

## *From the Visible to the Invisible*

Today's Gospel is a familiar one for most Christians. The narrative is memorable for its spirited exchange between Jesus, a Jew, and a Samaritan woman. The challenge for us today is to see something in the encounter that we have not seen before.

It may be helpful to read John's narrative from the perspective of Jesus attempting to draw the woman into a deeper reality. Initially, the Samaritan woman, who actually never lowers her bucket into the well, comes to a community cistern to draw water for her household—water that she can see and carry. Her focus is on completing an ordinary daily task. She is unprepared for her encounter with Jesus, a Jew, who asks her for a drink. This is her reality.

As they encounter one another at a place where Jacob, a patriarch of both Jews and Samaritans, gave his son Joseph the gift of water, Jesus reaches out to the woman, "If you know the gift of living water and who is asking you 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him and he would have given you living water." (John 4:10)

When Jesus offers the woman living water—water that quenches human thirst forever—she is unable to comprehend a deeper meaning of Jesus' words. However, when he offers the woman knowledge of who he is—the Spring of Living Water, welling up to eternal life—a Person who knows her and her past, he touches something deep within her.

As the woman becomes more open to knowing Jesus, her reality changes forever. In the final scene of the narrative, the woman declares, "I know the Messiah is coming, he who is called Christ. When he comes he will show us all things." And Jesus says to her, "'I am' is the one speaking to you." (4:25-26) The woman goes back to the city to share the news of her encounter. And, she invites her listeners a deeper reality, "Can this be the Christ?" (John 4: 29)

Like the woman at the well, Jesus knows each of us, our past poor choices and even our possible future pitfalls. Jesus is with us, waiting, to be seen, to lead us from what is immediate to a much more meaningful and invisible reality—a deeper understanding of his love and grace. All we have to do is to ask ourselves, "Can this be the Christ?"

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