

About a week or so ago I attended a diocesan wide workshop on addictions, and it brought me to a whole new meaning to the story we hear in the gospel today.

One of the presenters use the story of the women at the well to show how some of the traits of a person with an addiction would act, how we perceive and treat people with an addiction and how Christ would want us to act.

The Jews despised the Samaritans as much as the Samaritans despised them. To be seen with either would mean disgrace and to have a conversation with one or the other would mean being thrown out of their group.

The woman Jesus met at the well was not a model of propriety. Women of good repute would not have been at the town well at the time of day Jesus arrived. She had had five husbands when the law of Moses typically only allowed three. She also spoke with a man in public and without a male chaperone present. Today we might say that this woman had “issues.”

She and Jesus moved from conversation to a verbal duel of sorts. In this give and take her real thirst was made evident. At first she longed for the convenience of not having to draw water from the well every day, but she

soon understood that Jesus was offering something to quell the thirst evidenced by her many lapses in that culture's protocols concerning interaction between men and women.

The women of the town came in the morning or evening when it cooler and they could have time to visit with each other. The Samaritan woman goes to the well at the hottest time of the day, she wants to avoid others.

Jesus knows that she needs him and Jesus confronts the woman knowing exactly who she is and what she does. As she states "He has told me everything I have done". And yet He accepts her as she is and allows her to serve him.

She carries her jug with her, it is the symbol of her addiction and when she has it, it makes her feel safe. Something she can hide behind and use as an excuse to be out. It makes her bold to talk with Jesus a Jew.

After talking to Jesus she is brought face to face with her addiction and her fear, the fear that she felt that God could not forgive her. Jesus shows her

that she has the tools to let go of her sinful ways, just as she has the tools to get the water from the well.

Jesus gives her nothing but his acceptance of her as she is, and that all she needs to do is ask, and he will give the strength she needs to leave her water jug, her addiction at the well and return to her family. She is made whole and her recovery begins. She no longer needs her jug to hang on to and begins a new life. Her family sees the change in her and accepts her words.

The Gospel of Jesus speaking with the Samaritan woman at the well might offer us an opportunity this Lent to consider our own sins of addictions, whether it be alcohol, drugs, or sex. It could be an addiction to be a workaholic and compulsive shopper or the gambler. It could be that we use exercise, TV, texting as a way to escape from being with others and avoid having a personal relationship with those who are not like us.

It also helps us to see that if we also ignore those who have the addiction

that we actually add to it. There are times we also must have the strength to intervene and bring that person's addiction to the forefront The New Testament is clear that Jesus came to save all who would believe in him. Any missionary effort of the church cannot be limited to just "those people over there."

Just as Jesus spoke with the woman he met at the well, we are invited by God to speak with those whom we meet in our neighborhoods, our stores, our towns, and our churches about the Savior of the world.

Jesus had such an effect on the Samaritan woman that she went into the town and told the people, "Come see a man who told me everything I have done."

Does our belief in him have that same effect on us? Can we put aside anything that separates us from someone else and say, "Come and see this man. Come and learn about Jesus"?

Today take some time out of your busyness to come to the well and spend some quiet time with your Lord, who knows everything about you, and accepts you as you are. It is there he will give you a drink from the well of everlasting life.

