

REFLECTION / HOMILY

by Sister Céline Martel, CSC



Dear Brothers and Sisters, let me begin this reflection with this question: Can you recall an important ENCOUNTER in your life? My question is for every person present here today. You encountered this person or this group with whom you discovered something of importance or with whom you developed a friendship. This was a life-giving encounter, an event that renewed you.

This leads us to a first reflection on the Gospel of the Samaritan woman, where Jesus initiates an ENCOUNTER with a woman who was very likely rejected. In reality, there's a reason why she chose to come in the full heat of midday instead of coming in the morning with her neighbors and friends. Note the immense freedom of Jesus. In his culture a man does not speak in public with a woman. Jesus chooses the person and not the letter of the law.

Jesus initiates this ENCOUNTER in Samaria, a province that was marginalized because the Samaritans did not worship at the Temple in Jerusalem. What's more, where did this ENCOUNTER take place? Near the well, symbol of the Covenant between God and God's people. I find Jesus marvelous. He values this woman: "Give me to drink, you can help me, I need you". And then Jesus offers her his living water: the Spirit. This ENCOUNTER, this conversation, elicits the conversion of this Samaritan woman. She becomes an impassioned missionary. We can say that Jesus resurrects this woman.

Brothers and sisters, the Eucharist is an act of thanksgiving: Let us thank the Lord for his Good News. He has just given Living Water to the Samaritan woman who represents all of humanity.

We also give thanks for the 175 years of ENCOUNTER between the Lord and the three women's congregations founded by Blessed Basil Moreau: the Marianites, the Sisters from Indiana (who are with us here today), and us, the Sisters of Holy Cross. For forty years, more or less, we have been involved with associates and partners in our congregations.

We have been touched by the needs of individuals and of certain marginalized groups. We have established works that promote personal growth. Our option is for the poor, for participative leadership, for the care of the planet and to stand against the culture of violence. We try to allow ourselves to be radically transformed by the Lord whom we ENCOUNTER in his Word and in the reality of those cultures to which we have committed ourselves. The invitation of Basil Moreau to make of education a "work of resurrection" has motivated us throughout our history and gives its color to the theme of today's celebration: **TOGETHER ON THE PATHWAYS OF THE RESURRECTION OF THE WORLD**. This might seem pretentious, but we try to humanize and to allow ourselves to be humanized.

There's another event that brings us together: five young women will pronounce their first vows. We might well consider their vocations as a fruit of these 175 years.

Dear Sisters Walinedie, Chantal, Adeline, Monique et Edwige, you have ENCOUNTERED the person of Jesus. He drew you to himself. We, the three members of the team, Agnès, Fabienne, and I, feel privileged, for we have seen and heard you in your search, your openness, in daily life, in prayer, in ministry and in the sharing experienced after the CONFER courses (classes with members from other congregations). We are witnesses to one part of your ENCOUNTER with the Lord at the well. Today, dear companions, it is in deep communion with you that we live this experience of Eucharist and celebration.

As did the Samaritan woman, you will soon return to your people in Haiti and in Burkina Faso where you will witness to your ENCOUNTER at Jacob's well. You are going on mission. Here's what our Bishops tell us in #145 of the concluding document resulting from the Episcopal Conference held in Aparecida, Brazil: *The mission is not limited to a program or project, but it is sharing the experience of the event of the encounter with Christ, witnessing it and announcing it from person to person, from community to community, and from the Church to the ends of the earth.* Article #29: *We, as disciples of Jesus and as missionaries, must proclaim the Gospel, that is the Christ himself.*

Before concluding, I'd like to add a brief reflection. All of us here today wish to live the love to which the first reading chosen by the novices calls us.

Brothers and sisters, today we accompany five young women called to the consecrated life. Most of you here are called to married life, to family life. Our vocations, for many of us who are religious, were born in the family. The family is important.

In our pastoral work, we could give more importance to this call, which is the most common one for the majority of the population. You who live the vocation of being couples, I want to thank you for your presence, your commitment, your fidelity which speaks of the fidelity of God.

In the Eucharistic celebration, the Lord invites us to a gathering. The example of the Samaritan woman leads us to say: Lord, I desire to drink from your Source of Life, especially together with our five Sisters.