

Whoever drinks the water I shall give will never thirst.

John 4:14

During Philadelphia's harsh winter, Joe lived on a steam grate in center city. George had met him there while volunteering with a homeless outreach program. Joe, articulate and engaging, was easy to befriend. Nevertheless, he was afraid to come in to the shelter.

One morning, on his way to a downtown meeting, George stopped to pick up coffee. He decided it would be nice to take a cup to Joe on his way. Sitting down on Joe's grate, George offered him the steaming coffee. "Oh, thanks anyway, but I only drink tea," Joe said. George burst out laughing at his noble mistake. "You didn't think homeless people had choices, did you?" Joe countered. George, a good-hearted, generous man, learned a lesson that day about the human dignity often hidden under accretions of poverty, neglect and disenfranchisement.

Jesus made no such mistake when he met the woman at the well. Instead, he peeled through her accretions by respectful engagement and questioning. The woman, heartened by him, responded wholeheartedly.

This week, God invites us to strip away any pretense or fear keeping us from coming home to him. The readings remind us to hear, observe and teach the Divine Law. They encourage us to soften our hearts for God's voice.

God knows our brokenness and hard-heartedness. Yet, we are invited to repent and to believe that we are not far from God's kingdom. This week is a good time to seek God's feedback on our lives by a sincere examination of conscience, and a fearless request for healing. It is a perfect time to come home to Love.