

DAY 1

“WHO WILL SATISFY YOUR THIRST?”

*Awakening Holy Desire: Jesus and
the Samaritan Woman*

John 4:7–29

(Based on the Introduction to *Be Healed*)

PREPARATION

Place yourself in the presence of God.

The gospel account describing Jesus’s encounter with the Samaritan Woman (at Jacob’s Well) invites you to examine how you have attempted to satisfy your spiritual thirst in ways that have ultimately left you unfulfilled. We see in this story that only Jesus will satisfy our deepest desires. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* affirms this reality: “The desire for God is written in the human heart, because man is created by God and

for God, and God never ceases to draw man to himself. Only in God will he find the truth and happiness he never stops searching for” (CCC, 27).

LECTIO DIVINA

Gospel of John (4:7–29): Jesus
Encounters the Samaritan Woman

Take a few deep breaths. As you breathe, invite the Holy Spirit to inspire you as you pray with this scripture passage.

Reading

As you read through the story slowly, pay attention to how Jesus initiates the conversation with this woman. Notice how he first meets her at a human level and then reveals her troubled relational history before offering her the fulfillment she deeply desires. Finally, notice how the woman responds to Jesus and then goes to tell others about him after this encounter.

⁷A woman of Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, “Give me a drink.” ⁸His disciples had gone into the town to buy food. ⁹The Samaritan woman said to him, “How can you, a Jew, ask me, a Samaritan woman, for a drink?” (For Jews use nothing in common

with Samaritans.)¹⁰ Jesus answered and said to her, "If you knew the gift of God and who is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him and he would have given you living water."¹¹ [The woman] said to him, "Sir, you do not even have a bucket and the well is deep; where then can you get this living water?"¹² Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us this well and drank from it himself with his children and his flocks?"¹³ Jesus answered and said to her, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again;¹⁴ but whoever drinks the water I shall give will never thirst; the water I shall give will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life."¹⁵ The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water, so that I may not be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water."

¹⁶ Jesus said to her, "Go call your husband and come back."¹⁷ The woman answered and said to him, "I do not have a husband." Jesus answered her, "You are right in saying, 'I do not have a husband.'¹⁸ For you have had five husbands, and the one you have now is not your husband. What you have said is true."¹⁹ The woman said to him, "Sir, I can see that you are a prophet."²⁰ Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain; but you people say that the place to worship is in

Jerusalem.”²¹ Jesus said to her, “Believe me, woman, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem.²² You people worship what you do not understand; we worship what we understand, because salvation is from the Jews.²³ But the hour is coming, and is now here, when true worshipers will worship the Father in Spirit and truth; and indeed the Father seeks such people to worship him.²⁴ God is Spirit, and those who worship him must worship in Spirit and truth.”²⁵ The woman said to him, “I know that the Messiah is coming, the one called the Anointed; when he comes, he will tell us everything.”²⁶ Jesus said to her, “I am he, the one who is speaking with you.”

²⁷ At that moment his disciples returned, and were amazed that he was talking with a woman, but still no one said, “What are you looking for?” or “Why are you talking with her?”²⁸ The woman left her water jar and went into the town and said to the people,²⁹ “Come see a man who told me everything I have done. Could he possibly be the Messiah?”

Meditation

“This encounter with him, as it burns us, transforms us and frees us . . . enabling us to become truly ourselves

and thus totally of God," Pope Benedict XVI writes in his encyclical *Spe Salvi* (*Saved by Hope*).

Somewhere deep inside each one of us is a burning desire to finally become the person God created us to be. Yearning to be fully alive, we long to give ourselves wholeheartedly back to God. Yet despite these stirrings, many of us hesitate and resist, fearing the very thing we desire. While we long to be made pure and whole, we avoid God's process of purification and healing. I wonder if the Samaritan woman felt a similar reluctance before encountering Jesus at Jacob's well (see John 4). Do you remember her story? Her brief but powerful encounter with Jesus exposed the secrets of her heart and set her free to love again. She came to the well with an insatiable *thirst*. Her many worldly lovers had left these cravings for love unfulfilled. Neither could she satisfy their consuming appetites. One by one, they had thrown her away like a day-old beverage that had lost its taste. We can only imagine how hopeless and unworthy she felt before her encounter with Jesus. Consider her shock when Jesus approached her, asking her for water.

According to the customs of the time, a Samaritan woman would not be permitted to speak with a Jewish man. Furthermore, some scholars suggest she came

late in the day to avoid facing the people in her own village. But Jesus was not a bit surprised by their encounter. Coming to the well, Jesus too was *thirsty*, though he was seeking more than water. He thirsted for this woman, with a deep desire that was totally different from the way the other men desired her. While they sought to consume her for their own pleasure, Jesus longed to satisfy her thirst by pouring himself out on her behalf. He desired to fulfill her, not to use her.

