

Have you ever gotten really, really thirsty? Maybe after a long day out in the sun weeding and planting flowers? Or a long day on the tractor or combine, and your air conditioner was broken in the cab? Maybe after a long walk, or a long jog around the trails behind the Ugly School track? Or maybe because you forgot your water bottle, and didn't drink anything for many hours, and got dehydrated? When you finally found some water and gulped it down, did it satisfy your deepest thirst?

In the Gospel for (today/yesterday), we heard, “On the last and greatest day of the feast, Jesus stood up and exclaimed, ‘Let anyone who thirsts come to me and drink. As Scripture says: Rivers of living water will flow from within him who believes in me.’”

“Let anyone who thirsts come to me and drink...” What kind of thirst is Jesus offering to satisfy? What kind of water is Jesus offering us today? [PAUSE] To discover the answer to this question, let's use our imaginations.

You find a time machine in your grandma's attic. You step inside, close the door, and set one dial for 33AD, the other dial for Israel. You push the flashing button, wait a few seconds, and hear a “ding” as the screen reads, “You have arrived. Please exit the vehicle.”

You open the door and find yourself next to the Temple in Jerusalem. It is morning. Thousands of people holding leafy branches, following a Jewish priest who is holding a large golden pitcher (like this one), processing towards the southeast side of the temple hill. A small choir behind the priest is singing psalms. You catch up with an old woman, and ask her, “Hi! This is my first time here. Where is everyone going?”

“Shalom, you must be one of the foreign pilgrims coming to celebrate the Feast! Welcome to Jerusalem! Where are you from? Nevermind. We're heading to the fountain of Gihon to get the water for the Feast of Tabernacles! Come with me.”

She grabs your hand and pulls you into the procession. You arrive at the fountain, and everyone watches as the Jewish priest solemnly processes towards the water with a large golden pitcher. At the same time, the choir sings, “You will draw water joyfully from the springs of salvation.”

The priest draws water into the pitcher, and begins marching up the hill toward the Temple, the choir on his heels, singing psalms. Everyone follows him through the Temple Gate.

Inside the Temple courtyard, you see lots of people marching around the large

altar, dancing, singing joyfully, using the leafy branches to form a kind of roof over the altar. The priest goes to the altar, and then pours the water from the pitcher onto the altar, looking up to heaven and saying something. You ask the old lady, "What is he saying?" "Oh, the priest is thanking God for the Fall harvest that the farmers just gathered. He is also asking God to give us enough rain for the crops this winter."

Suddenly, you hear a shouting above the singing. You look around, trying to find the voice. You see a man dressed in simple clothing, not far away, standing up on a platform, shouting, "Let anyone who thirsts come to me and drink..."

His words remind you of something. You think of the story of Jesus meeting the Samaritan woman at the well. Jesus had told her, "If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water." The woman had asked, "...Where can you get this living water?" and Jesus had replied, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give them will never... thirst..."

You snap out of your daydream as Jesus shouts again, "Let anyone who thirsts come to me and drink..." The crowds quiet down, the people stop processing and singing, as everyone stares at this man.

You realize that something amazing is happening. Here, the people are praying for water, and their prayer will be answered in a way they don't expect. Jesus is saying "Come to ME and drink."

Your eyes meet His eyes, and His gaze reaches deep into your soul, and He says to you, as if you're the only one there, "What do YOU thirst for? Rivers of living water will flow from within the one who believes in me. Do you believe in me? Do you trust in me? Come to ME... and I will pour the water of the HOLY SPIRIT into your heart, like this priest is pouring water upon the altar. Come to ME, and I will satisfy your deepest thirst! Come to ME, receive the HOLY SPIRIT, and you will have the kind of life you have always thirsted for, and never... had... before."

I'll be away this week, so no daily Masses this week. Next weekend I'll have a wedding out of town. Please welcome Fr. Thai next weekend.