

Spending time at the Well of Sychar

to hear what the Spirit says today to Consecrated Life

A Congress on consecrated life entitled *Passion for Christ Passion for Humanity*, took place in Rome in November, 2004. Participants included 847 religious from all over the world. The majority were Superiors general, presidents of national conferences, theologians, directors of reviews and publications on religious life and young religious. For those of us who were not in Rome, it is possible to get the texts of the conferences given during the Congress, participants' responses to speakers as well as the *Convictions and Perspectives* issues on the last day of the Congress, on the Internet at the following address: www.vidimusdominum.org, *DAY BY DAY*.

This year, we prepared a celebration for February 2, the day dedicated to Consecrated Life, based on one of the scripture passages proposed to participants in the Congress as well as excerpts adapted from *Convictions and Perspectives*

Facilitator's guide

Those who wish to participate in this celebration should spend time reading and reflecting on the Samaritan Woman's story beforehand.

1. Distribute the text to all participants long enough before the celebration to allow time for personal reflection (in some cases, it could be the day before)
2. Highlight the **Points to ponder**

Preparation

Time: foresee at least one hour for a group of about 10 persons.

Space: begin in dimly lit space. On the focus table, on a plain cloth, place a large bowl of water, a ladle and as many glasses as there are persons attending. Add a green plant or flowers for make it more attractive. On a higher table or lectern, place an open Bible and a pillar candle.

Celebration

Leader:

Before opening remarks:

- To ask someone to light the tall candle while reminding participants that “*whenever two or three are gathered in Jesus' name, He is in our midst.*”
- To welcome participants
- To propose a song or to recite a prayer to the Holy Spirit.

1. Opening Reflections

World context: In your opening reflections, it would be appropriate to say a few words about the South East Asia disaster. You could mention especially the fact that for a time, the world forgot differences of race and religion to offer help and support to the tsunami victims. (Moment of silence to reflect on and pray for all victims of conflicts and natural disasters)

Consecrated Life in 2005: refer also to the Congress saying why the Samaritan Woman story was chosen and what inspired the **Contemplative moment** and the **Concrete Action Ideas**.

2. Scripture Reading: John 4: 1-28 (with narrator and 2 other characters)

3. Sharing Period

Allow sufficient time for all participants to share on the **Points to ponder**.

(If appropriate, before sharing begins, remind participants of the importance of active listening: it is not a discussion – there are no right or wrong answers – it is not the time to prepare what you wish to share – it is a call to listen to others as Jesus listened to the Samaritan woman.)

4. Contemplative moment (music could be played while a voice reads the following text in a meditative way)

To be Born Anew

Although we do not yet see clearly what the Spirit is bringing to birth in consecrated life, still we identify as sprouts of newness:

- *The desire to be born anew;*
- *The fascination with Jesus and his message proclaimed in the Gospel;*
- *The centrality of prayer in response to the Word of God;*
- *The fundamental importance of mission which impels us to undertake bold and prophetic new initiatives and challenges us to proclaim Jesus Christ through inter-cultural and inter-religious dialogue; to explore new means of communication and to express our option for the lowly and excluded (poverty).*
- *The search for communion and for community reaching out to parish, diocese, and city as well as embracing society and the whole of humanity (celibacy and communion);*
- *The need for an all inclusive spirituality that integrates the spiritual and the corporal, the feminine and the masculine, the personal and the communal, the cultural and the cosmic, the temporal and the eschatological;*
- *The transition from a consecrated life that separates us from the world to a consecrated life that inserts us in the world and witnesses to transcendence.*

Adapted from *Convictions and Perspectives*, November 2004

5. A moment of silence follows

At this time, we suggest that you distribute the paper containing on the one side: the text **To be born anew** and on the other the **Concrete action ideas**. Give participants enough time to read through all the Action ideas based on the *Convictions and Perspectives*, ask them to choose an action and share in 2's or 3's.

You could say something like:

Having listened to the Word of God and to some of the Congress' conclusions on consecrated life, we are now invited to decide on concrete actions that we wish to undertake. We can draw these from our own convictions, from what we have heard today or from suggestions taken from the Concrete Action Ideas.

6. Ritual: a Prayer Response

Invite participants to show their desire to do what the Spirit inspires them today by coming one by one to the focus table.

