

JRS Lent Reflection

JESUIT REFUGEE SERVICE
UNITED KINGDOM

A WEEKLY PRAYER RESOURCE

THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT • SUNDAY 15TH MARCH 2020 •

THIS WEEK'S GOSPEL

JOHN 4:5-16, 19-26,39-42

Jesus came to the Samaritan town called Sychar, near the land that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. Jacob's well is there and Jesus, tired by the journey, sat straight down by the well. It was about the sixth hour. When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, 'Give me a drink.' His disciples had gone into the town to buy food. The Samaritan woman said to him, 'What? You are a Jew and you ask me, a Samaritan, for a drink?' – Jews, in fact, do not associate with Samaritans. Jesus replied: 'If you only knew what God is offering and who it is that is saying to you: Give me a drink, you would have been the one to ask, and he would have given you living water.' 'You have no bucket, sir,' she answered 'and the well is deep: how could you get this living water? Are you a greater man than our father Jacob who gave us this well and drank from it himself with his sons and his cattle?' Jesus replied: 'Whoever drinks this water will get thirsty again; but anyone who drinks the water that I shall give will never be thirsty again: the water that I shall give will turn into a spring inside him, welling up to eternal life.' 'Sir,' said the woman 'give me some of that water, so that I may never get thirsty and

“ Anyone who drinks the water that I shall give will never be thirsty again ”

never have to come here again to draw water." "I see you are a prophet, sir" said the woman. 'Our fathers worshipped on this mountain, while you say that Jerusalem is the place where one ought to worship.' Jesus said: 'Believe me, woman, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know: for salvation comes from the Jews. But the hour will come - in fact it is here already -

when true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth: that is the kind of worshiper the Father wants. God is spirit, and those who worship must worship in spirit and truth.' The woman said to him, 'I know that Messiah – that is, Christ – is coming; and when he comes he will tell us everything.' 'I who am speaking to you,' said Jesus 'I am he.' Many Samaritans of that town had believed in him on the strength of the woman's testimony when she said, 'He told me all I have ever done', so, when the Samaritans came up to him, they begged him to stay with them. He stayed for two days, and when he spoke to them many more came to believe; and they said to the woman, 'Now we no longer believe because of what you told us; we have heard him ourselves and we know that he really is the saviour of the world.'



AKBAR'S* STORY

Akbar, one of our refugee friends, was held in an immigration detention centre for many months.*

Even the supposed good news of release from detention was a distressing process for Akbar:

"They provide me the solicitor, free Legal Aid & she said that [your country] is recently declared as a safe country and your immigration case is refused, your appeal is dismissed so nothing she can do. You will be deported. I say 'you don't know, only God knows' so I was just praying and after eight months, one immigration officer called me saying that we are going to release you. I say "are you sure?" I start crying over there. So he gives me the reason - that because your country did not give us your travel document."

Akbar was released with no support:

"When I was in detention, they release me, but they did not offer me anything. So they did nothing, "where I will go? How will I eat? How I survived?" They don't think, they are not worried about our survival, they're just saying to go back to your country."



The UK's asylum system is part of the Hostile Environment approach to immigration. This approach seeks to ensure people cannot do many of the things we take for granted. Akbar describes the anger he feels at being treated as though he doesn't matter:

"At the moment, The government is very, very... you can see [they're] against the Asylum Seekers or refugees. I don't know why...it's like hostile environment. They even not thinking how could a person survive without any job. You are not allowed to working, you probably took is prohibited, it is not entitled.

If your asylum case is refused, you are not entitled of any kind of Social Security benefits, so they are not thinking how somebody will survive. They're thinking about animals dogs, cats, but they are not [thinking about people]. What is the problem with the just few thousand asylum seekers? We are not asking you for any benefit. We're just asking you to accept us because we have no other way."

“They are not thinking how somebody will survive”

Akbar's current status is frustrating and complicated as he continues to live with constant uncertainty:

"What happened because my case is refused and I appeal, it was dismissed. Then I 'fresh claimed'. It was just dismissed and I didn't have any application pending. So when I was released in detention - released end of 2017, beginning of 2018 - my solicitor put a long residency appeal. I'm living here long time, like a human kind of application that I am used to here and Home Office wasn't able to deport me. So they put me this application, still waiting for this decision. It's under consideration. At the moment, I'm just kind of in a limbo situation, waiting for my application result"

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

It would be unusual for a woman to fetch water in the hottest part of the day. This may be because the Samaritan woman was socially ostracised. Have you had an experience of being ostracised or marginalised? What was it like?



Thinking about that experience, what do you desire for Akbar, and others in his situation? Is there something you want to pray for?



In the Gospel passage, we encounter a tired and thirsty Jesus: 'Give me a drink.' In your life, what are you thirsting for?



What living water might I offer to people in Akbar's situation?

**To protect his identity, this is not his real name.*