

### 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday in Lent. March 23, 2014

Readings: Ex. 17, 3-7; Rom. 5, 1-2. 5-8; Jn. 4, 5-42

#### Homily

Dear Confreres,

In this homily I pick up three thematic words from today's sacred scripture, make a few brief reflections, ask some questions and give time for us to open ourselves to whatever arises spontaneously within us as response and perhaps also speak to God quietly in our hearts.

The first word: JOURNEY

In today's first reading we are reminded of the journey of the Jewish people from Egypt to the Promised Land. I am sure they had set out on that journey with great enthusiasm, glad to leave behind their slavery and oppression. But today we find them tired of that journey; they are discontented and grumble against Moses their leader. They want to go back to the slavery in Egypt.

Referring to ourselves: We are today making multiple journeys simultaneously. For example: we have our spiritual and vocational journey. We are making a Lenten Journey; and we are experiencing together in a special way the journey of this General Chapter.

How do we really feel about these journeys? What is happening to us on these journeys? What is the level of our enthusiasm and passion on our spiritual and vocational journey? What progress have we made on our Lenten Journey? Have we really experienced any "metanoia"/conversion or life continues as usual?

In this context, I recall a sentence from the book of Revelation that I often meditate upon. In Chapter two, in the letter to the Christian community at Ephesus, the one like the Son of Man says: I am very happy with all that you have accomplished for my name's sake. *"But I have this against you. You have lost the love you had in the beginning"* (Rev. 2, 4 ).

This condemnation perhaps may have some relevance to the first module of our Chapter theme: *Mystics in the Spirit*. Has our focus on frenetic apostolic activity made us forget the primacy of God – the passion for God which is the primary rationale for our religious life choice? We could be working very hard for God and forget that God for whom we are working. Could this be true of us?

Lent is a time to recapture the love we had in the beginning. What efforts are we making to that effect? ....

We have been making our Chapter journey for a long time, more than three years beginning with the Provincial Chapters. We have been making this journey more intensely here at the Generalate for nearly a month now. How are we feeling about this journey at this juncture? Are we tired, disappointed, dissipated, even grumbling like the Jews, or still full of passion, enthusiasm and optimism? How do we really feel about way the Chapter is functioning?

We pause a moment to stay with whatever has been evoked in us through these considerations  
.... And may be also speak honestly to God about what has been evoked....

## THIRST

The Jewish people on the desert road thirsted for water. Thirst brings the Samaritan woman to the well. Her thirst for love/lust had led her to five husbands. They had not satiated her. And she was still thirsting. Thirsting for truth; thirsting for social acceptance and inclusiveness; thirsting for some certainty about the messiah. Can we see something of this woman in us? What? ...

Jesus is thirsty and asks the woman for a drink. What does this image of Jesus sitting at the well, alone, tired, longing for a cup of water evoke in us? ...

What are *we* really thirsting for? What is the desire welling up from deep within us? St. Ignatius of Loyola said, "You are your deepest desire." Do we recognise what our deepest desire today is? If we do, what are we doing to satisfy it? ...

Do we know what our young people today are really thirsting for? What to do we do to satisfy that thirst? Recognising and responding to that thirst might make us Servants of the Young.

----- (Pause for reflection and prayer) -----

## GIFT ("Donum Dei")

Jesus tells the Samaritan woman: "If only you knew the gift of God..." He then speaks of "living waters" as the gift. We know that scripture scholars and theologians have provided many interpretations as to what that gift is; what the living water is.

We don't need to bother about any of those interpretations. They are really irrelevant.

What is relevant is what *we* ourselves recognise that gift to be for us today. What is the gift Jesus is offering each of us personally *today*? What is the gift that the Lord is offering our Congregation through this 27<sup>th</sup> General Chapter at this critical juncture in its history? How are we opening ourselves to these gifts?

What is the gift that the Lord wants to offer young people today through us, through our congregation? How are our discussions and deliberations in the Chapter helping us to discern this gift?

..... (Pause for reflection and prayer) .....

## **An Indian Twist on the Samaritan Woman Story**

I like to conclude these reflections with a few lines from Rabindranath Tagore, the Indian poet, from his Nobel Prize winning little book "*Gitanjali*" (Garland of Songs) that can add a new perspective to the Samaritan Woman's story and personalise it:

*"I was alone at the well where the shadow of the tree fell aslant, and the women had gone home with their brown earthen pitchers full to the brim. They called me and shouted, "Come with us,*

*the morning is wearing on to noon. But I languidly lingered a while lost in the midst of vague musings.*

*I heard not thy steps as thou camest. Thine eyes were sad when they fell on me; the voice was tired as thou spokest low – “Ah, I am a thirsty traveller.”*

*I started up from my day-dream and poured water from my jar on thine joined palms.*

*I stood speechless with shame when my name thou didst ask. Indeed, what had I done for thee to keep me in remembrance?*

*But the memory that I could give water to thee to allay thy thirst will cling to my heart and enfold it in sweetness.”*

..... (Pause for reflection and prayer) .....

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be. Amen.

Jose Parappully

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