

Living water



Georgina Byrne *reflects on* John 4:5-42

It is no accident that a passage about living water is, in itself, one of the most refreshing discussions in scripture. Living water is the free-flowing water of a natural stream – unbounded and uncontrollable. It contrasts with the water of the well, which is tamed and contained.

What we have here is a conversation that bubbles with life as it splashes back and forth. Jesus breaks out from the cultural boundaries by speaking to a woman who is also a Samaritan. She, refreshingly, banters back. The two of them then share such a profound exchange that, when the disciples return (and are duly astonished that Jesus is even speaking with her) the woman abandons her water jar in order to go and tell others about it.

This conversation is tremendously rich and layered, but it can serve simply to remind us that Jesus Christ, the living water, knows no limitations when he meets us. We cannot contain the living God in an ordered, Sunday-shaped well. Jesus can meet us at any time, in any situation – even in ordinary domestic moments.

The challenge is: are we, like the Samaritan woman, ready to be drawn into a deeper faith, even if it isn't neat or convenient? And are we, even at the risk of ridicule, ready to tell others about Jesus, with the joy of the living water overflowing from us? ☺

Jesus, living water – cleanse, refresh and heal me. Fill my heart with love and joy that bubbles up and overflows. And may your Church be awash with your life, worshipping you in spirit and in truth. Amen.

Three books of law *Part 3 – Deuteronomy*

by Gillian Cooper

Its name means “second law”, a reference to its place in the Old Testament story as a revision and expansion of the laws of Exodus. But the title is misleading. Deuteronomy is a book not about law, but about grace.

The Israelites have nearly made it. They can see their new home across the Jordan. But before they move in, they need to be reminded of who they are and how they got there. It has been a hard journey, and it has been possible only

because of God’s commitment to his promises.

Deuteronomy tells of a deal, a treaty, between God and his people. We call it a “covenant”. God promises to guide and protect the people; Israel promises to be loyal to the rules of the treaty that will make them the people God wants. Everyone wins. There are lots of rules, but they are sensible rules for creating a peaceful and prosperous society. And, importantly, they are only there because, before everything, God rescued his people from slavery. Grace came first: unearned, undeserved salvation. ☺

“During these forty days, let me put away all my pride. Let me change my heart and give up all that is not good within me. Let me love God with all that I am and all that I have.”

David Griffiths (1792-1863), Welsh Christian missionary in Madagascar and translator

A Lenten Camino

Part 4 – signs of promise and hope

by Sr Janet Fearn

Pilgrims who undertake any one of the Camino routes are guided by signs which point out the way ahead. The seashell and arrow make sure that pilgrims do not follow false tracks and get lost. When the road is straight, some signs are further apart from each other. When the route is more complicated, perhaps at a crossroads, the signs are closer together. Sometimes they appear unexpectedly, perhaps on the side of a building or at the edge of a field.

The stone monuments indicate their distance from Compostela,

signs that the pilgrim’s efforts to reach the city are bearing fruit and the iconic shrine is closer than it was at the previous milestone. The seashell suggests many roads – and many pilgrims – converging towards a single focal point. These milestones are, therefore, signs of promise and hope.

What are some of the important signs of promise and hope in my life? Do I recognise them and, if so, how? Are there special moments when I know that I am heading in the right direction?

Sr Janet’s book, *A Lenten Camino*, is available from Redemptorist Publications as an e-book: www.rpbooks.co.uk/-a-lenten-camino ☺