

Questions for Reflection and Discussion

1. In what ways are we already living out the vision of Pope Francis to be an open door community?
2. The Eucharist is “not the prize for the perfect but a powerful medicine and nourishment for the weak.” What are the implications of this for our parish community?
3. The Pope quotes St Francis de Sales saying: “A spoonful of honey attracts more flies than a barrelful of vinegar.” How can we put this into practice as a Church, as a parish and as individuals?
4. Pope John XXIII called a parish ‘the village fountain where everyone could come and be quenched’. How is our parish community a place of rest and refreshment for those on the journey of life? How could it be more so?

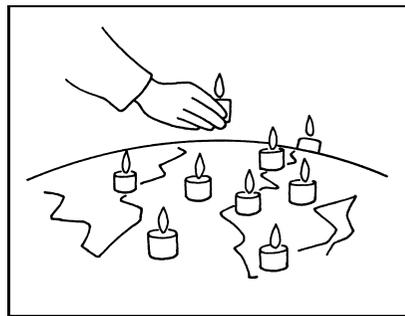
Practical evangelisation

At the end of the Gospel the woman told others about Jesus and she brought them to meet Jesus.

How can I find an opportunity to have a conversation with someone about Jesus this week? Who could I bring with me to Mass at Easter this year?

Prayer

Mary, Virgin of listening and contemplation,
Mother of love,
Bride of the eternal wedding feast,
pray for the Church,
whose pure icon you are,
that she may never be closed in on herself
or lose her passion
for establishing God’s kingdom.
Star of the new evangelisation,
help us to bear radiant witness to communion,
service, ardent and generous faith,
justice and love of the poor, that the joy of the Gospel
may reach to the ends of the earth.
Mother of the living Gospel,
pray for us.
Amen.



This leaflet was prepared by the Department for Evangelisation in the Archdiocese of Liverpool

The Joy of the Gospel Walking through Lent with Pope Francis

Third Sunday of Lent: The Woman at the Well



(In conversation with a woman from Samaria, who was with living with husband number six, and who had come to get water from the well)

Jesus replied:

‘If you only knew what God is offering and who it is that is saying to you: Give me a drink, you would have been the one to ask, and he would have given you living water.’

‘You have no bucket, sir, and the well is deep: how could you get this living water?’ Jesus replied:

‘Whoever drinks this water will get thirsty again; but anyone who drinks the water that I shall give will never be thirsty again: the water that I shall give will turn into a spring inside him, welling up to eternal life.’

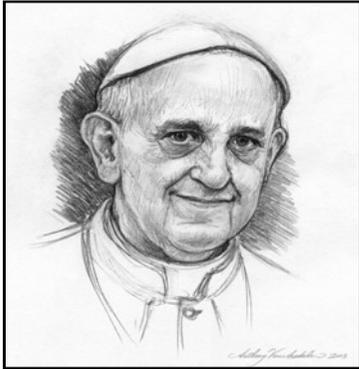
‘Sir, give me some of that water, so that I may never get thirsty and never have to come here again to draw water.’

The woman said to him, ‘I know that Messiah – that is, Christ – is coming; and when he comes he will tell us everything.’ ‘I who am speaking to you,’ said Jesus ‘I am he.’

See John 4:5-42

This Gospel passage invites us to stand with Jesus as he speaks to a woman who was seen by many as a “bad” person. You can imagine the horror of those first hearing this. He offers to quench her thirst, but not in the way she thought she needed.

The Gospel sheds light for us on the reflections of Pope Francis on how our parish communities are called to be places of welcome and inclusion so that people can experience the joy of the Gospel in their lives and respond appropriately.



To ponder: Life is so busy, so rushed, yet Jesus found time to listen to the woman at the well. His spending time with her changed her life.

Pope Francis reflects:

A Church which “goes forth” is a Church whose doors are open. Going out to others in order to reach the fringes of humanity does not mean rushing out aimlessly into the world. Often it is better simply to slow down, to put aside our eagerness in order to see and listen to others, to

stop rushing from one thing to another and to remain with someone who has faltered along the way. At times we have to be like the father of the prodigal son, who always keeps his door open so that when the son returns, he can readily pass through it. [46]

Question: How can we find time for others and for God in our busy lives?

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To ponder: In the Gospel passage the woman discovers that she is loved and so she is able to respond. The Pope puts this invitation (to know we are loved) and our response at the heart of the mission of the Church.

Pope Francis reflects:

Before all else, the Gospel invites us to respond to the God of love who saves us, to see God in others and to go forth from ourselves to seek the good of others. Under no circumstance can this invitation be obscured! All of the virtues are at the service of this response of love. If this invitation does not radiate forcefully and attractively, the edifice of the Church’s moral teaching risks becoming a house of cards, and this is our greatest risk. It would mean that it is not the Gospel which is being preached, but certain doctrinal or moral points based on specific ideological options. The message will run the risk of losing its freshness and will cease to have “the fragrance of the Gospel”. [39]

Question: How can we attract others towards the “fragrance of the Gospel” whilst being faithful to the moral teachings of the Church?

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To ponder: The Samaritan Woman was seen by many as an “outsider”, but to God no one is excluded.

Pope Francis reflects:

The Church is called to be the house of the Father, with doors always wide open. One concrete sign of such openness is that our church doors should always be open, so that if someone, moved by the Spirit, comes there looking for God, he or she will not find a closed door. There are other doors that should not be closed either. Everyone can share in some way in the life of the Church; everyone can be part of the community, nor should the doors of the sacraments be closed for simply any reason. This is especially true of the sacrament which is itself “the door”: baptism. The Eucharist, although it is the fullness of sacramental life, is not a prize for the perfect but a powerful medicine and nourishment for the weak. These convictions have pastoral consequences that we are called to consider with prudence and boldness. Frequently, we act as arbiters of grace rather than its facilitators. But the Church is not a tollhouse; it is the house of the Father, where there is a place for everyone, with all their problems. [47]

Question: This challenges us to reflect on our pastoral practice: how can we live out what the Pope is suggesting? What are the “pastoral consequences”? Can we leave open the door of our Church?

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To ponder: The way we picture the Church influences our thought and actions. Pope Francis invites us to consider a new model, which the woman of Samaria may have felt comfortable with.

Pope Francis reflects:

The thing the church needs most today is the ability to heal wounds and to warm the hearts of the faithful; it needs nearness, proximity. I see the church as a field hospital after battle. It is useless to ask a seriously injured person if he has high cholesterol and about the level of his blood sugars! You have to heal his wounds. Then we can talk about everything else. Heal the wounds, heal the wounds. ... and you have to start from the ground up. [America magazine – September 2013]

Question: What are the obvious wounds of those around us, what are the hidden wounds? How can we help to heal those wounds?