

## ST. MARY OF NAZARETH /ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI – WEST WICKHAM

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

**Hazel writes:** Many in our congregations are facing difficult times at the moment and it's going to be some time before we will be able to get back to our normal ways of supporting others. Please do pray and keep in contact with those who you know who are struggling, assuring them of God's love and care.

**Sunday 31st January at 10am - Candlemas.** Next Sunday morning we will have a service without communion, focusing on Jesus as the light of the world. We will be using Zoom and a meeting invitation has been sent out with the pew sheet to give the log-in details. A video of the service will be available on-line later in the day, from 1pm, for those who are unable to do Zoom and the sermon will be printed in the pew sheet as normal for those not on-line. We will be blessing any candles that you want to use in your times of prayer at home, or as a symbol of hope during the year ahead. Please have any candles that you would like to have blessed with you at the meeting and the means of lighting one of these at the very end of the service. Afterwards there will also be the opportunity to stay for a chat in smaller groups.

**Apologies** to anyone who tried to get into the retreat on Sunday evening using the link and ID circulated last week. I failed to change the details from a previous meeting, and it was all incorrect. Unfortunately, we did not record the meeting, but if you would like to receive the PowerPoint slides and a link to the music included, do let me know.  
Hazel.

**Resources and updates for the week ahead** – A video of the service has been posted to the websites for today. All other files have been combined and posted as a pew sheet which has been sent on paper to those who have told us that they are not on-line.

Other worship and resources that you might want to listen to or look at on Sunday:

- The Church of England's national virtual service will be available on their website at [www.churchofengland.org](http://www.churchofengland.org).
- The BBC have the following programmes to watch and listen to:
  - Sunday Worship at 8.10am on Radio 4 – A service marking Holocaust Memorial with members of Rose Castle Foundation.
  - Choral Evensong at 3pm on Radio 3 from the Church of the London Oratory.
  - **BBC2 at 1.15 p.m.** Songs of Praise mark 60 years with Aled Jones and Pam Rhodes recalling special moments.

Please bring **Foodbank donations** to the Vicarage or St Francis' Church. Currently they need UHT Milk (Urgent) Fruit Juice (Urgent), cold meat, vegetables (particularly carrots), desserts, shaving gel/razors. There are large stocks of Pasta, rice, beans, soup, cereals, tea and toilet rolls and these items are politely discouraged at the present time. Thank you for your continuing support.

Each week our **"coffee/tea & chat"** on Thursday at 2.30 pm is an opportunity to share with others. It is just 40 minutes and you don't need to commit to joining each week. Please let Rowena ([rowena.griff19@btinternet.com](mailto:rowena.griff19@btinternet.com) /020 8777 6112) know if you would like the log-in details.

**Free offer of material.** Someone with a connection to our churches is sorting out some items and has 22 rolls (yards & yards) of various materials to donate to someone, or an organisation which would be able to use them. If you have any ideas of who might be able to use these, or if you'd like to see pictures of them before offering a connection, please let Hazel know, so that we can facilitate this.

Just before Christmas we had a note of thanks from Amanda Stone at the **Bromley Borough Foodbank:**

Your help is essential to the work we do as we strive to assist people with the underlying issues which have brought them to a crisis point and to help them find ways to maximise their income so they can break free from needing to rely on food aid. We thank you again for partnering with us and take this opportunity to wish you a happier year in 2021.

The Rotary Club is offering FREE **Work Club workshops** to help with a job search on-line via Zoom. They all run from 10-11am on the following dates:

- Weds 27<sup>th</sup> Jan – CV writing
- Thur 4<sup>th</sup> Feb – Job search
- Fri 12<sup>th</sup> Feb – Interview skills
- Weds 17<sup>th</sup> Feb – Ace your LinkedIn profile
- Thur 25<sup>th</sup> Feb – Start your own business

To book your place, email [rotaryworkclub@gmail.com](mailto:rotaryworkclub@gmail.com)

Any items for the joint pew sheet to Beryl [bbolton@ntlworld.com](mailto:bbolton@ntlworld.com) and items for the websites to [brian.griff19@btinternet.com](mailto:brian.griff19@btinternet.com) or Gifty [office@stmarywestwickham.co.uk](mailto:office@stmarywestwickham.co.uk).

**Collect**

God of all mercy,  
 your Son proclaimed good  
 news to the poor,  
 release to the captives,  
 and freedom to the  
 oppressed:  
 anoint us with your Holy  
 Spirit and set all your  
 people free to praise you  
 in Christ our Lord.

**First Reading:**

**Revelation 19: - 6- 10**

<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.’

**Gospel: John 2: 1-11**

On the third day there was a  
 wedding in Cana of Galilee,  
 and the mother of Jesus was  
 there.<sup>2</sup> Jesus and his disciples  
 had also been invited to the  
 wedding.<sup>3</sup> When the wine  
 gave out, the mother of Jesus  
 said to him, ‘They have no  
 wine.’<sup>4</sup> And Jesus said to her,  
 ‘Woman, what concern is  
 that to you and to me? My  
 hour has not yet come.’<sup>5</sup> His  
 mother said to the servants,  
 ‘Do whatever he tells you.’  
<sup>6</sup> Now standing there were six  
 stone water-jars for the  
 Jewish rites of purification,  
 each holding twenty or thirty  
 gallons.<sup>7</sup> Jesus said to them,  
 ‘Fill the jars with water.’ And  
 they filled them up to the  
 brim.<sup>8</sup> He said to them, ‘Now

draw some out, and take it to  
 the chief steward.’ So they  
 took it.<sup>9</sup> 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<sup>10</sup> 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.’<sup>11</sup> Jesus did this, the  
 first of his signs, in Cana of  
 Galilee, and revealed his  
 glory; and his disciples  
 believed in him.