Can you picture the scene as they greet each other and his gentle gaze meets hers? I envision her immediately avoiding eye contact with Jesus. But then sensing something unusual in his presence, I imagine her looking up, being drawn into Jesus's penetrating gaze. Piercing her shame and reaching to the depths of her soul with his words, he sees her and speaks to her heart as no one has done before now. His searing love purifies her heart, burning away the shame-based lies that have tarnished her self-respect. Her previously unreachable well, the well of her soul, is now overflowing with living water. Running into the village, she longs to offer a refreshing drink to everyone she meets. She is radically transformed by her encounter with Jesus. Seeing her own dignity for the first time, she now desires to give herself

completely to God. She wants to tell everyone about this man who “knew everything” about her. She invites all of us to come and meet him for ourselves.

Vocal Prayer

Express your desires directly to Jesus in vocal prayer, realizing that you are in his presence.

The Samaritan woman asked Jesus for “living water.” What do you desire from him? Begin by praying aloud these verses from Psalm 42:2–3 as your own. Then, continue expressing your desires to Jesus in your own words.

² As the deer longs for streams of water,
so my soul longs for you, [Jesus].

³ My soul thirsts for [you, Jesus], the living [water].
When can I enter and see [your face]?

After expressing your desires, prepare your heart for an encounter with Jesus in contemplative prayer.

Contemplation

As you pray contemplatively with this story of the woman at the well, engage your mind, heart, imagination, emotions, and all your senses. In your imagination, identify with the Samaritan woman. Allow the Holy Spirit to lead you into an intimate conversation with Jesus.

Place yourself in the gospel scene, standing in the place of the woman. Every time the story refers to the woman, personalize it with “I” or “me.” For example, “I came to draw water. . . . Jesus said to me. . . .”

You see Jesus approaching you. What unworthiness keeps you from wanting to look at him?

Allow your gaze to meet Jesus’s gaze. (Allow yourself to spend a few moments experiencing his gaze beholding you.) Describe the movements of your heart as you look at him and he looks at you.

Pay attention to how you feel internally as he comes close and asks you for a drink. How does this translate into your life? How might you satisfy his thirst?

Jesus then asks you if you would like “living water.” How do you understand this “living water” that Jesus is offering you? How do you respond to his offer?

Now Jesus begins revealing your personal relational history. Pay attention to what you are experiencing as he reveals areas of your past and current broken relationships, showing you specific sins and wounds. (Ask the Holy Spirit to bring these areas of your personal history to mind now.)

When you think about these relationships, what were you desiring? How well were those desires fulfilled? How were they left unfulfilled?

Do you believe Jesus can and will satisfy your deepest desires? Why or why not?

What does it mean to you to worship in "Spirit and truth"? How does authentic worship fulfill you?

How does this encounter with Jesus motivate you to want to tell everyone about him? What do you want to tell them about Jesus?

Record your experience in this contemplative prayer in your prayer journal.

Action

Respond to your contemplative prayer experience with an action. Ask the Holy Spirit to inspire you.

Suggested Action: Spend some time going through your personal history of intimate relationships. Write down in your prayer journal the name of each person with whom you have had an intimate relationship. What were you desiring in each relationship? Then identify any ways you have sinned or been wounded in each of these relationships. Confess these sins in the Sacrament of Reconciliation, so you can experience Jesus's merciful gaze. If you do not have access to the Sacrament of Reconciliation, confess them to a trusted friend who will be able to respond with Jesus's love and mercy. Make eye contact.

Allow their loving gaze to heal you of your shame. If it seems prudent and for their good, contact any people you have hurt, and humbly apologize to them for specific ways you hurt them. Forgive others for any ways they have hurt you.

Alternative Action: If the suggested action does not fit you, ask the Holy Spirit to inspire an action that does.

WISDOM FROM THE CHURCH

As you reflect on Day 1, allow the wisdom from the Church to strengthen you in the graces of this day.

The Samaritan woman desired fulfillment in her broken human relationships, but she couldn't satisfy her deepest desires until she met Jesus. St. John Paul II in his 2000 World Youth Day address spoke about our universal longing for fulfillment: "It is Jesus in fact that you seek when you dream of happiness; He is waiting for you when nothing else you find satisfies you; He is the beauty to which you are so attracted; it is He who provoked you with that thirst for fullness that will not let you settle for compromise" (Pope John Paul II, "15th World Youth Day Address, Vigil of Prayer," 5). Just as in