FATHER GARY PENNINGS

PASTOR'S CORNER

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

On this Third Sunday of Lent, we hear the Gospel passage from the fourth chapter of St. John's Gospel. It is the account of Jesus' encounter with the woman at the well.

The story is that of a Samaritan woman seeking water to quench her thirst but discovering a deeper, spiritual thirst. In the woman's conversation with Jesus, she becomes aware of her sins and is prompted to embrace self-reflection.

The woman moves from skepticism about Jesus to belief. It represents the process of conversion. She not only comes to believe but also becomes an evangelizer by sharing the "good news" she has encountered in Jesus. The entire event takes place around a well and the water prefigures the living waters of baptism.

Every year on this Third Sunday of Lent, this gospel passage is used as those in the Order of Christian Initiation of Adults (OCIA) experience the "First Scrutiny". The Scrutinies are liturgical rites which have the purpose of revealing and healing what is weak, sick and sinful in the hearts of those adults preparing to be baptized at Easter (the Elect) and, at the same time, strengthening what is honorable, strong, and holy in them.

For those of us already baptized and active in the life of the Catholic Church, the Scrutinies are an invitation to examine our own hearts and to seek divine help in healing what needs to be healed and strengthening even more what is already strong.

For those preparing for baptism at Easter, Lent is a time of purification and enlightenment, a time for deeper conversion. For those of us already baptized, it should also be a time of deeper conversion and a time of recommitment to the identity as sons or daughters of God that we receive on the day of our baptism. I invite you to embrace this Lenten season as time to recommit yourself to Christ and his Church.

Sincerely yours in Christ Jesus, the Way, the Truth and the Life,

Fr. Gary