

Wedding in Cana – and the community in Cameroon - April Beckerleg 12/01/2024

We are, as we have often said, called in many different ways, but we are all called. Our Gospel story today, the wedding in Cana, shows this. We have this story in Epiphany because it is a revealing of who Christ is, but it reveals far more than that. This first miracle was performed in the heart of the community, a wedding. And in those days a wedding was a community event – something that mattered to the whole community, not just the small gathering of family and friends. One of my favourite parts of this story is the role of Mary. It seems as if it was she that saw this was the moment – that a gentle nudge from her was needed – and the story shows that he did need it – it didn't seem to have occurred to him – his reply 'why are you telling me this, what has it got to do with me?' – and the fact that she doesn't reply – she just leaves that thought with him – total trust – it is so perfectly judged – she had played her part, and just turns to the others -do what he says, and melts away. The story makes it clear that not everyone knew what had happened – many of the guests wouldn't have even known there was any kind of wine crisis. The bridegroom didn't suffer the terrible shame of not providing enough for his guests, and the only people who knew were the servants, the least important – and this is such a correlation for how the church works – how much happens under the radar, quietly, without great fanfare, just people making the world a better place, each of us playing our part.

Today we will spend some time considering what kind of church God is calling us to be in our open meeting. In all this we remember that the church is not separate from her members. When we talk of church we do not say 'them' we say 'we'. Each of us is called to play our part – and we know that so well at St Nicolas, we have so many people doing so many wonderful things – demonstrating lives of commitment and faith.

Last year one of the themes that emerged from the open meeting was a blurring of boundaries, the idea that church and community aren't kept separate – and I think today's gospel story really illustrates that perfectly. Jesus wasn't confined to the religious places, he was right in the heart of the community where people were, doing something under the radar, almost unnoticed, but something that made a real difference. Each of us carry the rest of our lives into church, and we carry church with us out into the world.

This looks very different for many of us, and it is always wonderful when we get to hear about what is on people's hearts. At St Nicolas we are very much a church which looks outwards, and this is reflected in the actions of many of our members. Last year Lyndsey talked about her trip to Palestine to plant olive trees, and today we have Jo talking about Cameroon.

I think we all know that there are many places where conflicts go unremarked by the world's media. I know that I often feel that there are many issues which I feel I am not fully informed. We hold in prayer all those affected by armed conflict, those who are discriminated against, and places where the complexities of different groups cannot be summed up in a single sound byte.

The continuing conflict in Ukraine, and of course the terrible violence in Gaza and Israel continue to be subjects of our prayers. We are very aware of the suffering of all concerned. But we are perhaps aware that it is easier to keep these issues at the forefront of our minds when they are in the news, and that there are lesser known conflicts and suffering which are not in our minds. We know that God's vision for the world is one of peace among all nations, for a world where all may flourish and suffering cease.