

# NAMBUCCA VALLEY ANGLICANS WORSHIP at HOME

Epiphany 2  
16.01.2022

## SUPPLEMENT

### SENTENCE, COLLECT, READINGS & HOMILY for today 16 January 2022

The primary message of Christmas, first heard by the shepherds is peace and goodwill. Sadly, this message will always remain an elusive dream while we remain so disinclined to rise to the human nature shown to us in Jesus. Wealth, power, prestige, competition, and pride seem always more attractive. Jesus is then the intersecting person, or the intersecting point. In him humanity and divinity intersect. In him time and eternity intersect. In him the transitional and eternal intersect. It should be the business of all humans to nourish the unity of soul and body, to seek reality beyond material acquisition and to celebrate this moment in the context of what endures.

When the Australian indigenous community confronted Christianity 200+ years ago the experience for them was less than edifying. Not much light here. If on the other hand, there had been genuine reverence and respect for culture, the outcome could have been very different. Is it too much of a stretch to imagine that Christianity and indigenous culture could have met at the intersection of "Song Lines"?

And so, what of Christmas this year. Meet and celebrate as a family? – absolutely. Share gifts with one another? – certainly. Better still, contribute to the wellbeing of the marginalised in any way possible.

The overriding emotion of Christmas should be awe and wonder. No wonder adults love to be in the presence of children during this holy season for children are much better at awe and wonder than adults. It would be wonderful if the Church could find a way of setting the scene for such awe. It is unsurprising that Cathedrals with wonderful music, lights, and ceremony come into their own at this time.

However, for many, perhaps most Australians, connection with formalised Christian faith is a bridge too far. But it should not be impossible through music, the natural environment, imagination, storytelling, perhaps some quiet reflection before the prawns are shelled, to put life into perspective. Each one of us are both insignificant, and precious. This moment is nothing within the sweep of history, but it is a moment that will never come again.

Today is the moment to love and be loved. The celebration of Christmas is the celebration of humanity in the embrace of divinity.

Celebrate well.

Blessed Christmas to all.



**The Marriage Feast at Cana**  
by Juan de Flandes 1500–04  
Netherlandish  
Metropolitan Museum  
New York

This was one of forty-seven panels representing the lives of Christ and the Virgin that were made for Isabella of Castile. It represents the marriage feast at Cana, when Christ performed his first miracle turning water into wine. Traditionally, the bride and groom are identified as Saint John the Evangelist and Mary Magdalen. Here the two quite possibly are disguised portraits of Prince Juan, and Isabella's daughter-in-law, Margaret of Austria, who married in 1497. Looking in from the courtyard at the left may be the portrait of a court functionary or possibly a self-portrait of the artist.

## Second Sunday after Epiphany

## Sentence

Jesus revealed his glory, and his disciples believed in him.

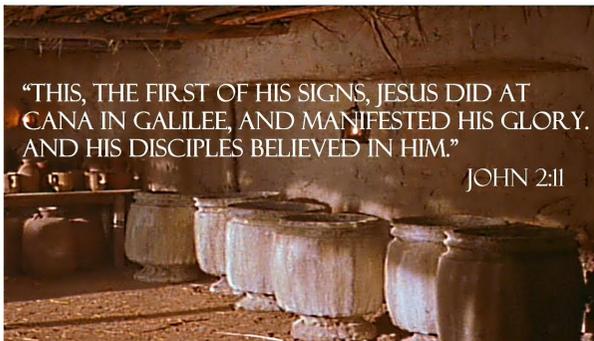
John 2:11

## Collect Prayer of the Day

**Bountiful God,**  
whose Son revealed his glory at Cana of Galilee:  
help us to believe and obey,  
so that, as our Saviour promised,  
we may be filled with the wine of new life  
and show forth his joy and love;  
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever. Amen.

## Collect Prayer of the Week

**Almighty God,**  
by whose grace alone we are accepted  
and called to your service:  
strengthen us by your Holy Spirit  
and make us worthy of our calling;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.



presents, cards, decorations, family meals, and pictures of snow. Navigating through, let alone evaluating the merits of these images, is no simple task! May I suggest a very good starting point is to be found in the date chosen for the celebration of Christ's birthday, probably in the 4th century during the reign of Constantine. There is no way of knowing which day Christ was born, so why this date?

