

**GOD FULFILLS THE PETITIONS OF THE OUR FATHER**

Hear again the Word of the Lord to His Church on this seventieth day before the Feast of the Resurrection of our Lord:

*“Behold, I will stand before your face there upon the Rock in Horeb; and you shall cause to strike (the) Rock, and waters will come out from it, and the people may drink.”  
And Moses did thus before (the) eyes of (the) elders of Israel.<sup>1</sup>*

**Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ**

Two petitions of the Lord’s Prayer are illumined by today’s readings. The fourth petition I reviewed before the invocation in the catechetical moment, and will unpack next. The sixth petition’s reinforcement will follow. In the declaration that is to come, it is our prayer that you will understand that God fulfills the petitions of the Our Father, even before we pray them!

Today, in our Old Testament reading, you have heard of the third time the Israelites complained against Moses, since he delivered them from bondage to Egypt. The first complaint was about lack of water – and that came three days after the Lord brought them through the Yam Suph! The second complaint came on the 15<sup>th</sup> day of the second month after God defeated Pharaoh’s army. In today’s narrative, not three months had passed from the crossing of the Sea. For a third time constant grumbling again occurs among the people.

They seem to have held to a motto that pervades the American thought of this new millennium, of our leaders, and ultimately of God, “What have you done for me lately?” The short-time line between rejoicing and grumbling is fitting to recall this

month. Barely three months have passed since the election of our new government. Only two and a half weeks have elapsed since the inauguration of our current President. Already some of his most vocal supporters – the liberal press – are sending forth murmurings and grumblings against his program of change, or lack thereof.

Civil leaders today, and over 3,500 years ago, receive little grace, mercy and peace from people when they fail to meet their felt needs in timely ways. People, even those of the Faith, tend to look to, and petition, our human leaders to provide for our bodily needs. They, we at times, forget that God provides everything required to satisfy people's bodily needs, even the wicked receive all they have from His grace. (That many lack daily provisions is not God's fault; it is a result of sin, and of mankind's greed).

There is one lesson to take from the texts for this week. It is reinforced every time, if you take time to reflect upon it, you pray the Fourth Petition of the Our Father. As you boldly petition God to grant us our daily bread, you are to remain sure that God provides for the daily needs of all people, even to the wicked, without your prayer. Also, you are free to recall that God uses this petition to make you aware of his gifts and enable you to receive your daily sustenance with thanksgiving. Such has been the case since the beginning of creation.

Further, forgetting that God is the Great Provider, and expecting and trusting in humans to meet our daily needs is a sin shared by all since Adam's Fall. Complaining

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<sup>1</sup> *Exodus 17:6*

against God's ministers – secular and religious – for their failure to meet our demands right now – is a sin we all share in, at some time other, with the Israelites of old.

It is a forgivable sin. This is displayed in God's answer to His chosen people's third time of public murmuring, grumbling and complaining about their leaders' failure to immediately meet their daily needs. Forgiveness is uncovered in the theme verse for this week:

*"Behold, I will stand before your face there upon the Rock in Horeb; and you shall cause to strike (the) Rock, and waters will come out from it, and the people may drink." And Moses did thus before (the) eyes of (the) elders of Israel.<sup>2</sup>*

The grumblers against Moses, the civil minister of God for their deliverance, receive the desires of their hearts, in his striking the Rock that accompanied them. Instead of giving them the wages their sins deserve, of bringing punishment upon those murmuring murderous threats against their government leader, God gives them flowing, that is living, waters. Three times the people have threatened their civil minister, and three times God has taken away their complaints by providing what they demanded – at no cost to them.

Yet there was a cost. Sin's wages were received by God. Did you grasp the depth of the Word that declares how much God paid when you heard it read this morning? Hear again how God removed His wrath at the people's grumbling against his minister:

*And all the same spiritual Drink drank: for they all drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them; and the Rock was Christ.<sup>3</sup>*

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<sup>2</sup> Exodus 17:6

By what means did this living water flow?

It came forth as God stood before the face of Moses and his chosen witnesses. The one who had heard the malcontent murmurings against him for the third time was commanded by YHWH to strike the Rock. In striking that Rock -which Paul, inspired by the Holy Spirit, declares to be the Christ - waters flowed.

