



**REFLECTION
FOR THE PROFESSION CEREMONY**

Villa Lante, 26 January 2020

John 4 : 5-42

Everyone who has been in touch with your group, has been struck by your attentiveness, your presence to each other and the way you listen. So, it seems logical that you have chosen the Gospel of Encounter for your Final Profession.

The meeting between Jesus and a woman at the edge of a well is an unlikely event, but it is also a deep and intimate encounter which changes her life totally, fills her with joy and then invites her to communicate it with others.

What does God want to tell us through this Gospel?

1. God comes to meet me, even if I am far away from Him; and at times He waits for me.

Jesus stops at this well and waits for a woman who has chosen the hottest time of the day in order to be sure of meeting nobody! They are alone and it is He who begins the conversation and brings her out of her isolation; because often without knowing it, **it is Jesus who comes to look for us**, to open us up to his Word.

And if we have difficulty in recognizing him (and that can happen to us in our own lives...), **Jesus reveals himself to us as He did to the Samaritan woman**: “the Messiah,. The Christ...I who am speaking to you, I am He.” (v26). In this Gospel too, we are invited to listen to the stranger, to our brother or sister. Their culture can seem very distant, even sometimes strange or incomprehensible. Because Christ is discovered in the person we least expect. When the Pope invites us to open wide our doors to welcome migrants into our homes, he is inviting us to an unlikely sort of meeting, just like the meeting of a Jew with a Samaritan woman, and of a single man with a woman. **Christ becomes poor and allows himself to be recognized in the poorest, the most fragile**, sometimes in those who are most distant and very different from me. And you, how have you met him during these five months? We have been witnesses that you have taken the time, with confidence and generosity, to be ready to listen to His Word. You have learned to recognize Him in the challenges and in the times of profound sharing among yourselves.

2. God satisfies me even if I think that I don't need him, and that I am self-sufficient. He invites me to conversion through our intimate encounter with Him.

While waiting for us beside the well, God takes the risk of being frustrated by our response.

In this Gospel, the woman shouts at him sharply: "What! You, a Jew..." because "the Jews, in fact, do not associate with Samaritans". (v.9)

And she refuses to believe what Jesus promises her. "You cannot give me water, because you have no bucket". (v.11)

We are sometimes hard on Christ, deaf to his promises of happiness. We don't need him. We are not thirsting any more.

Saint John lets us discover how Jesus reverses the situation, so that this woman opens herself to listen to him, to his Gift, and so that she believes that God can give us life in abundance, "the water that I shall give will turn into a spring inside her, welling up to eternal life". (v.14b)

For that to happen, the Samaritan woman has to begin by listening and trusting in the Word of God. Then Jesus will invite her to express her deep desire "Then, Lord, give me that water..." (v.15)

Jesus is going to invite her to enter into another dimension of the conversation, by ordering her: "Go and call your husband!" (v.16). Jesus touches into her deep suffering, but without judgment or condemnation. On the contrary, he stays with her in her deep distress: during her life she has looked for a love which could not be found, a thirst which is never satisfied, a pain which is always with her, a frustration...

And Jesus also enables her to express another search: I don't know where we should worship? On the mountain as our fathers did, or in Jerusalem as the Jews say we should?

Jesus leads her into a process of looking deep within herself, to an intimate and free encounter with God. She does not need to go to a sacred mountain to adore; she discovers deep within herself the Source of living water. His invitation is to let herself be united with God and his Spirit in the depths of herself. "God is spirit, and those who worship must worship in spirit and in truth." (v.24) Jesus has led her to acknowledge humbly the obstacles in her life and he frees her from them.

Like the Samaritan woman, will I dare to let myself be moved by a person who appears in his simplicity and in his helplessness? Would I listen today to the voices of those who say to me: "I am thirsty and I need you"? In short, how can I let myself be questioned and acknowledge my unsatisfied thirst for love and recognition? **How do I call out to him in my deep thirst and desire?** Will I dare to say, " Give me that drink » **in order to allow myself to be filled with the Holy Spirit?**

He has already given us everything, by the water of baptism, by his loving gaze , by his Word which frees me. His living water is always there, He leaves us free to come and drink .

3. Finally : Christ gives me new life in abundance but in order to share it with others, and to send me on mission to His People, whom he makes mine. We are not meant to stay on the mountain or beside the well.

Conversion, interior encounter....these give you Joy - not only the laughter which you experienced during these last months, but a profound Joy; the joy that comes from the liberating encounter which impels you to make him known in the world. Today, dear Sisters, **you are filled with this Joy**, just like this woman who goes away to announce what she has experienced.

The fact that the Samaritan woman leaves her water jar at the edge of the well, so that she could run and tell her people what she has experienced, tells us how overcome she was, but also how she had to share what she has discovered and experienced. This deep Joy which comes from listening to the word of God, from being healed or converted, from having a deep encounter with Christ, **this joy is to be shared; and happy are those whom you will meet when you go home, and who are going to receive that joy from you.**

Allez ! Avanti ! Go ! Adelante !

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