- draw water from our “Well of Sychar” (the large bowl), using the ladle and to pour it in a glass;
- share with others the gift of “living water” he/she has received today. This can be done in the form of a prayer or a wish, e.g. I wish to draw the living water of tolerance with Or I ask Jesus to bless me with the living water of a listening heart each time I encounter people whose conversation bore me to tears.
- drink the “living water” they put in their glass after their prayer or wish as a sign of their commitment.

7. Leader

Before concluding the celebration with a song and or a blessing, the leader says:

We believe that to follow Jesus through consecrated life in our time, we are called to develop attitudes that will enable us *“to quench people’s thirsts, to heal their wounds, to be the healing balm on open wounds, to respond to the longings of our brothers and sisters for joy, for love, for liberty and for peace.”*

Excerpts attributed to John Paul II.

JESUS AND THE SAMARITAN WOMAN

John 4: 1-30

N. When Jesus heard that the Pharisees had found out that he was making and baptizing more disciples than John though in fact it was his disciples who baptized, not Jesus himself – he left Judea and went back to Galilee. This meant that he had to cross Samaria. On the way he 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 strait down by the well. It was about the sixth hour.

When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her,

J. Give me a drink.

N. His disciples had gone into the town to buy food. The Samaritan woman said to him,

W. What? You are a Jew and you ask me, a Samaritan, for a drink?

N. Jews, in fact, do not associate with Samaritans. Jesus replied:

J. 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.

W. You have no bucket, sir, 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?

J. 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.

w. Sir, give me some of that water, so that I may never get thirsty and never have to come here again to draw water.

J. Go and call your husband, and come back here.

W. I have no husband.

J. You are right to say, 'I have no husband'; for although you have had five, the one you have now is not your husband. You spoke the truth there.

W. I see you are a prophet, sir, our fathers worshipped on this mountain, while you say that Jerusalem is the place where one ought to worship.

J. 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 worshipers 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.

W. I know that the Messiah – that is, Christ – is coming; and when he comes he will tell us everything.

J. I who am speaking to you, I am he.

N. At this point his disciples returned, and were surprised to find him speaking to a woman, though none of them asked, “What do you want from her?” or, “Why are you talking to her?” The woman put down her water jar and hurried back to the town to tell the people, “Come and see a man who has told me everything I ever did, I wonder if he is the Christ?”

POINTS TO PONDER

1. Read and re-read the story of the Samaritan woman trying to set aside all preconceived ideas of the text. Then choose one or more points to ponder.

2. Context: identify the various levels of life experience present in this story.

3. Contemplate Jesus and the woman; note their attitudes, words, gestures. What can we learn from them?

4. The purpose of this reflection is to share new insights – elements of growth – words or gestures that touched your heart. For more effective listening of what others will share with the group, it is a good idea to write them down.

CONCRETE ACTION IDEAS

(Adapted from Convictions and Perspectives of the Congress)
Numbered to facilitate the sharing

1. Dialogue with someone of a different culture, religious or race in a shopping mall, for instance
2. Find concrete ways to practise “compassionate solidarity”
3. Create beautiful spaces for prayer
4. Invite someone from another culture, race or religion to address my community
5. Find new symbols to tell new stories that touch the hearts of men and women of our time
6. Create beauty that will give joy and life in the midst of violence and death
7. Take the risk to communicate my faith and convictions
8. Interact with the mass media in a creative (constructive) way
9. Speak a “language” that people of today understand
10. Give more time to *lectio divina*, an element of transformation of our lifestyle
11. Promote a spirituality of communion
12. Find new ways to collaborate with other communities
13. Develop new means of on-going formation within my community
14. Develop self-on-going formation
15. Make real efforts to get to know people of other cultures, races, religions through reading or visiting a website
16. Attend a meeting open to all people of different religions
17. Show solidarity with another culture by attending an event at their festival
18. Imagine new solutions when new problems arise (even very small ones)
19. Make our communities more open and hospitable
20. Update and adapt our community structures

A HIGHLY RECOMMENDED ACTIVITY

Visit the Website: www.vidimusdominum.org. Choose one or more of the Congress texts, read them and share your insights with some members of your community.

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