There, dear ones in Christ, is the punishment the people deserved. In the smack of the staff that God had once turned into a snake, and that God used in Moses' hand to turn the waters of Egypt to blood, now, at YHWH's command, brought forth living water from the Rock. From the thud of the staff upon the side of the spiritual Rock, life-giving waters poured out. Do you understand what God was foreshadowing, in the sight of witnesses, by His Presence before them as Moses beat that Rock?

Yes, it was the beating that was to come in the Passion of the Christ. There, as He received the punishment His people, you, deserved on account of all your sins, the wrath of God was poured out. At the end of that Passion, pre-figured in the staff striking the pre-incarnate Christ, the fullness of this text is made clear as a soldier's spear pierces the lifeless Jesus . Blood and water flow mingled down. That glory of God is held forth that all sinners might behold the payment God made for them, for you.

The Gospel again having been declared, and burned with cleansing fire upon your conscience in the Image of the Stricken Christ, we re-turn rather abruptly to our text. Now it is to lead you into a clearer understanding of the sixth Petition of the Our

Father – “lead us not into temptation.” The narrative of the Israelites complaining begins:

*And all (the) congregation of (the) sons of Israel moved on from (the) Wilderness of Sin, by stages, upon (the) command of YHWH and they camped in Rephidim; and there were no waters for the people to drink.<sup>4</sup>*

The text begins with the people moving from the place where they first received God’s provision of “what is it?” God had begun to provide for their daily bread with the bread of angels. Each day, except for the day of rest, they would go out and freely gather all they needed for that day. On the sixth, they could gather and prepare enough for the Sabbath Day’s rest. God was giving them this out of grace. It was theirs wherever they moved, including to this place in the place called Rephidim – located somewhere on what we call the Sinai Peninsula. There they halted. As the Lord declares, there was no water for the people to drink in that place. The same people that daily gathered their ration of Manna with which they made, daily, the sweet bread of God, now, instead of praying to God with thanks for His blessings, again complain, grumble, and give appearances of threatening their civil leader!

Some might wish to declare that God is the One who brought the people to this point of unbelieving doubt about His gracious provision and will to help them. That is, someone might desire to say that in commanding His people to leave the Wilderness of Sin and its water, of His having Moses lead them into a place where *there were no waters for the people to drink*, God was tempting them to rebel.

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<sup>4</sup> Exodus 17:1

But, you answer, in light of the fact that daily God was providing the miracle of the “what is it?” for food, the people had no reason to doubt that YHWH was going to give them drink. Most of you know, and some of you are learning, the meaning of the sixth petition – in which we confess that God certainly tempts no one. In fact, it is our prayer, in the prayer that Jesus gave to us, that God would guard and protect us so that the temptations of the devil, the world and our own sinful flesh will not lead us into misbelief, doubt, and despair of God’s goodness on our behalves. It is to be our fervent prayer that YHWH, as we pray His model Prayer, would keep us mindful of His victory over all that tempts us, and show us that He has overcome them for us and in us. The petitions of the Lord’s Prayer serve as our daily spiritual Manna – used to keep before us His grace, mercy and generous provision for all our needs of mind, body, and soul.

God certainly was not tempting His people at their encampment. These were they whom He had just rescued from bondage, from evil deaths, and from starvation. Yet, they who daily gathered the means of their daily bread, free to them,

*found fault with Moses, and they said to him, “You give waters to us, and we (will) drink!” Then Moses caused to say to them, “Why do you find fault with me, and why do you tempt the YHWH?”<sup>5</sup>*

Moses, their God-appointed government judge, calls them on their sin. He names it tempting the Lord their God. There is sharp Law declared here –to show the people their sin, to turn them to repentance, and to drive them to ask for the forgiveness of their sins.

