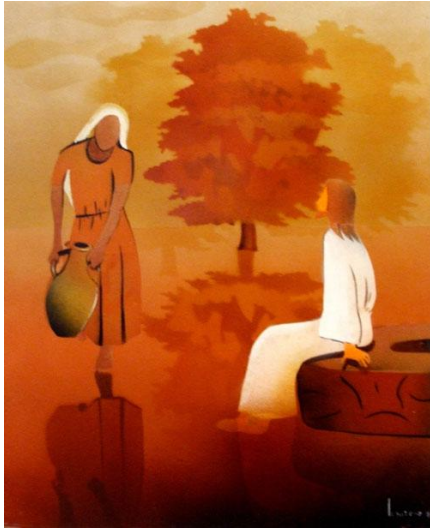


Jesus encounters Samaritan woman at the well (Jn 4: 5-42)

Theological Reflection From Fr Charles Menezes,

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This is an interesting story from the Bible, with a few pointers, enlightens and enables us to evaluate our actions in the youth ministry. Here we understand the perspective of Jesus, so human and practical yet divine in inspiration.

What is Youth Ministry?

It is to bring Jesus to youth and youth to Jesus in the present reality. Jesus never gets old. We need creativity and conversion to face the reality of being human.

Evangelization in the youth ministry is not strategies but involves the young

in the spirituality to encounter Jesus. It is not giving information and knowledge about Jesus but the **PERSON OF JESUS**.

The question remains - Do our creative actions in youth ministry lead young people to Jesus? How do we train and form youth as evangelizers?

Here, we come to know how the human encounter of Jesus with the Samaritan woman made her an evangelizer. She could experience him and proclaim Jesus as **Son of Man** much before Jesus went through the process of Resurrection.

This story can be divided into 6 parts and explained in IYCS Methodology.

Truth of Life/Reality : Awareness (See)

1. Jesus is a traveler

He walks with his disciples. As human he experiences tiredness, weariness, thirst, hardships. He begged woman for a drink - water.

We as followers of Jesus are asked to journey, travel with the young and the rest of the humanity. Jesus comes to us

as humble simple traveler; He invites us to journey with him.

Pope Francis asks us to walk with people (*Caminare*) - Are we humble and simple in our approach to travel with the young. Can we remove pretensions, pride, ego, judgmental attitudes?

2. Jesus stops at Jacob's well

He was thirsty and tired. **Jesus was first** - (before the Samaritan woman reached the well to fetch water)

- What are the wells people go to when they are tired, burdened, frustrated?
- What are the wells we frequent when we are frustrated?
- What are the wells frequented by the youth when they are frustrated in life?

Are we aware of them? - We don't know, neither their parents know.

- As Church and youth animator or youth leader - Are we getting there first or are we always late?
- Are we there to meet the hungry, tired, weary? - Because our presence is important.

From the well we discern to draw clear living water. It may be ordinary well but clear water. (Is the water the well we frequent adulterated?)

3. Where is the well located? - Sichar (Samaria)

It is a hostile territory for Jews and Jesus enters the hostile territory. Woman was surprised to see him there.

- It is easy to enter friendly territories. For young people there a number of friendly territories but they are adulterated.
- For Church many sectors are not friendly - the worldly sinful structures, social and systemic evils etc. They are contrary to the Gospel.

- The world is sinful and broken but it is still God's world. And this broken world provides opportunity for evangelization.

• Evangelization is proclaiming and not complaining. We are aware of the migration of the young people. Migration is a wound. Migration is not future but present. It is a tomb experience and Jesus can transform tombs into Resurrection.

4. Jesus engages (encounters) woman into simple conversation

He speaks about vessel, water, family, husband, thirst etc.

- Woman is surprised – Why do you know me? Are you the Messiah?
- Jesus tells her about herself without any judgment – plainly, lovingly, compassionately and she experiences him. **It is HE – Personal encounter.**
- Who are we and who is Jesus for us? - Getting to know ourselves better will help us know Jesus. This process requires patience, time and perseverance.

- Woman experiences **truth of herself and Jesus.**

Samaritan woman came for water and now she is thirsting for truth/life. She does not require water jar anymore – **I have found the Messiah.**

We need to give the youth religious experiences of Jesus. If Jesus is not known then what and whom do we preach? - Rules, policies, strategies....?

5. We need to Sustain the Spirit

People who heard her, went to Jesus and asked him to stay with them and he stayed for 2 days.

He stayed in the hostile territory. He encountered women, husbands and children. They said - now we have seen, touched and experienced him ourselves. They have gone to others to tell what they have seen and heard.

1 John 1:3- What we have seen and heard...we proclaim to you.

As youth ministers and members of IYCS-JECI, these pointers will help us to channelize our efforts in preparing young as Evangelizers and thus encounter Jesus and transform ourselves and the world around us.

Pointers:

- a. Traveling, identifying the wells frequented by young, water - clear and adulterated, territory – friendly and hostile.
- b. Courtyard of the gentiles - Pope Francis wants us to go to the courtyard of the periphery; People of other faiths; Non-believers; Catholics who have gone to the periphery.
- c. Human encounter and woman becomes evangelizer – Proclaims Messiah before Resurrection. My encounter with the young – Does it reflect Jesus?

6. Questions for Action

Q1. How do we see sign of hope, opportunity in this miserable situation today?

- We are called to address the world of sufferings, of young people

Q2. What is the emotional first aid for the young Migrants (from Church/life)?

- Listen to the youth and their aspirations; Feel the expression of their faith in a faithless manner; hear the faith of the faithless.

Q3. How to facilitate encounters?

- World is divided. Unity happens with encounters. Space created in human encounters will remain forever.