

Third Sunday of Lent – Cycle B (March 11, 2012)

I came across a compelling story about a woman named Una Kroll. An Anglican, she fought for the ordination of women to the priesthood, won the fight, and was herself ordained as a priest. But a few years back, she made the remarkable decision to leave the Anglican/Episcopal Church, and her priesthood, and enter, of all churches, the Roman Catholic Church. Friends and colleagues were baffled, even angry, about this decision, but her response was clear and firm. After years of reflection, she felt compelled by God to make this change in her life, even admitting to having reservations about the consolidation of power in the Catholic Church in one group of men.

Why become a Catholic? She wanted to be able to minister as a disciple, a servant of Jesus Christ and not have to exercise power through domination. As she experienced it, the priesthood in the Anglican Church became focused on who had the power to lead, preach, govern. Being a woman, her ministry became focused on these clerical issues leading to a felt experience of clericalism.

Now she is a disciple, ministering with other Catholics in a parish, serving the needs of the poor. She is doing what God wants her to do, something she was unable to do in a lived reality of priesthood marred by constant controversy. I thought of Una when praying about the woman at the well. At face value, two very different women: the woman at the well is unnamed, on her sixth "husband," is filled with shame and marginalized. Una has a husband, children, grandchildren, respect and purpose. What united the two women is an experience with Jesus that turned their lives upside down, redirecting them to discipleship and mission.

The woman at the well encounters Jesus who redirects her thirst *within* her wounded heart and spirit. He shatters the walls of shame that defined her identity and the waters of grace flood her being. She becomes totally transformed and runs from Jesus to her people who are, in turn, changed by her witness and joy. The woman at the well became a disciple on a mission of drawing others to Christ. Una simply wanted to be a disciple empowered not through ordination but through the waters of Baptism. The woman at the well and Una were empowered through the waters of baptism.

Mark and Violet are waiting at the waters of the font of baptism, to be filled and changed forever. They want to be immersed in the death and resurrection of Christ and live this magnificent mystery by dying to self and rising in Christ. All of us who are baptized need this season of grace to re-live and renew the waters of the spirit that are waiting to surface once again. We are empowered through baptism to be disciples of Jesus, going into the world, like the unnamed woman and Una, drawing others to Christ.

We gather at this well of the liturgy, by approaching the baptismal font and dipping our hands in these waters, listening to the Word, being fed by the Eucharist; we leave the church once again dipping our hands in the waters of baptism leaving the church with a mission. The font of Baptism and the Altar of the Eucharist are connected: we are nourished by Body and Blood to live a life of Baptism. This Catholic Community is a school in discipleship, gathering at Liturgy to be formed as disciples and servants and leaving this Liturgy renewed and with a mission to spread the Good News. In every encounter with Christ, his sole purpose is to free us from the toxic shame and guilt that weigh us down, making us a new creation in God's love...our true identity.