

Experience

I was attending a training programme on 'Safeguarding Policy' organized by the congregational (Our Lady of the Charity of the Good Shepherd) facilitation team. Almost at the end of the training, the participants were asked to bring out their reflection on safeguarding through their creative art. Colour papers, clay, crayons, sketch pens, quarter plates and tissue papers were provided as tools. I was worried, perplexed and confused initially because drawing is not my cup of tea.

As I took my private place in the hall, suddenly a thought came to the surface of my mind. 'Why not my own spectacle' to share my reflection? I used my own specs to draw the outline. And I titled my drawing with the caption "Looking Beyond." The reflection derived from the drawing was this.

My spectacle is a tool for me to see the distance which is a sign of farsightedness. It is also transparent therefore there is clarity in what I see. It is also a tool to break barrier of weakness which is a sign of possibilities. There are many more meanings attached to it. But, only three of them were chosen as they were more appealing to me. Spectacle which is taken at times for

granted gave insights to the training attended and I was able to connect it for my further implementation of the 'safeguard policy' in our work places.

It gave me a vision to apply safeguarding not only to those within my circle but beyond. It led me to a deeper meaning of safeguarding policy that it includes everyone in a vulnerable situation. I take a call to ensure safety for those in my care recognising their worth and dignity. To break the barrier of weakness is to grab the opportunities to become the voice of the voiceless.

St. Mary Euphrasia Pelletier, the foundress of the Religious of the Good Shepherd Congregation imbibed this spirit of safeguarding from her family who cared for the victims of French revolution. She wanted to nourish her desire by joining such congregation whose mission was to empower women and girls and all those who are in vulnerable situations. The congregation of Our Lady of Charity founded by St. Jonh Eudes who catered to the needs of the times was an inspiration to her. She heard the divine calling and responded to commit herself to safeguard the victims of injustice. She exclaimed, "one person is more precious than the whole world," after being inspired by Jesus the Good Shepherd who went after the lost one, leaving the ninety nine that were within the safe environment.

'Looking beyond' originates from an attitude of a compassionate heart. For, persons with such hearts only could break barriers and look at persons as persons. This attitude helps us to appreciate the worth and dignity of the other person particularly the vulnerable irrespective of their religion,



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nationality, caste, class, creed, gender etc. It appreciates the beauty in them as they are created in the image and likeness God, our loving the father and mother.

Jesus, our Master-teacher, invites us to break the barriers of our socio-cultural and ethnic mind-set that separates us from our basic and fundamental identity as his brothers and sisters. His powerful life-examples sets model to us to be practiced in this aspect. He related and accepted persons in vulnerable situations regardless of their background with compassion and empathy. He was able to go beyond his socio-cultural conditions to look beyond, the people at the periphery. Samaritan woman at the well, woman caught in adultery, his encounter with Matthew, the tax collector, Zacchaeus who climbed tree, wanting to see Jesus etc... are some of the narrations in the Gospels, where Jesus reaches out to persons in distress. We also see them fully transformed once those vulnerable had encountered with Jesus. He is inviting each one of us to sense the need of the time, at every historical moment, and explore possibilities to become the embodiment of hope.

This Jesus' attitude of looking beyond is very much needed in this globalised and capitalistic world which promotes consumeristic culture. It looks at a person as a commodity (to be used). In this context, we, all of us, particularly the teachers, educationists, mentors, religious, priests, administrators, all professionals, and all who are serving in such places need to develop such looking beyond mind-set and attitude. It is both the need of the hour and invitation of Jesus. Let us throw away the mask that we put on and embrace their vulnerability by ensuring support and safety. ◆

Looking Beyond