In the northern hemisphere, around the winter solstice, there was a pagan celebration of light vanquishing darkness as the shortest day passed and the prospect of growing light lay in front. Many, if not most Jewish and Christian festivals have their roots in lived contexts, often pagan festivals which were appropriately absorbed and given new meaning. (Celebrating the local accent and culture should always be part of Christian living. It is shameful that in the last 200 years Christianity has more often been a significant weapon of colonisation). As the Torres Strait Islanders were to celebrate centuries later, the coming of Christ and the coming of Light can be understood as coterminous. How so?

The Gospel writers, but especially John, constantly use the image of light to convey growth, new understanding, insight, wholeness, indeed life itself. So, what is it about the coming of Jesus that conveys such new understanding that history itself has been attuned to his birth, years preceding and years following.

First it is the astonishing revelation that whatever we think God is like, we must rethink, because God cannot be other than the nature we see in Jesus. So: God is near. The divine energy we call God is in the business of restoration, redemption, forgiveness, inclusiveness, community, honouring all, even the most unlovely. This revelation was as shocking to the 1st century as it is today where images of God are often partisan, tribal, about power, prestige, and exclusivity. As JB Phillips famously said, 'your God is too small'.

Equally astonishing is the light shone on the true nature of humanity – for as Christian credal affirmation confirms, Jesus is both 'true God' and 'true man'. The popular image of humanity to be desired or admired in the 21st century, as in the 1st century, has not changed much. Power and prestige are sought and honoured. Success is measured through wealth. Winning is everything, losing is shameful. The revelation or light of Jesus turns this understanding on its head. Servanthood, regardless of vocation or status, is demonstrated as the mark of true humanity. Above all real leaders are servants. True humanity is to be cherished not through accumulation or achievement but through quality of living. We are who we are not because of individual identity, but because of who we are in relation to everyone and everything else. The Australian political scene, especially that part of it which identifies as Christian would do well to read, mark and learn this reality.

## PRAYER

Almighty God, whose Son our Savior Jesus Christ is the light of the world: Grant that thy people, illumined by thy Word and sacraments, may shine with the radiance of Christ's glory, that he may be known, worshiped, and obeyed to the ends of the earth; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who with thee and the Holy Spirit liveth and reigneth, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

Rutledge, Fleming. Means of Grace: A Year of Weekly Devotions (pp. 64-65). Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.. Kindle Edition.

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As the previous Homily was not long, I have included retired Bp George Browning's reflection below, as we take a last look back at Christmas, before we set our eyes towards Holy Week and the Cross.

### **The True Meaning of Christmas** by George Browning

#### **Light has come into the world and the dark has not put it out**

When a little child accuses his grandfather of swearing because he had mentioned Jesus in conversation, we can have some idea of how far Western culture has fallen from any real understanding of the Christian narrative! Indeed, it is more likely in Western culture, that Christianity will be belittled and made more fun of than other world religions. Care is generally taken not to offend Islam or Judaism, while Eastern religions are regarded as safe 'go to' destinations for those who seek meditation, mysticism or simply a meaningful 'religious' experience. It may well be the case that the fault lies with the perceived behaviour of those who claim to be Christian, but more likely that recent generations of adults have not grown past the literalism they heard in their infant and primary nurture - if they have heard the Christian message at all. In any case, the familiarity 'that breeds contempt' is in fact a false familiarity – it is in truth a lack of any real understanding or knowledge.

So, what of Christmas?

Christmas is adorned with two image groupings. The first group are largely biblical and include a manger, camels, gold, frankincense, myrrh, sages from the East, angels and shepherds. The second group are accretions over the ages and from different, but largely European countries: Santa Claus, fir trees, carols,

## THE MINISTRY OF THE WORD

### Reading from the Old Testament: **Isaiah 62:1-5**

- 1 For Zion's sake I will not keep silent, for Jerusalem's sake I will not remain quiet, till her vindication shines out like the dawn, her salvation like a blazing torch.
- 2 The nations will see your vindication, and all kings your glory; you will be called by a new name that the mouth of the Lord will bestow.
- 3 You will be a crown of splendour in the Lord's hand, a royal diadem in the hand of your God.
- 4 No longer will they call you Deserted, or name your land Desolate. But you will be called Hephzibah, and your land Beulah; for the Lord will take delight in you, and your land will be married.
- 5 As a young man marries a young woman, so will your Builder marry you; as a bridegroom rejoices over his bride, so will your God rejoice over you.

