

I'm Thirsty

Have you heard about the severe drought which is affecting the people of California? I read recently about the situation in the town of East Porterville. Of its 7,300 people, almost 1,000 have no running water. Groundwater levels have plunged by 60 feet or more in some spots, and thousands of wells are in danger. But few knew the extent of the crisis until 72-year-old Donna Johnson started driving around town and asking neighbors, "Hi. Do you have water?" Again and again, the answer was no.

When Johnson's well ran dry last June, she and her husband had no idea they were part of something bigger. "I guess I was just oblivious to how bad it had gotten," she said. But that changed when she started listening to the conversations around her. At the local gas station, for instance, or the grocery store, again & again she would hear, "So-and-so's well ran dry."

In July, Johnson decided to put together a list of people out of water in East Porterville. The local paper ran an article that gave her phone number and address and said she was collecting bottled water for drought victims. People were generous; soon there were pallets of bottled water under her tarp carport. Johnson recruited a neighbor to help her make the deliveries. Still, the calls from people needing water just kept coming, and the donations barely kept up.

Desperate families would phone—even at midnight—and say "We're completely out of water" and she'd go right away and take some. Again & again people told her, "Thank you for the water. We didn't know where to go. We're grateful."

[Adapted from Diana Marcum, "Hi, do you have water?' In a Central Calif. town, answer is often no." LA Times (9-18-14)]

Does life ever seem like that for you? Like your well has run dry? You're thirsty... so thirsty... and you don't know where to turn for help....

There are many things we thirst for in life: for meaning, for hope, for friendship, for healing, for acceptance, for forgiveness, for love... If you were to name one thing that is a deep thirst inside of you, what would it be?

In the midst of the spiritual drought in our lives, Jesus makes a bold promise: "Those who believe in me shall never thirst." These are Jesus' words, recorded in John 6:35: "Those who believe in me shall never thirst."

How does Jesus meet that promise? By his death on the cross. We think of his words from the cross, and especially his cry, "I'm thirsty."

But why did Jesus die on the cross? He hadn't done anything deserving of death... in fact, he had lived a life of perfect love. His death on the cross was not because of his sins, but because of ours. He chose to die for us, to die in our place, to pay the penalty for our sins, so that our sins would be forgiven. Through Jesus' death, we have the gift of a new life, a new beginning. Sin separates us from God, but Jesus opens the way for us to experience the fullness of God's love for us.

What do we need to do to receive this gift of life and love? Only to believe in Jesus, to put our trust in him, to commit to living as his follower.

When we come here to the communion table, we admit our sins and failings to Jesus, silently confessing our brokenness, trusting in him. We bring to him our spiritual thirst, the drought we experience in our lives. And Jesus meets us here, with the broken bread and

outpoured cup, his body broken for us, his blood poured out for us. And we are forgiven, fed, and strengthened to live for him.

Do you remember Donna Johnson, the woman in California whose well ran dry? She, who was thirsty herself, found a mission in life to help her neighbors who were suffering from the drought.

And that's what Jesus asks of each of us. All around us, there are people who are thirsty—thirsty for meaning, for hope, for friendship, for healing, for acceptance, for forgiveness, for love... Family members, friends, people at school or at work or in the community. We can help them learn about Jesus and his amazing promise, "Those who believe in me shall never thirst."

Today's anthem by the choir expresses it perfectly:

"I'm thirsty," Christ said when on Calvary he bled as he hung there and suffered for me.
"I'm thirsty," he cried from the cross where he died so that each thirsting soul might be free.
He hung there for me, nailed to Golgotha's tree, and through parched lips said, "Father, forgive."
"It is finished," he cried, then in agony died so that all who are thirsty might live.

I'm thirsty, O Christ, for the water of life that you offer so full and so free;
I'm thirsty, dear Lord, for your water and word, for to drink will refresh and cleanse me.
I drink from the stream that's so crystal and clean, and my thirst is at last satisfied.

So come, drink thirsty ones, for the stream freely runs from the cross where he suffered and died.
Come, drink thirsty ones, for the stream freely runs from the cross where he suffered and died.

by Joseph Rojan

So come, come to Christ's Communion table, eat the bread, drink from the cup, and know Christ's promise: "Those who believe in me shall never thirst." Amen.