

Lenten Reflection for Third week of Lent

(thanks to Michelle Hogan,
Ursuline Wilmington)

If your parish has begun the work of preparing individuals for initiation into the Church, you will hear the story of the woman at the well on the Third Sunday of Lent.

Jesus speaks to a Samaritan woman. It would have been surprising enough for him to speak to a Samaritan, let alone a Samaritan *woman* who sought to visit the well in the middle of the day (most likely avoiding the glances of the other women, should she have arrived earlier in the morning).

Jesus is thirsty as he sits near the well waiting for his disciples, and he reaches out and engages the woman in conversation.

He asks her for a drink. Of course, she was more than surprised that a Jewish man would be speaking to her, but his thirst is one that he has for all of humanity.

His reaching out to someone who, we learn as their conversation continues, has had more than her fair share of bad relationships, is an example of how he reaches out to each of us where we are, no matter our past.

In his encyclical letter, *Fratelli Tutti*, Pope Francis points out that Jesus' encounters with and stories about Samaritans are "highly provocative... and [challenge] us to expand our frontiers."

These encounters give "a universal dimension to our call to love, one that transcends all prejudices, all historical and cultural barriers, all petty interests."^[1]

They call us to an encounter, to truly listen to and converse with each other.

These examples call us to solidarity with and for one another.

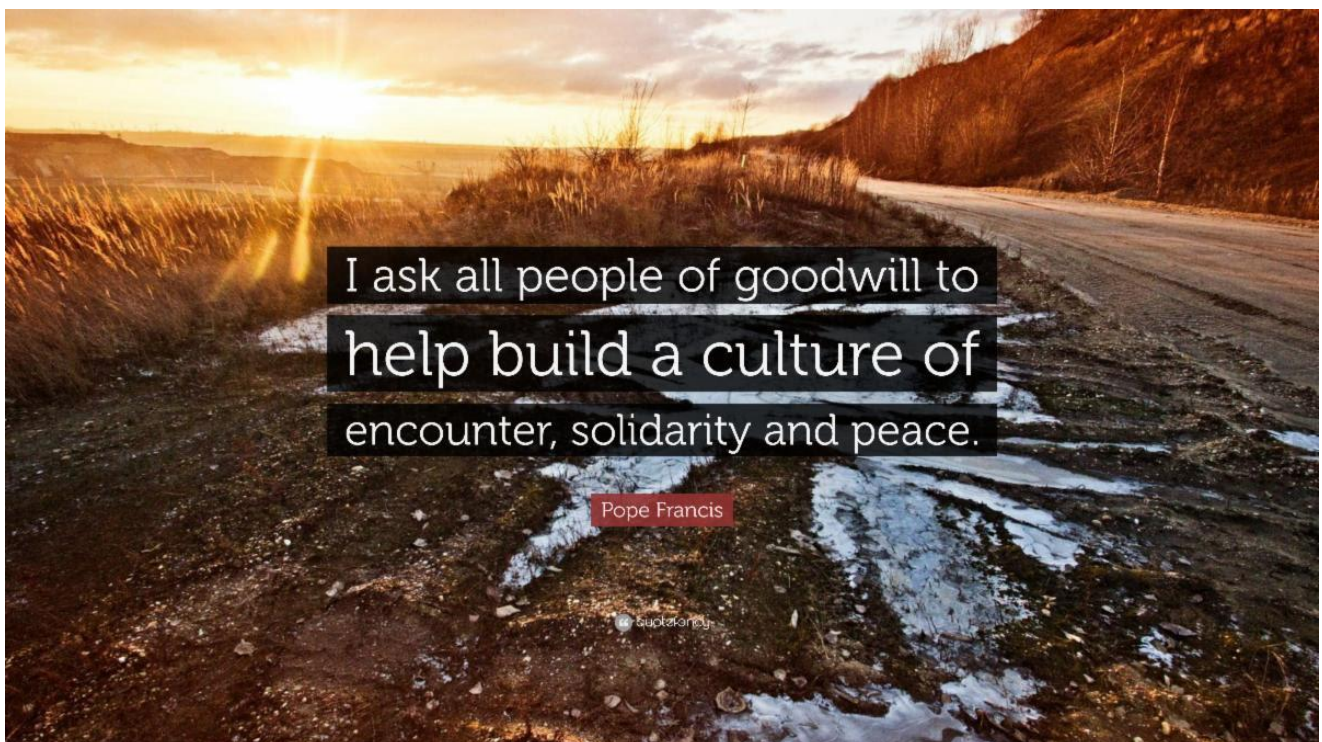
Pope Francis goes on to challenge us to root our relationships in love: "Love, then, is more than just a series of benevolent actions. Those actions have their source in a union increasingly directed towards others, considering them of value, worthy, pleasing and beautiful apart from their physical or moral appearances....

Only by cultivating this way of relating to one another will we make possible a social friendship that excludes no one and a fraternity that is open to all."^[2]

Creating social friendships that exclude no one may have seemed pretty difficult before the pandemic (and may seem even more challenging now that we are so divided politically, economically, and racially), but Jesus' desire to sit at the well and listen to and talk with the Samaritan woman provides an example for the importance of dialogue. The time he spent with the woman led to an invitation to remain in the town for two days, and his encounter with those he met during those two days led them to see that he "is truly the savior of the world." (John 4:42)

[1] Francis, *Fratelli Tutti*, encyclical letter, Vatican website, March 3, 2021, http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20201003_enciclica-fratelli-tutti.html, sec. 83.

[2] Francis, *Fratelli Tutti*, sec. 94.



This Lent, where do you encounter Jesus?

How can you root and model the encounters you have with all those who pass in and out of your life in the encounter you have with the Christ who thirsts for you?

copy of the reflection prepared by USA Ursuline JPIC Team