

## The Word of God This Week

Set time aside each day this week with other members of your household, with other members of your parish or alone to listen to and reflect on the living Word of God. Use these passages from the Lectionary that are assigned for Liturgy this week. Reflect on how the Lord is inviting you to a deeper union with him.

### TODAY

**Exodus 17:3–7**  
**Romans 5:1–2, 5–8**  
**John 4:5–42**

### MONDAY

**Luke 4:24–30**

*“... no prophet is accepted in the prophet’s hometown.”*

### TUESDAY

**Matthew 18:21–35**

*“Not seven times, but . . . seventy-seven times.”*

### WEDNESDAY

**Matthew 5:17–19**

*“I have come not to abolish but to fulfill.”*

### THURSDAY

**Luke 11:14–23**

*“Every kingdom divided against itself becomes a desert . . .”*

### FRIDAY

**Mark 12:28–34**

*“You are not far from the kingdom of God.”*

### SATURDAY

**Luke 18:9–14**

*“... all who humble themselves will be exalted.”*

## Leaving the Good for the Best

From ancient times, the Church has used the story of Jesus’ encounter with a Samaritan woman during the season of Lent. This is appropriate because the story is one of conversion. By means of her dialogue with Jesus, the woman lets go of something valuable to her in order to embrace union with him.

The story revolves around two kinds of water. The woman, together with her whole city, was the proud possessor of a well given to them by their ancestor, Jacob. The well was the source of life to them and to their flocks. As Jesus and the woman begin to speak, they discuss water and who can provide it. The woman thinks she can, for she has a bucket by which to draw water from Jacob’s well. Jesus does not.



But Jesus reveals another type of water—not the physical water from the well, but the spiritual water of his gospel. This is the water that only Jesus can give. As the two discuss marriages and proper worship, it becomes clear to the woman that Jesus, who she first saw only as a thirsty stranger, is in fact the Messiah of God. She moves from a physical attachment to the water of the well to a spiritual union with Jesus as her Lord. Jesus’ water is a spiritual spring gushing up to eternal life.

As the woman runs back to the city to tell her neighbors about Jesus, she leaves her water jar behind. She will no longer need it. For the water she now possesses can only be contained by the human heart.



## The Faith of the Church

Conversion is but a beginning. It initiates a spiritual journey. The person who comes to faith in Christ must continue to form himself or herself more closely to Christ. No unworthy or manipulative techniques should be used to entice a person to believe. Yet people should be validly supported in their faith even if others oppose their decision (Cf. *Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church* 13).



## Questions of the Week

The spiritual journey of the Woman of Samaria is a gradual one. It begins with suspicion, recognizing Jesus as “a Jew.” Soon, she recognizes him as “a prophet.” Finally, she sees him as “the Messiah.” Step by step she finds eternal life.

### Adults

*Can I identify a moment in my life that could be validly called a conversion? What did I turn from and turn to?*

### Children

*Have I ever stopped doing something that I knew was not what God wanted me to do?*

## Responding to God's Word . . .

Many of the good things in our lives are perfectly compatible with the Gospel. But the discipline of Lent is to understand what is primary and what must be subordinated to our relationship with Christ.

It is a good thing to have a nice home and possessions that give us satisfaction. But if we find ourselves controlled by what we own, then it is time to unburden ourselves so that we have the freedom to do Christ's work.

It is a good thing to have time to relax and enjoy the blessings of life. But if the use of our time becomes

indulgent, our leisure can turn into selfishness. Then we must let go of our time so that we have time for others.

It is a good thing to be respected and admired. But if our acceptance prevents us from taking a stand that is unpopular, then we sacrifice our values for the sake of our image. Then we must disregard the opinion of others and speak the truth.

We are blessed by many good things. But the best thing is our relationship with God. Whatever threatens that union must be left behind.

## SUGGESTIONS

Use one of these suggestions or one of your own to respond to God's Word this week.

**In the home.** Discuss with your household one factor that hinders your relationship to each other. Determine an action you can take to work against it.

**In the workplace or in school.** Identify one habit you possess that frustrates others. Choose a positive action to oppose it.

**In the community.** Locate a problem in your church or neighborhood. Point it out to someone and discuss what he or she thinks can be done about it.



## Meditation Moment

In *Me and Other Advertising Geniuses*, Charlie Brower alludes to the folly of trying to satisfy a spiritual thirst with a material object. He says, "My friend Bill is one of those guys who's still scoring touchdowns, even though the game's over and won. My friend Bill has done everything they've told him to do, but he's still thirsty and unhappy."

### For reflection . . .

*Do I know anyone like Charlie's friend? What makes me think this person is like Charlie's friend? What might I do to help this person?*

OUR HEARTS WERE MADE FOR YOU,  
O LORD, AND THEY WILL NOT REST  
UNTIL THEY REST IN YOU.

SAINT AUGUSTINE

FROM *VISION* BY MARK LINK, SJ

## A Prayer for Conversion

Dear Lord, you call me each day to conversion, to leave what is wrong in my life behind. Lead me to replace anger with forgiveness, apathy with service, suspicion with trust, cynicism with hope, gossip with praise, and indifference with love. I know I can never grow without your grace. Your love is my power to change. Amen.

Carry this thought in your heart as a guide for your faith journey this week.

Come and see a man who told me everything I have ever done! He cannot be the Messiah, can he?

The Woman of Samaria, John 4:29

## Profile in Faith

### The Woman of Samaria (John 4)

We do not know the name of the Samaritan woman who meets Jesus by Jacob's well. But she demonstrates one clear characteristic of a believer: mission. Once she realizes who Jesus is and that he is able to offer eternal life, she rushes into her city to tell others. A disciple does not hide the Good News but shares it.

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