

## **Week 4: Living with Vulnerability**

### **Gospels:**

**John 3:14-21 Jesus with Nicodemus**

**John 4:1-42 The Samaritan Woman**

This week we meet the Samaritan woman, living in vulnerable circumstances, who journeys from her own brokenness to the source of living water. We also meet Nicodemus, a Jewish leader and member of the ruling Sanhedrin, who opens himself to become vulnerable in front of Jesus.

In Jesus, God became vulnerable. To have a body is to be vulnerable. Vulnerability is the central theme of Jesus' ministry. He was vulnerable in the wilderness as the Devil tempted him. By rejecting the devil Jesus became vulnerable to rejection, loss, suffering and death—the very things that make us human.

Nicodemus made his pilgrimage to Jesus at night because he was afraid of rejection. In his conversation with Jesus, Nicodemus wants to be in charge, to assert his knowledge. In response Jesus tells him that he needs to become like a child again, to become vulnerable. He thinks he knows about God, but Jesus suggests that he does not *know* God. To *know* God requires a level of vulnerability, an openness, an imagination, that Nicodemus has spent a lifetime putting behind him.

The Samaritan woman has experienced deep loss, sadness and vulnerability. Jesus' response is non-judgmental, yet expresses an understanding of her pain: the rejection, loss, vulnerability, and impermanence she has had to endure. Despite society having deemed her unpopular, or disposable, or unclean, Jesus welcomes her and calls her worthy, good, and important.

As we journey through life, Jesus sees us and knows the depth of our being. He sees our wounds and brokenness. Yet he wraps us in bandages of love. Like the Samaritan woman we have the opportunity to open our hearts to an encounter with Jesus. As we pause on our pilgrimage, God is with us as we sit resting at the roadside of life. God embraces each of us as we are—with all our strengths and weaknesses, and all our potential, realised and yet to become. He recognises our vulnerability and our desperate cry for living water.

Our ultimate guide is the Holy Spirit whose presence we discern in the unfolding of the journey and companionship of those we might not otherwise meet. Cultural and social barriers are eroded, perspectives widened and trust grows as we become informed by the stories of others. We gradually begin to trust these companions and our horizons are widened as a consequence. In this time of Lent, we are invited to reflect on the experience of the many people on the move throughout the world today.



### **Nicodemus' Pilgrimage:**

John 3: 14-21 Visits Jesus by night.

John 7: 50-52 Meeting of the Sanhedrin.

John 19: 38-42 Helps Joseph of Arimathea to put the body of Jesus in the tomb.

# The Samaritan Woman

Known as St Photini (The Enlightened One) in the Orthodox Church and celebrated as the first to proclaim the Gospel of Christ and equal to the Apostles.



## Discussion Starters:

1. What is our experience of meeting others on the journey of life? How have we opened our arms to the vulnerable, willing to let “the other” to be themselves, as they come into our space?
2. Who are those with whom I am sharing my Lenten journey and what am I hearing from their stories that evokes a response in my heart?
3. What does it mean to be separate and yet ‘one’ in the world today?

## A Reflection for Pilgrims:

Take some time to gather wisdom for the continuing journey:

What captured my attention?

What surprised me?

What moved me?

What changed me?

What is my hope for me and for my faith community?

What will I take home?

## We Refugees

*by Benjamin Zephaniah*

I come from a musical place  
Where they shoot me for my song  
And my brother has been tortured  
By my brother in my land.

I come from a beautiful place  
Where they hate my shade of skin  
They don't like the way I pray  
And they ban free poetry.

I come from a beautiful place  
Where girls cannot go to school  
There you are told what to believe  
And even young boys must grow beards.

I come from a great old forest  
I think it is now a field  
And the people I once knew  
Are not there now.

We can all be refugees  
Nobody is safe,  
All it takes is a mad leader  
Or no rain to bring forth food,  
We can all be refugees  
We can all be told to go,  
We can be hated by someone  
For being someone.

I come from a beautiful place  
Where the valley floods each year  
And each year the hurricane tells us  
That we must keep moving on.

I come from an ancient place  
All my family were born there  
And I would like to go there  
But I really want to live.

I come from a sunny, sandy place  
Where tourists go to darken skin  
And dealers like to sell guns there  
I just can't tell you what's the price.

I am told I have no country now  
I am told I am a lie  
I am told that modern history books  
May forget my name.

We can all be refugees  
Sometimes it only takes a day,  
Sometimes it only takes a handshake  
Or a paper that is signed.

We all came from refugees  
Nobody simply just appeared,  
Nobody's here without a struggle,  
And why should we live in fear  
Of the weather or the troubles?  
We all came here from somewhere.