



The Sunday of Samaritan Woman

“In those days, those apostles who were scattered because of the persecution that arose over Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch, speaking the word to none except Jews...” Acts of Apostles 11:19-30

The apostles being scattered after Stephen’s martyrdom reminds us of a similar image, when the apostles ran away after Judas’s betrayal and Jesus was seized by the guards. The power that crucifies scatters the people who love the Truth and the Word of God. When that power manifests itself, the breaking down of community happens. Jesus was alone on the cross also because

the power of death leaves man alone and divides us from one another through fear. On a different scale, we can see more clearly the consequences of it. The war that happens now in many parts of the world scatters millions of refugees and local communities remain desolate and destroyed. It takes at least a generation for things to come back together. If there is anything left. But it is not only the war that divides. Any culture that prioritizes death breaks the fabric of community life. We suffer culturally in Toronto because of that. Euthanasia, abortion, or the cultural usage of drugs in Canada are mines that exploded and harmed this generation. They touched first those who are directly affected by them and afterwards they spread like a poison all over the land and overseas. When we remember living today with a sense of broken community and the sense of disunity, we should know one of the main causes of that. So that we can teach the next generation a way out of it and not teach them to go deeper into the pit than we did, stepping further down into the segregation of life.

In today’s gospel, through His humanity, Jesus shares in this scattering that comes from the threat of death. John tells us that he left Judea because of the Pharisees who, as we heard in the gospel only a few days ago, wanted to kill Him: *“Is not this man whom they seek to kill?”* (John 7:14-30). But because his time had not come yet (Thursday’s gospel), he leaves Judea.

And as any other refugee, he is hungry and thirsty and finds himself in a strange land, Samaria. It is here though where the first and real connection happens, in a strange land by the well. The well is the place that gathers strangers together because of the water they need. It builds community. Moses met Zipporah by the well. He was running away as well, and he was thirsty (Exodus 2: 18-22). But as it is with the fresh water, so it is with food or other human needs. The place that nourishes the body and soul becomes the place where the strangers gather. Where real connection, based on real human needs, is happening. In a culture that favours death, places that nourish life become places where the signs of a new community are seen. It brings together at the source scattered strangers who carry deep wounds and a deep need for life.

It is in this place where the dialogue happens, and people learn about each other and the coming of the Holy Spirit is foreseen and manifested. Sharing of food, water, clothing or caring for the stranger do not quench the thirst for the real encounter but rather prefigures it and magnifies it. Because in the kingdom of God there will be no need for fasting or for eating, but everything we'll do will be out of love for the other. Like Jesus who, after the resurrection, ate with His apostles. The stranger is thirsty and hungry indeed now, but the encounter with him touches our heart and makes it thirsty for the living water. He shows us the reality we hope for and desire.

The gospel starts with Jesus alone thirsty and hungry, being "scattered" by the well, and ends with Him surrounded by the people from the village who are witnessing Him as Christ. *"Now we believe ... and we know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the World"*. The image of a church who has at her heart Christ Himself. The community is healed from death and people do not need to scatter because Christ is risen, and He is in our midst. During Friday's reflection, Elisha thought that the coming of the Holy Spirit is about the unity in Christ. He heals us and brings us close to Him and to each other. The movement that fills our heart with joy and peace.

The Samaritan Woman – a feature from Friday's reflection

The healing of community happens through the witness of the Samaritan woman. She runs back to her community forgetting the water for which she had come to the well. The water that was so real and so precious to her. And for a good reason. She forgets about it because she had found indeed the source of the living water and wanted to share it with all. However, everything started, as Keithan noticed, through her initial refusal to offer water at once. By setting a boundary between them, recognizing their status: they were strangers to each other. However, it was revealed that both had what the other one desired. For Christ, real food, and for the Samaritan woman, the life-giving water. It is for us to ponder more on her heart because it is a broken heart with which we relate naturally. Christ sees through her, and yet he sees everything with mercy and love. And she recognizes that. And yet, in all her fragility she reveals the truth and real longing that every stranger has, the longing for the coming of Christ. We know, that if the eyes of a person see through us with love and forgiveness, this heals our heart. It so happens with the Samaritan woman. What she reveals is a similar love for Christ himself. It is a sincere encounter in which both God and man reveal the love for each other.

On Friday, Sarah reflected on the gospel as well. A great tragedy just happened in her life. Her son just died during Holy Week in tragic circumstances, back in her home country. This week she returned to the mission. She needed to come. Her reflection on the gospel revealed her only truth that gives her hope. That her son is with Christ now. When life left her orphan of a son, she reveals within her heart a faith that we cannot comprehend. Because now strangers worship in truth and spirit. And we are given to witness and testify this in a broken community as Toronto, the renewal of new life.



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We are an apostolate of the ecumenical patriarchate "Mother Church of Christ's poor" under
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