

BRINGING HOME THE GOSPEL

March 12, 2023 • 3rd Sunday of Lent • John 4:5-42

Holy Water, Holy Place

Jesus and his disciples travel to Samaria. Jesus goes ahead of his disciples and encounters a Samaritan woman who is drawing water from the well. When Jesus asks her for a drink they begin a dialogue that leads to her conversion. Jesus tells her that those who drink the water he offers will never be thirsty again. She asks for the water without knowing what she is asking for.

Water is basic for life. We need it for nourishment, for healing, and for cleansing. Water can also take life. Left under water long enough, we die. This is why water is the perfect sign for the sacrament of baptism. Through the waters of baptism, we die to our old self and receive new life in Christ. The church reinforces this imagery of baptism by sprinkling us with holy water at various times through the year, and by placing holy water fonts at church entrances.

Parishioners are also encouraged to take holy water home with them. This is something my husband and I did faithfully for the first few years of our marriage. We had been given a holy water font for our wedding. It hung by the front door of our first few apartments. I don't know what happened to it after that. The miniature font was a nice reminder that our home was the domestic church. Like the parish church, we dipped our hand and blessed ourselves when we entered or left.

I remember dipping my finger in the font to bless my children on their first day of school each year. I continued to bless them as they grew up. I would make a simple Sign of the Cross on their foreheads before big events in their lives like final exams or a long trip. My children are all grown now, and I still bless them. Sometimes they even bless me back.

When we moved into our first house, my mother brought her own holy water on her first visit. Like the holy water used during the dedication of a new church, my mother sprinkled her holy water and blessed each room in our own house church. Blessing the house reminds us that our homes are church, and blessing each other reminds us that we are the embodiment of that church. Holy water is a sign of our new life as part of the body of Christ.

FAMILY RESPONSE

Have a home blessing. Even if you have already blessed your house, there is nothing wrong with rededicating your space. Assign different rooms to family members. Have them write a prayer appropriate to that room. Use holy water and make sure you take time to bless family members, too.

PERSONAL RESPONSE

How is your home like church for you and for your family?