

February 28, 2016 – Third Sunday of Lent/Scrutinies
On the Path – “Journey Toward Christ the Light”
Pausing for an Encounter with Christ

Would you please hold up your cell phones?

I will be referring to them later in this homily and I was wondering how many we have here today.

OK, you can put them away for now.

Of course, please turn them off for the time being.

Lent - Journey Toward Christ the Light.

On the east wall of church we have shown this journey with foot prints ... foot prints on various paths heading toward the risen Christ.

There are different paths, different size foot prints, different starting points, and different directions.

We are each unique so we start at various places, we go at various speeds, and our directions are not consistent.

On the wall we portrayed these various paths, all inclined toward the risen Christ.

Today we are about 40% of the way from Ash Wednesday to Easter.

- How goes our journey?
- Has it started?
- Has it stalled?
- Has it regressed?
- Has it trended in the best direction?
- How about taking a little pause on the journey today?

Wouldn't it be great to take a pause at a well in Samaria as did Jesus where he met the Samaritan woman?

Perhaps if we take a pause we also can meet with Jesus.

There's a word for such a meeting: "encounter".

The dictionary defines "encounter" as: an unexpected or casual meeting with someone or something.

Certainly the Samaritan woman did not expect to meet and talk with a Jewish man when she came for water

... men did not speak with un-accompanied women

... Jews and Samaritans were always at odds so they would not be speaking to each other.

But it happened! Jesus and the Samaritan woman.

As we take our pause on the journey, maybe it could be Jesus and us!

Which way do you think your conversation would go?

Humm? That could be pretty cool, couldn't it?

It's interesting - today's psalm sets us in that very direction.

Psalm 95 reminds us about our relationship with God by telling us about how the Israelites met the Lord on their 40 year journey in the desert.

Midway through that psalm (vs 7b) is a verse that gives us a challenge in our relationship with the Lord.

There have been many variations on translations of that verse.

One of the most common translations is:

"If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts."

Some of us may be thinking:

"Well, if I am lucky I won't hear the voice of the Lord and I can keep on going with my own agenda!"

But, there's another translation that does not give us that wiggle room.

"Today, listen to the voice of the Lord."

Yes, there are no "ifs, ands or buts" about it!

Maybe it's the dad in me ... "OK, kids, listen up!"

Here then is our invitation for today:

Take a pause and listen to the Lord.

Here are some questions to consider in answering that invitation.

"Where am I most likely to be when I have my chat with the Lord?

- At a well in Samaria? Not very likely!
- In my car? In church?
- On the couch at home?
- Some place of solitude ... in a room with a closed door?

"How am I going to initiate a dialog with the Lord?"

- Day-dreaming?
- Prayer?
- Observing nature - the beautiful snow, sunrise/sunset, stars?
- Reading Scripture? Using Lectio Divina?
- By examining my conscience?
- Turning off the media - TV, Facebook, cell phone, computer?
- Eucharistic Adoration by the tabernacle?
- Receiving Holy Communion?
- Reading a spiritual book - like our "Little Black Book"?
- Listening to spiritual music?
- Taking a quiet walk by myself?
- Having a cup of coffee?
- Going on a retreat or day of prayer?
- Snacking?
- Writing in a journal or a note book?
- Centering prayer?
- Looking over the list of Corporal or Spiritual Works of Mercy? - *actually, that sounds like a very good choice!!!*

- And, sometimes the Lord will simply surprise us with an opportunity!

Those are the **Where** and **How** questions.

Now comes what may be the toughest question about accepting the invitation ... **When!**

- The biggest challenge of our invitation to "take a pause and listen to the Lord" is simply **when** can I do it?
 - o **When** can I make it happen?
 - o **When** will there be space in my busy, busy schedule?
- OK, get those cell phones back out.
 - o Many electronic devices have alarm clocks built in to them.
- Turn the phone on and set your alarm for 3:00 this afternoon.
 - o That's a time for your pause and chat with the Lord.
- Oh, you're already busy at that time?
 - o OK, you choose the time.
 - o OK, maybe it is not today.
 - o Can you make it sometime this week?
- **When?**

Later today you can take a little time to again consider the questions about **Where** you pause with the Lord and **How** you initiate the dialog with the Lord.

Blessings on your individual journey toward the Lord this Lent.

Blessings on your pause and encounter with Lord today - or later this week.

May the Lord bring to you some of the excitement that the Samaritan woman experienced at Jacob's Well!