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<sup>5</sup> Exodus 17:2

Oh, there is temptation going on. It is not God tempting His people to sin, but His people tempting Him to exercise His just wrath on account of their sins! They failed to give thanks for their daily bread. They had, in their immediate desires, allowed those to draw their thoughts away from the deliverance God had already given them. Their anger turned on their leader, and through him onto God as:

*The people thirsted there for waters, and the people caused to murmur against Moses, and caused to say, "Why did you cause to bring us up from Egypt to kill me and the sons of me, and my cattle by thirst?"<sup>6</sup>*

The specific anticipated consequences of their thirst are expressed in the singular because the people are complaining as one. Their words move from complaining about leading "us up from Egypt," to "kill me and my sons, and my cattle by thirst." They are accusing Moses of delivering them into death by dehydration! Their words are spoken to tempt Moses, and through him, God, to act according to their ways, according to their desires. The minister responds by interceding for the people with God, a petition which might even hold a note of exasperation.

*So cried Moses to the YHWH saying, "What shall I do with this people, they almost stone me!?"<sup>7</sup>*

And God responds as,

*Then YHWH caused to say to Moses, "Pass before the face of the people, taking with you (some) from the elders from Israel, and (the) rod which you caused to strike the Nile with it, take it in your hand and go."<sup>8</sup> "Behold, I will stand before your face there upon the Rock in Horeb; and you shall cause to strike (the) Rock, and waters will come out from it, and the people may drink." And Moses did thus before (the) eyes of (the) elders of Israel.<sup>9</sup>*

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<sup>6</sup> Exodus 17:3

<sup>7</sup> Exodus 17:4

<sup>8</sup> Exodus 17:5

<sup>9</sup> Exodus 17:6

Thus YHWH forgives His people despising what we call the sixth petition, and its meaning. At the same time, the Rock, Christ, having been struck, pours forth living water that takes away the sinners' transgressions, by taking the wrath of God upon Himself. That the spiritual descendants of those forgiven sinners might remember the love, grace and mercy of God in the striking of the Rock who is Christ, Moses

*called the place there, Masah and Meribah, upon (the) fault-finding of (the) sons of Israel, and upon their temptation of the YHWH saying, "Is YHWH among us or not?"*<sup>10</sup>

For us, the answer is that YHWH is among us. We believe that because God fulfills the petitions of the Our Father, even before we pray them!

**The peace which passes all understanding guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus**

Septuagesima (*Lutheran Service Book* one-year series)

Exodus 17:1-7; I Corinthians 9:24-10:5; Matthew 20:1-16

February 8, 2009

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**SOLI DEO GLORIA**

**TRANSLATION, SECOND DRAFT**

*And all (the) congregation of (the) sons of Israel moved on from (the) Wilderness of Sin, by stages, upon (the) command of YHWH and they camped in Rephidim; and there were no waters for the people to drink.*<sup>11</sup>

*Then the people found fault with Moses, and they said to him, "You give waters to us, and we drink!" Then Moses caused to say to them, "Why do you find fault with me, and why do you tempt the YHWH?"*<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Exodus 17:7

<sup>11</sup> Exodus 17:1

<sup>12</sup> Exodus 17:2

*And the people thirsted there for waters, and the people caused to murmur against Moses, and caused to say, "Why did you cause to bring us up from Egypt to kill me and the sons of me, and my cattle by thirst?"<sup>13</sup>*

*So cried Moses to the YHWH saying, "What shall I do with this people, they almost stone me!?"<sup>14</sup>*

*Then YHWH caused to say to Moses, "Pass before the face of the people, taking with you (some) from the elders from Israel, and (the) rod which you caused to strike the Nile with it, take it in your hand and go."<sup>15</sup>*

*"Behold, I will stand before your face there upon the Rock in Horeb; and you shall cause to strike (the) Rock, and waters will come out from it, and the people may drink." And Moses did thus before (the) eyes of (the) elders of Israel.<sup>16</sup>*

*Then he called the place there, Masah and Meribah, upon (the) fault-finding of (the) sons of Israel, and upon their temptation of the YHWH saying, "Is YHWH among us or not?"<sup>17</sup>*

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<sup>13</sup> Exodus 17:3

<sup>14</sup> Exodus 17:4

<sup>15</sup> Exodus 17:5

<sup>16</sup> Exodus 17:6

<sup>17</sup> Exodus 17:7