

## 4. Mercy is Inclusive



### GATHERING SPACE

Are we a Church that calls and welcomes sinners with open arms, that gives courage and hope, or are we a Church closed in on herself?

Whenever we Christians are enclosed in our groups, our movements, our parishes, in our little worlds, we remain closed, and the same thing happens to us that happens to anything closed ... it begins to get dank. (Pope Francis)

The success of the meeting at the well in Samaria depended on two people who were willing to unchain themselves from the legacy of the past and make a new beginning ... it was a triumph of mercy. Mercy takes risks because it is fuelled from the heart, drawn not driven, given and received. (Burke)

> Where does exclusion operate in our society today?

### FROM THE SCRIPTURES

There are many times in the scriptures when Jesus challenges the closed social boundaries of his day. The story of the woman at the well is a story of exclusion on many levels: the woman herself comes out in the middle of the day to draw water when no-one else is about. She is an outcast, a woman and a Samaritan – many reasons for Jesus to avoid contact. But Jesus does not reject her. He chooses relationship and through his mercy she understands who he is and what he is offering – liberation.

There came a woman of Samar'ia to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink." For his disciples had gone away

into the city to buy food. The Samaritan woman said to him, "How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samar'ia?" For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans. Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water." The woman said to him, "Sir, you have nothing to draw with, and the well is deep; where do you get that living water? Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well, and drank from it himself, and his sons, and his cattle?" Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will thirst again, but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst; the water that I shall give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life." The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water, that I may not thirst, nor come here to draw water." (John 4: 1-15)

### FOR REFLECTION AND SHARING

- > 'If you knew who it is that is speaking to you...' How do Jesus' words challenge us to inclusivity?
- > Can you recall other times when Jesus, through word or action, challenged segregation or alienation on any basis?
- > How can you practice inclusivity at a Board level?

## PRAYER

May we be open, God of mercy, to your call for an inclusivity and welcome for all.  
May we look upon our world with your eyes, listen to the cry of those who are marginalised with your ears and respond from hearts filled with your love. May we be merciful to all because you are merciful to us.

### **For those who feel alienated and alone**

*Welcoming God, hear our prayer*

### **For refugees and displaced people around the world**

*Welcoming God, hear our prayer*

### **For those who leave homes of violence and abuse**

*Welcoming God, hear our prayer*

### **For those separated from society through sickness, infirmity or imprisonment**

*Welcoming God, hear our prayer*

### **For broken families, fractured relationships and those battling inner turmoil**

*Welcoming God, hear our prayer*

### **For courage, in this Year of Mercy, to open the doors of our hearts to others**

*Welcoming God, hear our prayer*

*(Pause for any special intentions)*

## FOR THE END OF THE MEETING

God of Mercy  
Each day you walk with us  
Present in every aspect of our human  
existence.  
Help us to pour out mercy on those we meet  
The abandoned and forgotten  
Those who struggle  
Friends and family  
Work colleagues and strangers  
May we embrace all with your tenderness and  
compassion.  
(Simmonds)

Let us ask the Lord: Lord, grant that we  
be more and more united, never to be  
instruments of division; enable us to commit  
ourselves, as the beautiful Franciscan prayer  
says, to sowing love where there is hatred;  
where there is injury, pardon; and union  
where there is discord. (Pope Francis)

Illustration from Sieger Köder 'Art and Inspiration'. Bible: Revised Standard Version Catholic Edition. Simmonds, G: *The Closeness of God* (2013). Burke, A. *The Quality of Mercy* (2015), p28. Pope Francis: *The Church of Mercy* (2014), p32.

COMPASSION JUSTICE RESPECT HOPE



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