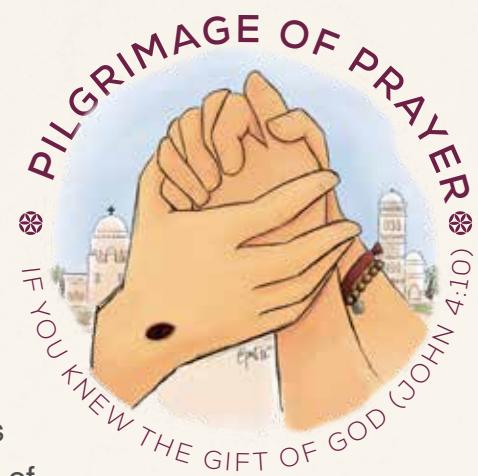


Day 1 – Ash Wednesday

Give Me A Drink: Bethesda

For Personal Reflection & Prayer

- Prayer is a surge of the heart toward heaven. The heart is where I am, live, withdraw to, my hidden center, the place of truth, and decision making. When was the last time my heart surged to God?
- How did I realize that God thirsts for me?
- How has prayer been a gift in my life?



Take these considerations to the Lord in prayer, asking for light and strength.

Offer a prayer inspired by the words of Scripture:

*"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"*

John 4:11

*Sir, I have no one to put me into the pool
When the water is stirred...*

John 5:7

When the Well Runs Dry: Prayer Beyond the Beginnings By Thomas H. S.J. Green

Jesus lived in a world where water was a... precious commodity. Not only was it scarce, but much of what was available was dangerous-stagnant water was the breeding ground for some of the most feared diseases. For Jesus and for his people, the value of water-good water, flowing water, what he called "living" water, was very great

It is not surprising, then, that he so frequently uses water as a symbol of life and salvation, a symbol already prominent in Isaiah, Jeremiah, and the Psalms. Yahweh is the source of living waters and he leads his chosen ones to drink from the waters of life and to lie down in peace by "restful waters."



The same beautiful symbol, with its roots in the daily life of a people surrounded by the desert, dominates John's vision of eternal life at the end of the Book of Revelation: "Then he said to me, 'It has already happened. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give water from the well of life free to anybody who is thirsty'" (Rev 21:6). This is the promise of the God of love, and in his final vision John sees its eternal fulfillment: "The angel showed me the river of life, rising from the throne of God and of the Lamb and flowing crystal clear. Down the middle of the city streets, on either bank of the river, were the trees of life, which bear twelve crops of fruit in a year, once each month, and the leaves of which are a cure for the nations" (Rev 22:1-2).

The book of Revelation is a mysterious work... But the meaning of the "river of life" is clear enough when we recall the Old Testament significance of "living water" and when we also realize the part played by water in Jesus' teaching in St. John's Gospel... His encounter with the woman of Samaria... the woman talking about the "living" water which flows from the earth and Jesus talking about the living water within a person: "No one who drinks the water that I shall give will ever be thirsty again: the water that I shall give will become a spring of water within, welling up for eternal life."... it is a new and strange thing the Lord is saying to her. But as John and the early church meditated on the water become wine at Cana, the water that healed the blind man, the beautiful incident of the washing of the disciples' feet at the Last Supper, then the symbolism of water became more and more central to the teaching of Jesus.





It was not at all surprising that water should flow from the side of Jesus—"One of the soldiers pierced his side with a lance and immediately there came out blood and water" as the concluding incident of the drama of Calvary. Jesus dies that we may have life; the eternal life within him flows out upon the church and upon each one who believes in Jesus, becoming "a spring of water within, welling up for eternal life."

The water symbolism of Jesus has continued to live in the church, particularly in the baptismal liturgy. Like any great symbol it is drawn from our ordinary experience; but it "works" for us as a symbol (i.e., a visible sign pointing to an invisible, interior reality)... Jesus is the symbol, the sacrament par excellence, because he makes visible to us the Father who dwells in unapproachable light... This, above all, sets Christianity apart from any religion in which the things of this world are illusory and spirituality is achieved in a flight from our concrete experience. The most ordinary things-like water-reveal God, if only we have the eyes to see."

