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# Connect!

Uniting Word & World

For Sunday, June 28, 2015

Water in the Desert

## This Sunday's Scripture Readings

13<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time

<http://new.usccb.org/bible/readings/062815.cfm>

Wisdom 1:13-15; 2:23-24

2 Corinthians 8:7, 9, 13-15

Mark 5:21-43



The Arava Desert is the northeastern portion of the Negev Desert in Israel. It is arid, rocky, and hot. This is where I am for three months of volunteer work at Biblical Tamar Park. There is a *tel* here (archeological site), going back to the time of Abraham. This oasis in the desert has been a stopping place for centuries. King Solomon built a fortress here named after his sister, Tamar. Conqueror after conqueror has established an outpost here, one on top of the ruins of the last. The Israeli Antiquities Authority is working together with [Blossoming Rose](#), a nonprofit organization in Michigan, to oversee, restore, and maintain this fifty-five-acre site. In plain English, to keep life flourishing here in the desert.

That's quite a project! Physical life is a challenge here. Yesterday, the power went off for over an hour. We said to each other, "Don't open the refrigerator! Don't open the door ... our cool air will escape!" We asked, "Can we survive in heat well over a hundred degrees without A/C?" Almost every green thing living here has to be watered. The timed irrigation systems are on backup batteries. We wondered, "Are those batteries all working? How long can they last?" Without water, just about everything on these fifty-five acres will die, except some of the weeds! Without water being pumped to us, will we die? As we were discussing all these questions and possibilities, there was a beep. The A/C was back on ... just in time to start cooking lunch. Life had returned!

This weekend's readings are about life and the threats to it. In Mark's Gospel, we are still close to the beginning of Jesus' public ministry. Mark wants to make sure that we realize the message of Jesus. He has come to bring life in all its fullness.

Hopefully, our presiders will read the total Gospel passage, rather than the abbreviated version. The story of the hemorrhaging woman illumines a situation many people experience in our society today, the situation of isolation. According to Jewish law, no one was allowed to touch a woman with an issue of blood, whether monthly or continuous. This particular woman had not been touched for twelve years! Why else would she weave through the crowd and sneak up behind Jesus? If he was a keeper of the law, he would not have touched her without becoming ritually unclean. Even in the "pressing" crowd, had she been discovered, she would have been excluded. This woman was living in solitary confinement in the midst of society, an untouchable ... so thirsty for human interaction!

Her faith gives her the courage to reach out a finger, a finger seeking healing, seeking new life. That faith is rewarded. She feels wholeness within herself. The flow of blood dries up. The water of wholeness floods her being. Her desert life blossoms! Jesus brings her out of isolation and into the family of faith, calling her, "Daughter." She belongs once again.

Many in our society wither in isolation. Standing in a crowd, living in a neighborhood, or even sitting in a pew, some are deeply lonely, touched by no one. Why? Many reasons can isolate. Among them might be a difference in language, education, social status, physical looks, age, health, race, marital situations, even religion. All or any of these factors can isolate a person from the living waters of human kindness and love.

We, as the living Christ in our world, turn to these hurting ones and say the word of relationship ... friend, neighbor, my sister, my brother in Christ. Isolation flees.

The situation could be reversed. I could be the isolated one, whether self-imposed or situational. I may be the one who needs to imperceptibly work my way through the crowd until I can reach out in faith seeking healing. I may be the one who thirsts for relationships with others. I may be the one who hasn't been touched for years. Can I build up my faith and courage, just as this nameless woman did, and reach out to be healed?

Many people are dying of thirst in our world today. Through the power of Jesus, life-giving water is available to all. Can we reach out to give another a drink? Can we reach out to receive the water of life ourselves? Faith is the wellspring of courage, courage to seek what is needed for life. The words from the Book of Wisdom need to be planted deeply in our hearts. "God did not make death." "God formed man to be imperishable." God brings water to the desert of our souls that we may live and live fully!

Patricia DeGroot, ObISB

## PRAYER

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A psalm of David, when he was in the wilderness of Judah.

I

O God, you are my God—

it is you I seek!  
For you my body yearns;  
for you my soul thirsts,  
In a land parched, lifeless,  
and without water.  
I look to you in the sanctuary  
to see your power and glory.  
For your love is better than life;  
my lips shall ever praise you!

II  
I will bless you as long as I live;  
I will lift up my hands, calling on your name.  
My soul shall be sated as with choice food,  
with joyous lips my mouth shall praise you!  
I think of you upon my bed,  
I remember you through the watches of the night  
You indeed are my savior,  
and in the shadow of your wings I shout for joy.  
My soul clings fast to you;  
your right hand upholds me.

*—Excerpt from Psalm 63. Scripture texts in this work are taken from the NABRE © 2010, 1991, 1986, 1970 CCD, Washington, D.C. and are used by permission of the copyright owner. All Rights Reserved. No part of the NAB may be reproduced in any form without permission in writing from the copyright owner.*

## **NOTICES**

### **2015 CHURCH NETWORK CONFERENCE, July 13-16, Nashville**

The Church Network's 2015 Conference, "The Rhythm of the Future," promises to provide a wealth of experiences and benefits for church leaders: a launch event; three keynote addresses; a tradeshow with over two hundred representatives from the best products and services available to congregations; more than seventy workshops presented by experts and leaders in the field of church administration; and networking with other leaders for learning, support, and sharing. To learn more visit <http://member.thechurchnetwork.com/2015conference>.

### **FORTNIGHT FOR FREEDOM**

The Fortnight for Freedom: Freedom to Serve takes place from June 21 to July 4, 2015. The theme of this year's Fortnight will focus on the freedom to serve the poor and vulnerable in accord with human dignity and the Church's teaching. For more information and resources for your parish, visit <http://usccb.org/issues-and-action/religious-liberty/fortnight-for-freedom/index.cfm>.

### **PETER'S PENCE COLLECTION**

Many dioceses will take up the annual Peter's Pence collection to support the charitable work of the Holy Father on the weekend of June 29–30. The USCCB offers parish resources on their website at: <http://usccb.org/catholic-giving/opportunities-for-giving/peters-pence/collection/index.cfm>.

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