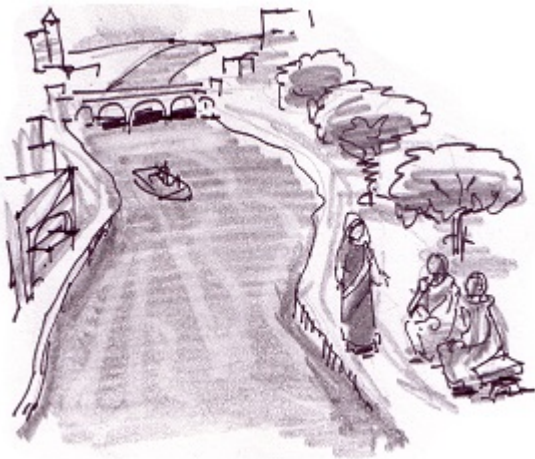


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May 22, 2022

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"You have been with me from the beginning" (John 15:27).

[Acts 16:11-15; Jn 15:26—16:4a](#)

Rivers, as actual and as metaphor, are places of confluence and movement. People think differently and more deeply down by the river because permanence is passing by. The invitation to go with the flow to where it empties, or against it to the source, is always implicit. Our souls feel the fluidity of life near a river. A body of water is like a mother who rebirths and reminds us where we came from and where we are going.

Paul and Barnabas go down to the river in Philippi, knowing it is a natural place of prayer and reflection. They meet Lydia, a woman whose heart is already open to the Word, and in the natural flow of holy conversation she hears the same Spirit inviting her to offer her household as a faith community. "Come and stay with me," she says to the Apostles.

With these same words, Jesus invited the first two disciples who followed him from the river where John was baptizing, to come and stay with him, to come and see where he lived. This beginning of the Good News is repeated each time the Word flows forward into new lives. As the Chosen People were born passing through the waters of the Exodus, and as they entered the Promised Land by crossing the Jordan River, so we grow each time we progress through the waters of our baptism.

With each crossing our spirits surrender the past and welcome the future, moving toward newness, an ever changing promise of deeper life. It begins with our decision to go down to the river and enter the flow. This is the most important decision we will ever make.

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