

 Together we WILL get through this health crisis. Instead of selfishly hoarding our material resources, let us share what we have with one another. More importantly, let us be God’s evangelist by sharing God’s love and compassion with our neighbors, who might be living in a great deal of fear, panic, and anxiety at this time. May this be a time for us to define who we are as God’s people, as we draw socially and spiritually closer with one another, and more importantly closer with God. Let us break down any social barriers, stereotypes, and stigmas against one another, as we seek God’s grace and mercy of healing through all humankind in times such as these.

 In the name of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, Amen.

1. *1 Corinthians 12:26* [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. *John 4:13-14* [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. *John 4:15* [↑](#footnote-ref-3)