

## The Third Sunday of Epiphany –24<sup>th</sup> January 2021



On this 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday in Epiphany we hear of Jesus' first miracle, the changing of water into wine, we meet Jesus at the very start of His ministry.

Today also marks the Sunday in the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. As part of this, today we will begin our worship with a short liturgy mostly taken from the excellent resources put together by Churches Together in Britain and Ireland but with the addition of music sung by Joe Fernandes, taken from an excellent video, prepared especially for this week of prayer and posted by the Society of Pilar Bhopal, a charity working with children and young people and associated with the Catholic church in Bhopal, India.

The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity in 2021 has been prepared by the Monastic Community of Grandchamp in Switzerland. The theme is "Abide in my love and you shall bear much fruit", it expresses Grandchamp Community's vocation to prayer, reconciliation and unity in the Church and the human family. The Grandchamp Community has its origins in Europe in the 1930s, when a group of women of the Reformed tradition sought to rediscover the importance of silence and listening to the Word of God. Today the community has fifty sisters, all women from different generations, Church traditions, countries and continents. They remain faithful to a life of prayer, life in community and the welcoming of guests. The sisters share the grace of their monastic life with visitors and volunteers who go to Grandchamp for a time of retreat, silence, healing or in search of meaning.

### Collect for the day

Almighty God, whose Son revealed in signs and miracles the wonder of your saving presence: renew your people with your heavenly grace, and in all our weakness sustain us by your mighty power; through Jesus

Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen

### Psalms 128

Happy is everyone who fears the LORD, who walks in his ways.

<sup>2</sup> You shall eat the fruit of the labour of your hands;  
you shall be happy, and it shall go well with you.

<sup>3</sup> Your wife will be like a fruitful vine within your house;  
your children will be like olive shoots around your table.

<sup>4</sup> Thus shall the man be blessed who fears the LORD.

<sup>5</sup> The LORD bless you from Zion.

May you see the prosperity of Jerusalem all the days of your life.

<sup>6</sup> May you see your children's children. Peace be upon Israel!

### A reading from the Revelation to John

<sup>6</sup> Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the sound of many waters and like the sound of mighty thunder peals, crying out,

"Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns.

<sup>7</sup> Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory,  
for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready; <sup>8</sup> to her it has been granted to be clothed  
with fine linen, bright and pure"— for the fine linen is the righteous  
deeds of the saints.

<sup>9</sup> And the angel said to me, "Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb." And he said to me, "These are true words of God." <sup>10</sup> Then I fell down at his feet to worship him, but he said to me, "You must not do that! I am a fellow servant with you and your comrades who hold the testimony of Jesus. Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."



Stained glass window designed and made by Adam Goodyear for  
St Matthews Church, Bankfoot, Bradford

### A reading from the Gospel according to John

**2** On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. **2** Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. **3** When the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to him, "They have no wine." **4** And Jesus said to her, "Woman, what concern is that to you and to me? My hour has not yet come." **5** His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you." **6** Now standing there were six stone water jars for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. **7** Jesus said to them, "Fill the jars with water." And they filled them up to the brim. **8** He said to them, "Now draw some out, and take it to the chief steward." So they took it. **9** When the steward tasted the water that had become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the steward called the bridegroom **10** and said to him, "Everyone serves the good wine first, and then the inferior wine after the guests have become drunk. But you have kept the good wine until now." **11** Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee, and revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.

Words from Fr Rodney

What is a miracle ? This is a question I have asked myself throughout my ministry. I have gradually come to the conclusion that there are at least two kinds of miracles, those for which there is a possible explanation, and those for which there is no explanation except that they are 'miracles'. Our gospel reading for today is one for which there seems to be no simple explanation ! But does the miracle just lie in Jesus turning the water into wine, or as St. John indicates does it more importantly point to something about who Jesus is in this His first miracle ? It may well be that Jesus did indeed turn the water into wine, but what was also important was that He transformed what would have been seen as sign of disapproval from God of this marriage, into something that was an even greater sign of His blessing. The very controversial Bishop of Durham, the late Bishop David Jenkins, taught me many things and one of them was to look for God at work in what most people would regard as very ordinary things, rather than just in the miraculous situations. When it came to this first miracle at Cana in Galilee, he would have said not just to focus on the miracle of the changing of water into wine, but the greater miracle of transforming what would have been seen as a sign of God's disapproval into an even greater blessing because Jesus was there ! So here is a message for us today, to have Jesus as a living part of our lives not only blesses our lives, but can even transform potential disasters into even greater blessings !

