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Our Lady of Dallas Cistercian Abbey
3rd Sunday of Lent – Year A
Sunday, March 15, 2020

*Holy Mary, Mother of God,
you have given the world its true light,
Jesus, your Son – the Son of God.
You abandoned yourself completely
to God's call
and thus became a wellspring
of the goodness which flows forth from him.
Show us Jesus. Lead us to him.
Teach us to know and love him,
so that we too can become
capable of true love
and be fountains of living water
in the midst of a thirsting world.*

With this prayer, Pope Benedict XVI concluded his first encyclical, *Deus Caritas Est*. The focus that today's first reading and Gospel have on thirst reminded me of it. And indeed, one could say that our whole world, so much reminded in recent weeks of its fragility, is thirsting now in a particularly acute way: thirsting for a sense of security, to be sure, but perhaps just as much, thirsting with renewed intensity for

a sense of connection, and for a sense of meaning. Our response, both individually, and through the institutions that we run or participate in, should be *caritas in veritate*, charity, grounded in the truth, or put another way, should be empathy and generosity proceeding from a well-informed mind, making good judgments. Practically speaking, I think that, for the world, and for the communities that we serve, we monks now bear, at the very least, a special responsibility for *extra prayer* during the current crisis, a responsibility expressed in the extra petition inserted into our morning and evening prayer, and proclaimed with even more eloquence by the emptiness of our pews, and the spiritual thirsting of many hundreds of our brothers and sisters in Christ that that emptiness no doubt bespeaks.

But today, as I reflect on the simple request that Jesus makes to a woman, for her to help him quench his thirst in the middle of the day, my thoughts turn to our even more immediate situation. Here, comparatively isolated from our usual routines of work and relationships in the larger community, we are given the special opportunity, which at times may seem like a challenge as well, of facing not only God but also *each other*, of facing the hidden Christ in each of our brother monks, or in our Abbot. Though perhaps for some of us our screens may beckon with increased ferocity in these days of the break, all of us must admit that we have fewer means of escaping each other than we ordinarily do. And all of us, insofar as we

individually carry within ourselves a thirst in this community life that we have vowed ourselves to... a thirst for friendship, for *being really listened to*, for meaning, for beauty, for order and security... all of us to that degree *become Christ* for our confreres. In the days ahead, my prayer and my hope is that we each of us rediscover, and reinvest ourselves in the encounter with Christ in our confrere, whether old or young or middle-aged, meeting him in his particular need, even thirst, for friendship or meaning, or security... and responding with availability, cheerful giving, patience, and goodness... and also with that great sense of humor with which God has consistently blessed our community over the years.

I am confident...because of all the graces that I've seen at work in our community for years now, graces that have not only preserved it in a minimal way, but have renewed it often, and at times, wondrously...that if we choose to see the coming days as a time in which Christ calls us to seek out and be receptive to more frequent encounters with Himself *in our confreres and their needs, both hidden and expressed*...then we will find that, in spite of all the ongoing uncertainty and adjustment of the coming weeks, we will have been once again renewed in our core commitments to God and the monastic life in this place, and thereby will be made ready to be better fountains of living water in our prayers, work, and relationships in our thirsting community and in our thirsting world. Amen.

Let us now stand, and profess our faith.

INTERCESSIONS Let us now present our needs and petitions and those of the Church and the world to our Heavenly Father, whom we worship in spirit and in truth.

1 For Pope Francis and for all bishops, priests, deacons, and other leaders in the Church, that they may proclaim Jesus Christ constantly to the world as the true and lasting relief for the spiritual thirsting of every human person and society, *we pray to the Lord.*

2 For the Church around the world and in this community, that we may grow more able to see Christ in the needs and thirst of our neighbor, and may rush eagerly to encounter Christ in loving our neighbor and meeting their needs, *we pray to the Lord.*

3 For the consolation of all those who are suffering or who have lost loved ones due to the coronavirus, for caretakers, doctors and nurses, first responders, and for all who feel the special burden of the crisis in the economy right now, *we pray to the Lord.*

4 For all who feel especially burdened spiritually and emotionally by the restrictions currently in place in churches in so many parts of the world, and for all communities that do not have regular access to the sacraments, *we pray to the Lord.*

5 For an increase in vocations to the priesthood and religious life, especially to our own Diocese and to our monasteries here and in Zirc and Kismaros and Valley of Our Lady, *we pray to the Lord.*

6 For the conversion of sinners, especially for the deeper conversion of ourselves, and for the souls in Purgatory, *we pray to the Lord.*

Almighty God, accept and answer the prayers we speak, and those that we keep in our hearts, for we offer them through Jesus Christ your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. AMEN.