## Psalm 36:5-10

- <sup>5</sup> Your unfailing kindness, O Lord, is in the heavens:  
**and your faithfulness reaches to the clouds.**
- <sup>6</sup> Your righteousness is like the strong mountains:  
**and your justice as the great deep;  
you, O Lord, save both man and beast.**
- <sup>7</sup> How precious, O God, is your enduring kindness:  
**the children of Adam shall take refuge  
under the shadow of your wings.**
- <sup>8</sup> They shall be satisfied with the good things of your house:  
**and you will give them drink  
from the river of your delights.**
- <sup>9</sup> For with you is the well of life:  
**and in your light shall we see light.**
- <sup>10</sup> O continue your merciful kindness  
toward these who know you:  
**and your righteous dealing to those  
that are true of heart.**

I want you to feel this in your inmost being. What has Jesus done? Twenty-one hundred glasses of the finest vintage for one little wedding party in a backwater village! What does this mean? It is the Gospel of John that gives us Jesus's words, "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly" (10:10). The wine so freely given represents Jesus's gift of himself. Every Jew in Jesus's time knew that the wedding feast, throughout the Hebrew Bible, was the primary image of salvation, the banquet of redemption in the kingdom of God. And so when Jesus, at a wedding, poured out more good wine than anyone had ever seen, those who had eyes to see and ears to hear recognized that the future blessings of the heavenly kingdom had become present in the miracle of Jesus. "This," John writes, "the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory; and his disciples believed in him."

Jesus sees our predicament. He hears our news—the wine has run out, and we are still in our sins. He sees us, he sees our whole society, he sees the whole world full of disease and violence and cruelty and death, afflicted with conditions that religious rituals have never been able to improve. He sees us, he loves us, and he has come to pour out his life for us. The message of Christmas was that the Son of God is born among us. The message of Epiphany is that the Son of God is powerful to save. Whenever you find yourself asking, "Is that all there is?" remember: *no, it is not all*. There is the promise of God through faith in Jesus Christ, and that is everything.

And please understand this: the promise of Jesus does not refer only to some far-off future day. He gives his life to us now, not a life of conspicuous consumption ending in emptiness, but a life of service to others and to God's suffering world, a life that is built not on chasing dreams and fantasies, but being built by the Holy Spirit into a fellowship of love that gathers even now at the Lord's table. He, the only begotten, the Messiah of Israel, is the one, the only one who is able to give purification, the only one who is able to wipe away regret forever, the only one in whose name we find ourselves redeemed and restored and brought into an eternal future where there will be no need to search for dreams, because the dream of all humanity is summed up in the cross and in the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. He goes to prepare a place for us at his own unending banquet. May he confirm this truth in your heart, today and forever.

That's an exceptionally poignant and candid summary of the regret at the heart of human life. I do not believe there is anyone today, however well defended, who does not recognize the creeping chill of that feeling—"there should have been more to it all." And when this feeling assails us, when this sense of having been deprived gnaws at us, we take refuge in all sorts of escapes; we buy something and charge it, we drink, we pop a pill, we grab for sexual adventure, we throw a lavish party, we read the latest self-help book or go to the guru of the moment.

In today's reading from John's Gospel, we discover Jesus at a wedding where the wine has run out. We can imagine the dismayed host saying, "Is that all there is?"

There's something else wrong at the wedding at Cana in Galilee. There are those water pots standing by for the Jewish rite of purification. They are "a reminder that all is not well and that there is a need greater than that of a further supply of wine." 12 Water from them is used for the washing away of sin. It is used, but it doesn't work. It is tasteless and colorless and joyless, and it doesn't take away sin. The Epistle to the Hebrews tells us that religious rituals "can never ... make perfect those who draw near.... In these sacrifices [these purifications] there is a reminder of sin year after year" (Heb. 10:1-3). The water in the story represents all our human attempts, and especially our religious attempts, to make things right.

Jesus says, "Fill the jars with water." This is a big order. Each jar held 15 to 25 gallons, and there were 6 jars. At a minimum, then, we are talking about 90 gallons. Most scholars suggest at least 120 gallons. If there are 4 quarts to a gallon and each quart yields 6 glasses, that's a minimum total of 2,160 glasses. The servants, trusting Jesus, haul this huge amount of water and fill the jars. Jesus says, "Now draw some out, and take it to the steward of the feast."

