

"Live as examples of Christ Jesus"

Devotions for Deacons

Weigh the Needs of Causes and

Title: Use the Church's Resources Discerningly

Scripture: John 4:4-42

Text: Philippians 1:9-11

“Paul is clear: Discernment requires love that is full of knowledge and insight.”

The woman comes to the well in the middle of the day. Everyone else is at home, possibly asleep in the noontime heat. Perhaps she is hoping to avoid prying questions and staring eyes: her life is far from perfect and she knows it. But there is a Jew by the well. A Jew! How can this be? What could he be doing here? She wants to avoid him. But then he speaks. And her amazement grows.

In John's Gospel, we read that Jesus is travelling from Galilee to Jerusalem. Normally Jews took a longer route just to avoid Samaria. Jesus even instructs His disciples to stay out of Samaritan towns and, like Him, focus their ministry on the Jews (Matthew 10, 15).

You see, the Jews of Jesus' day discriminated against Samaritans, a mixed blood people outside of God's chosen nation. But Jesus undermines this attitude by commending Samaritans in His stories and encounters with them (see Luke 10, 17). This encounter with the Samaritan woman, however, goes deeper.

This time, Jesus travels through Samaria, and, with perfect discernment, stops at a well. He then begins a conversation with the woman there that marks Him as different from other Jews and that has eternal significance for her.

Jesus asks the woman for a drink. He knows exactly how she will react. Why would a Jew expect kindness from a Samaritan? This conversation, however, is meant to go further: Jesus uses the physical water in the well as a

entry point into a conversation about her need for a Saviour.

Again, with perfect discernment, Jesus turns the conversation to the woman's husband. He states the facts; he does not condemn her. The point is not her 5 husbands, nor to talk about places of worship. He is leading her to the point in the conversation where He will make a startling and bold assertion of who He is. What a gift to this woman! And it leads to amazing professions from many others. Not even the disciples had called Him the "Saviour of the world."

This entire encounter with the Samaritan woman is a beautiful glimpse into Jesus' perfect discernment. He chooses to leave the familiar path and the careful focus of His ministry. Of course He knows hearts, minds, thoughts and actions in advance. But He still makes a bold and unprecedented choice to minister to the needs of this Samaritan town.

As deacons, we are to model Jesus' discernment: to weigh needs, to make bold choices and to put to use the church's resources. Jesus did not always take the familiar route, or do what had always been done. We are called to be like Jesus. But how do we discern? Paul, in Philippians, is clear: Discernment requires love that is full of knowledge and insight. Read God's Word together. Pray for discernment and love. And then make choices boldly, guided by power of the Holy Spirit.