### *Intercessions*

Let us pray

As we come together at the end of a week focusing on Christian unity, we think of Christians throughout the world also worshiping in many languages and contexts, reminding us that there is unity in the midst of our different traditions. We pray today that this unity inspires us to work together for a better understanding and acceptance of one another, so that we may be the example of tolerance and reconciliation that you would want us to be. We ask you to bless the efforts of all those working for unity within our own Christian communities and beyond and we thank you for the opportunity we have had these past months to share our faith with other churches and traditions, praying that these links remain strong in the future. Amen

Today we bring before you our world in desperate need of unity and reconciliation at this time. We pray that we are able to build bridges with

peoples of other faiths and non, working together to tear down the walls of indifference and hatred that so blight our world today. We ask you to bless our own government and leaders throughout the nations with the wisdom and will to work for justice and solidarity. Today we also pray particularly for the new leadership of the United States as they try to heal the divisions that have caused so much pain in recent times. Amen

Today we pray for our families, friends and neighbours and thank you for all the many examples of people working in unity for the good of others that we have witnessed this week. We ask you to bless those who have volunteered to deliver the vaccine within our communities, those who work in our local health and social services and all those key workers sustaining our daily lives at the moment. We pray for their safety and the safety of their loved ones. As our lockdown continues we ask your blessings on all those we cannot see and in the words of Amanda Gorman's timely poem, help us to draw strength from the hope that 'in this time of everlasting shade....'our common faith reminds us... 'There is always light, if only we are brave enough to see it, if only we are brave enough to be it.' Amen

Today father we bring before you those who are suffering in body, mind or spirit especially all those who are suffering from the pandemic, those who care for them and their loved ones, those who are lonely, anxious and in pain, as well as any we wish to pray for particularly today ....

We also ask for your blessings on the vaccination roll out and pray that it safely and effectively helps us in our fight against the virus. Amen

Finally Father, we remember today all those who have gone before us, those who have died recently, especially in the pandemic, those whose anniversaries are around this time and any we wish to pray for today... we thank you for their love, friendship and our memories of them and we pray for comfort and peace for their loved ones. Finally, remembering God's gift of hope brought to us in the form of his son, we ask that they rest in peace and rise in glory. Amen

*In a moment of silence we bring your own prayers to God*

The Lords prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name;  
thy kingdom come; thy will be done; on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.  
And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, forever and ever.  
Amen.

*Liturgy for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity*

God of life, you have created every human being in your image and likeness. We sing your praise for the gift of our many cultures, expressions of faith, traditions and ethnicities. Grant us the courage always to stand against injustice and hatred based on race, class, gender, religion, and fear of those not like ourselves.

**ALL: God of peace, God of love, in you is our hope!**

Merciful God, you have shown us in Christ that we are one in you. Teach us to use this gift in the world so that believers of all faiths in every country may be able to listen to each other and live in peace:

**All: God of peace, God of love, in you is our hope!**

O Jesus, you came into the world and shared fully in our humanity. You know the hardships of life for people who suffer in so many different ways. May the Spirit of compassion move us to share our time, life and goods with all those in need.

**All: God of peace, God of love, in you is our hope!**

Holy Spirit, you hear the fury of your wounded creation and the cries of those already suffering from climate change. Guide us toward new behaviours. May we learn to live in harmony as part of your creation.

**All: God of peace, God of love, in you is our hope!**

*Today we end with a blessing typically used by the Sisters of the Grandchamp Community.*

Be one, so that the world may believe! Abide in God's love, go into the world and bear the fruits of this love. May the God of hope fill us with all joy and all peace in faith, so that we may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.  
Amen.