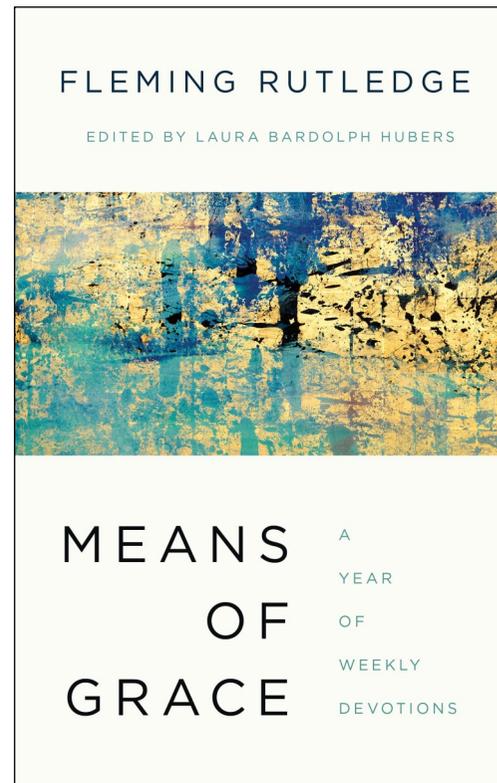
The evangelist John is a great storyteller. He doesn't bore us by saying anything so pedestrian as "The steward tasted the water and discovered that it had turned into wine." Instead, the next thing we hear is the steward's exuberant shout to the host, congratulating him: "Everybody else I know puts the good wine out first and then when people's taste buds are shot, they bring out the cheap stuff. But you have kept back your good wine until now!"

## New Testament Reading: **I Corinthians 12:1-11**

- 1 Now about the gifts of the Spirit, brothers and sisters, I do not want you to be uninformed.
- 2 You know that when you were pagans, somehow or other you were influenced and led astray to dumb idols.
- 3 Therefore I want you to know that no one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says, 'Jesus be cursed,' and no one can say, 'Jesus is Lord,' except by the Holy Spirit.
- 4 There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them.
- 5 There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord.
- 6 There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work.
- 7 Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.
- 8 To one there is given through the Spirit a message of wisdom, to another a message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit,
- 9 to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit,
- 10 to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues.
- 11 All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines.

## Gospel of John 2:1-11

- 1 On the third day a wedding took place at Cana in Galilee. Jesus' mother was there,
- 2 and Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding.
- 3 When the wine was gone, Jesus' mother said to him, 'They have no more wine.'
- 4 'Woman, why do you involve me?' Jesus replied. 'My hour has not yet come.'
- 5 His mother said to the servants, 'Do whatever he tells you.'
- 6 Nearby stood six stone water jars, the kind used by the Jews for ceremonial washing, each holding from eighty to a hundred and twenty litres.
- 7 Jesus said to the servants, 'Fill the jars with water'; so they filled them to the brim.
- 8 Then he told them, 'Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet.' They did so,
- 9 and the master of the banquet tasted the water that had been turned into wine. He did not realise where it had come from, though the servants who had drawn the water knew. Then he called the bridegroom aside
- 10 and said, 'Everyone brings out the choice wine first and then the cheaper wine after the guests have had too much to drink; but you have saved the best till now.'
- 11 What Jesus did here in Cana of Galilee was the first of the signs through which he revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.



The following homily is taken from **MEANS of GRACE** by Revd Fleming Rutledge. Pictured above on the right with her editor Laura Bardolph Huber.

It's always good to hear an address from someone different. Enjoy.

### John 2:1-11

When the steward of the feast tasted the water now become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the steward of the feast called the bridegroom and said to him, "Every man serves the good wine first; and when men have drunk freely, then the poor wine; but you have kept the good wine until now." —JOHN 2:9-10

I often read the personal ads in magazines. Nowhere will you find a more comprehensive index of human longing. The wittiest and most literary ones are, predictably, in the New York Review of Books. Here is my all-time favorite:

Reflecting over the past, it seems at mid-life that there's not much more time to search for dreams. Married man of means and mien looks for a woman who feels that there should have been more to it all. Age and marital status unimportant. Discretion assured.