

## His Eminence Metropolitan Gerasimos of San Francisco - Reflection for the Sunday of the Samaritan Woman 2020



Beloved Brothers and Sisters in the Lord,

### **Christ is Risen! Χριστὸς Ἀνέστη!**

On this Sunday, our Church remembers the meeting of Jesus Christ with the Samaritan Woman. Our tradition has named her Φωτεινή (Fotini), meaning the illuminated one. Jesus encountered Fotini at a well, where she was about to draw water. In their conversation, Jesus says that he could give her living water, to which she said, ***"give me this water, that I may not thirst, nor come here to draw again."***

Jesus and Fotini are using the same words to describe two different realities. To Fotini, living water meant running water, as from a stream or a river. Water in a container was not considered to be living water. She did not want to go to the well. To Jesus however, living water meant something far greater. As Church Fathers have pointed out, the living water that Christ offers is water that is filled with the grace of the Holy Spirit. For us, our first encounter with living water is in the water of baptism, which is blessed by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, through which we

become illumined and given new life. The well where we draw that living water is the Church.

I have had many individual conversations and conference calls over these weeks of physical distancing, I know how much you desire to come to the well of living water that is your parish. The hardest decision we had to make collectively these days have dealt with temporarily ceasing our access to that well. Fortunately, we are seeing that the time is soon coming when we will all be able to return to the well, to draw from the life-giving font.

The situation still changes rapidly but our parishes are preparing for that day. As a Metropolis we have developed the necessary protocols and procedures so that we may return safely. Once this day arrives, we must also be patient, for the new normal will require new behaviors for us all, perhaps for many months ahead.

One lesson for the new normal is also embedded in today's Gospel lesson. As you may know, Samaritans and Jews did not have dealings with one another. They had serious theological disagreements, debating, just as Jesus and Fotini did, over the proper location to worship God. Because of this, they did not converse with one another; they couldn't share eating and drinking utensils. Jesus and Fotini broke the estrangement between their peoples and engaged in a profound discussion first about the living water, then about her life, and then about the worship of God Himself.

Part of our new normal should be to find ways to engage in meaningful dialogue with those with whom we usually have avoided. At the end of the Gospel lesson, when the disciples finally return to him, Jesus says to them, ***"lift up your eyes and see how the fields are already white for harvest"*** (John 4:35). These words call us to go into those fields, to bring back the lost sheep, to invite our brothers and sisters into our church – so they may experience what we teach, how we pray, how we try to live, how we support one another – the living water of our faith.

Especially as we prepare to open the doors of our churches, I encourage you to use this as an opportunity to recommit ourselves to the Lord and to be an example to others who are thirsting for spiritual nourishment.

My beloved brothers and sisters in the Lord, **Χριστὸς Ἀνέστη! Christ is Risen!**

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