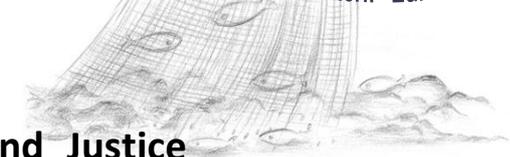




Journey of Enrichment

2011 - Year of Shared Spirituality

"Put out into deep water,
and let down the nets for a catch." Luke 5,4



Women and Justice

In this reflection on women and justice we will follow the *Spiritual Itinerary for Today with Saint John Eudes*, because it is an easy path to walk and it allows us to enjoy a rich heritage of personal and prophetic growth.

This itinerary consists of four movements:

1) A time for being open and receptive to accept the reality of the injustices suffered by women

The figures of inequality

103 years ago, 146 women died in the fire at a textile plant in New York, as they were fighting for the recognition of their rights, and 100 years ago, March the 8th was recognized as Women International Day. However, inequalities and unfair practices continue.

The majority of the 1,500 million people who live with less than a dollar per day, are women. In the entire world, women earn on average half of what men earn. Women with limited resources have to work from an early age; they have the highest number of children, earn the smallest amount of money and retire later from the labour market.

70% of poverty affects women, although they contribute to two thirds of the labour force in the world and earn barely 10% of the income. Women, who live in poverty, are often deprived of access to important critical resources such as loans, land and inheritance. 1,000 million people are illiterate, among whom 670 million are women.

Between 15% and 50% of women suffer physical abuse in their family circles. Each year in the world, at least 2 million girls between 5 and 10 years old are sold and bought as sexual slaves. With growing economic globalization, the trafficking of women coming from poorer countries to richer countries increases every year. People trafficking networks can recruit and transfer women legally or illegally to "slavery" for forced prostitution, work exploitation and domestic servitude.

It is estimated that 5000 girls were killed in 2009 in the name of community honor. Every two hours, a woman is stabbed, stoned, strangled or burnt alive to "save" the honor of the family. Every 7 minutes, a woman is beaten or suffers psychological or physical aggression from her spouse. In the world, 135 million girls and women have been victims of genital mutilation. This figure increases by 2 million each year (AI).

In the world, there are more women than men infected by aids (PNUD 2009). In sub-Saharan Africa for instance, women represent 57% of adults infected by the HIV (United Nations Population Fund 2009).

1. What impressions, what feelings do you experience when you read these figures? How do I feel in my heart as a consecrated woman fighting for the dignity and equality of women's rights?
2. Have I myself been a victim of injustice in the past: discrimination, marginalization, segregation, abuse?
3. Do I know if my country has signed and/or ratified the international agreements asking for the legal and penal sanction of trafficking, human slavery and abuse offenses? What are those agreements?

2) A time for contemplating and giving thanks for the loving attitude of Jesus towards the women of his time, which restored their dignity

"In an era when male chauvinism prevailed, Jesus' attitude was significant in establishing the dignity of women and their indisputable value. He spoke to them (cf. Jn 4,27); was merciful (cf. Lk 7,36-50), he healed them (cf. Mk 5,25-34) and reclaimed their right to dignity (Cf. Jn 8,1-11), he chose them as first witnesses of his Resurrection. He included women in the group of people who were closest to him (Cf. Lk 8,1-3)". (DA 451)¹

¹ DA: *Documento de Aparecida* (5th General Conference of the Episcopate of Latinoamerica and the Caribbean.)

The fact that Jesus chose them, welcomed them, loved them and treated them with respect and dignity made them feel they were human beings valued in the eyes of God. This consciousness unveiled latent possibilities for participating and becoming active in society, as responsible adults.

Through his equally respectful way of relating to all human beings, men, women, boys, girls, old men and women, Jesus shows us what "having life and having it more abundantly" means. (Jn 10,10).

In Mark's Gospel, please read, interiorize and reflect on the following quotes:

- ❖ **Mk 1,29-31.** Read carefully the verbs, what do they reveal of Jesus' attitude?
- ❖ **Mk 5,25-34.** How does this text appear as being important to women? What does it tell me about Jesus' consideration of women's body?
- ❖ **Mk 12,41-42.** In this quote, Mark shows us how Jesus was attentive and sensitive to the reality around him and how his refined sensitivity made him praise the widow's gift. I give thanks for all the widows I have met and for all that they taught me.

A time for being silent...

I give thanks to Jesus for his sensitivity, his loving, warm and respectful behaviour towards women, because he makes them "**visible**" in a patriarchal society where women's destiny was to remain in an inferior status of submission to men.

I read this psalm to women:

*God had not finished the universe, and in the sixth day he created her; he created the woman.
And God said: I will give you a compassionate heart; a free spirit to fly with the birds;
A body, to give birth to this world. I will give you wisdom, to know the great truth;
Strength to move mountains. I will give you delicacy to embrace the earth; passion to enflame the world;
Vision to respect the earth I shaped. I will give you natural joy to dance with the children;
Smiles to fill valleys; tears to clean the pain. I will give you hands to work and love;
Intuition to discover the unknown; desire to be what you were created for.
And God said: Woman, I created you as my image!!*

3) A time for living forgiveness

Read carefully:

The Sisters of OLC: Article no 36 of the Constitutions, on the vow of apostolic service

The Sisters of the GS: Articles 5 and 6 of the Constitutions

- ❖ Do I need to ask pardon at a personal or community level?
- ❖ What steps do I need to take towards a more decisive and prophetic commitment in favour of women who fight for their dignity and the recognition of their rights?

4) A time to renew your commitment on a personal and community level to work zealously in favour of the dignity and rights of vulnerable women and girls/boys.

- a. In community we can read, comment and look for alternatives to concretize this commitment on a personal and community level, *The documents on the position of the Good Shepherd* (www.buonpastoreint.org)

We finish the reflection with a prayer with Saint John Eudes:

Serving like Jesus

Lord Jesus, I am sent with You to love and lead people to love Your Father, accomplish Your will,
To serve with humble and passionate love, to make all lives an offering of love.
Give me Your grace to struggle against what prevents me in serving like You do
And make the love of our Father present to all.
Grant that your gift of true humility and your ardent charity may be reborn within me
Lord Jesus, I offer myself to You, Servant sent by the Father.

(From a text by St John Eudes OC I, p. 265-270)