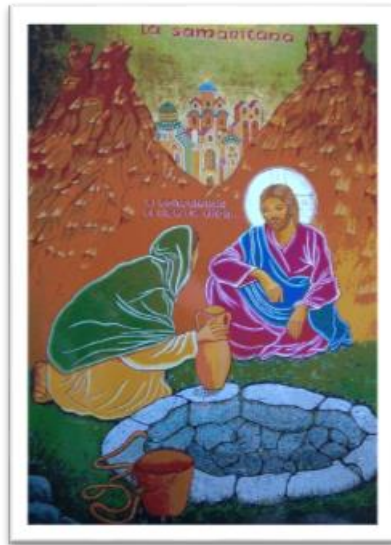


“Journeying toward a global, ecological and solidary conscience, we live the mission as disciples of Jesus in a changing world”

Biblical icon: The Samaritan Woman (Jn. 4, 1-43)



The world around us is in continuous evolution and change. It is not only nature and the cosmos, but also the social, cultural, political and economic spaces. This dynamism is an essential part of life, but never as in the last two centuries when the changes have been rapid and significant. This dynamism is an essential part of life, but never as in the last two centuries when the changes had been so rapid and significant. This reality challenges our manner of thinking and acting because in our life we are more used to introduce novelty in an evolving manner than in thinking the change to be a natural process that would invigorate our daily journey.

The Gospel of John, before narrating the encounter of Jesus with the Samaritan woman, informs that Jesus had abandoned the territory of Judea and returned to Galilee due to the incomprehension he had experienced on the part of those who clung to things as they had always been before and refused to listen to the news he proclaimed. (Jn 3: 22- 4: 3. Therefore, in order that his message would continue to be Good News for everybody, he travels again.

Upon crossing the region of Samaria, he stopped in Sychar near the well of Jacob where a woman from the region came to draw water (Jn 4:7). A Jew, Jesus finds himself in a not very safe place, since Jews and Samaritans were confronted by their diverse manner of understanding the common religion (Jn 4:9). The dialogue begins from a simple request from Jesus: give me a drink, presenting himself before a woman without prejudices and simply expressing his need (Jn 4:7).

The woman is surprised by the boldness of Jesus and tells him: *“How is it that you, a Jew, ask me, a Samaritan and a woman, for a drink?”* (Jn 4: 9).

These words clearly entail obstacles which static forms of thinking and doing generate in the encounter between human beings and the preventive instinct which bring about the distinct, that which does not respond to what we consider adequate or valid. Jesus, on his part, with his simple request proposes to her “to change the rules of the game” and initiates a dialogue from another perspective, with new questions and unsuspected answers.

Jesus does not justify his boldness, but dares her again, questioning her contingent manner of seeing God and her incompetence to see the transformation which could emanate in the encounter. *“If you only knew who it is, who is asking you for a drink, you yourself would have asked me and I would have given you living water.”* (Jn. 4: 10).

The Samaritan woman has difficulty to understand the words of Jesus because she is incapable of situating them in any known situation. She can only interpret them from her tradition and her routine character: *“Sir, you have no bucket, and this well is deep; where is your living water? Are you greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us this well, and drank from it himself, together with his sons and his cattle?”* (Jn. 4:12). But the God who reveals himself in Jesus is gift, *gratuidad, abundancia ...* life who does not allow himself to be trapped in “the wells” where we always go to drink, wherein we satiate our questions, refresh our ideas and concepts and soak our customs and rituals every day. Jesus questions that manner of acting and invites us to go to the spring where everything flows and nothing stagnates, to that spring which *“spring up to produce eternal life”* (Jn 4: 13-14), because what is proper of God is not eternal stability but continuous dynamism who receives us in our circumstances, in growth and limit, in progress and in retrocessions.

The woman finally discovers the value of the proposal of Jesus and desires it, but she seeks to receive it from outside, who could be another to provide her: *“Sir, give me this water, that I may never be thirsty, and never have to come here to draw water”* (Jn 4: 15). But Jesus invites her to make an interior, personal path by welcoming her without prejudices, without blameworthiness. (Jn 4: 16-18). The dialogue with him is leading her to encounter her very self, with her wounds, her fears, but also with possibilities and richness. Little by little she is discovering in Jesus a wider horizon for her existence and she dares to ask him the question, that will allow her to open herself to a new conscience not only of herself but of God who sustains her: *“Sir, I see that you are a prophet. Our parents came to this mountain to worship God, but you claim that Jerusalem is the only place to worship God”* (Jn. 4: 19-20).

In his response Jesus offers her more than what she expects, by inviting her to seek God beyond accustomed spaces, beyond the frontiers separating the sacred from the profane. She asks him about the adequate place for God in history and he proposes to find it in “spirit and truth” (Jn 4: 21-24), that is, in the path of life, through the processes of discernment, from a more wholistic new awareness of the world and the cosmos.

The words of Jesus, read from our time today, not only denounces the falseness of a religion centered on its own securities, but he is also proposing a new religious experience which, maintained in the creator dynamism of the *Ruah* of God, impels us to leave the known to open ourselves to receive the seeds of the Kingdom which fill our world and sustain us to live in it as transforming agents and co-responsible of its present and future.

The Samaritan woman, through the encounter with Jesus, discovers the most authentic of her very self and is capable of knowing Jesus in a different manner, believing in him with a renewed faith. Her discovery invigorates her and makes her abandon the well and her jar and return to her city, with a new bearing and a word of notification (Jn 4: 28-29).

Today, we also need to allow ourselves to be found and surprised by Jesus and consent that the best in us flourish, delight us so that we could, like the Samaritan woman, abandon the jars on which we always drank and gave to drink, to trust in the spring of eternal life which comes from our interior (Jn 4: 14) and which prepares us to go along with hope and passion through still untraveled paths, to understand and accept new spaces of life and mission which are emerging in our world.

The encounter of this woman with Jesus made her a disciple and the experience lived close to him empowered her to announce and convoke others to the mission (Jn 4: 39-42). Her dialogue with him brought her far beyond the known, undermined frontiers which shut her up in her weakness, in her prejudices, rescued her from the small walls of her house and from the ragged paths which, until that moment she had trod, in order to set her off on the way and integrate her in a wider community, that of the followers of Jesus, that she was called to trod other places, to become and incorporate herself in other cultures, confront new challenges with new strategies and thus to become agent of transformation through the paths of history.

As followers of Jesus, we are also invited like her, to allow ourselves to be enamored again by the dynamism of the Kingdom, to be part of creative, daring, prophetic communities which “from a global, ecological and solidary awareness” are set on responding to the challenges of our world and to offer a believing word which helps others to discover the God who sustains their lives.

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