**Post Communion Prayer**

Almighty Father,  
 whose Son our Saviour  
 Jesus Christ is the light of  
 the world: may your  
 people, illumined by your  
 word and sacraments,  
 shine with the radiance of  
 his glory, that he may be  
 known, worshipped, and  
 obeyed to the ends of the  
 earth; for he is alive and  
 reigns, now and for ever.

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## TALK: Hazel O'Sullivan

**To believe in Jesus as the Christ is to live a life within a life. A life knowing that Jesus' glory can be revealed in ordinary events. We need to share that with others.**

Weddings are very joyous events. They represent a new beginning for two people and everyone wants things to start well for them, so many people put a lot of effort into making that day good. There's a whole industry sector devoted to it. And looking through any wedding magazine, this is the kind of thing that everyone's after: special clothes, lots of decorations, special food (and, especially during the past year, an outside location).

Our reading from Revelation gives a picture of a wedding (the Lamb, Jesus Christ, and his bride – the church). We hear that there is rejoicing, there is fine, linen clothing (v8) and a great marriage supper (v9). Blessed are those who are invited to that supper (it's going to be a great party).

And in our gospel reading Jesus, his mother and his disciples were also at a wedding party. It's clear that it was Mary, Jesus' mother, who'd been the key guest invited to the wedding. This was before Jesus' ministry had really taken off, so Jesus and his friends were most likely only invited because his mother had been invited. When the wine runs out, there's a problem and it's Mary who feels it most, because she's closest to the couple getting married. This is a wedding feast – remember all that planning that would have gone into the day? So it's not a case of popping down to Sainsbury's to get extra supplies. No, this is a calamity. It's such a great calamity that this is the moment where Mary feels moved to reveal what she knows to be the power of her son, Jesus, the Son of God. She knows that he (as the Son of God) he is the possessor and dispenser of life. Her instruction to the servants was an instruction to seek life at its source.

The guests may not have noticed the abundance created from what was a very ordinary beginning – six jars of water. No, the guests were already quite drunk. But the steward did notice and the disciples did too. It was this revelation of Jesus' glory that led them to believe in him. This was the start of the disciples understanding Jesus' power as the possessor and dispenser of life and seeing many events that revealed his glory. This is what this season of Epiphany is all about – having Christ's glory revealed – and this is why it is this reading that appears in our lectionary at this point in the year – it's the first time Jesus' glory is revealed and people believed in him as a result. I wonder if you believe in Jesus as the possessor and dispenser of life and seek to live your life through him, or does your motivation in life come from elsewhere.

To believe in Jesus as the Christ is to live a life within a life. Mary, Jesus' mother, and his disciples were at a wedding – this is what was happening in their lives. But they were also living another life, getting to know Jesus and playing a part in revealing his glory to the world. Mary knew about the possibilities that were part of this aspect of her life – she'd had that visit from the angel, Gabriel; that visit from the shepherds on the night of Jesus' birth; and that visit from the wise men some weeks later. She knew about how Jesus' glory can be revealed in what might otherwise be ordinary events.

We too need to see God at work – the revelation of Jesus' glory - in ordinary everyday happenings. Where we do so, we will find an abundance created in ordinary things, just as there was an abundance of wine created in those six jars of water.

I want to tell you a story of how I have seen Jesus' glory – a great abundance - revealed



in ordinary everyday happenings. I have gained permission from the people involved here, so it's OK for me to share it. Many of you will know this woman, Florence, who became associated with our churches through the bereavement support group. She spent as much time as possible out of her home following her husband's death and loved coming to St Francis' on

Friday and Saturday mornings. Following a stroke, she moved into Burrell Mead, intending this to be a temporary thing, but that was not to be and she's now there as a permanent resident, unable to leave because of the pandemic and she's been unable to see her family, except on one or two occasions over the summer when they could meet in the garden. Unsurprisingly she has been feeling quite down recently, but a couple of weeks ago, I received a telephone call from her and she was overflowing with joy. I know that my photography skills are not great, but you can see this joy on her face in the photo which was taken a day later. The thing that made her so joyful was a present that she'd received the day before. It was a very ordinary present – some coloured pencils and some sheets of pictures to colour. You can see them in the picture on the next page, which I took quickly in a very socially distanced kind of way, wearing a face mask and going nowhere near anyone.



I don't think it was the present itself that Florence was so overjoyed about, but more the link with the person who'd sent it. You see, that present had come from Terry. Terry was someone else who came to St Francis' on Friday and Saturday mornings, visiting from Bethlem Hospital. Terry was moved to a prison near Nottingham just over a year ago and he has also been unable to leave his residence, for obvious reasons, and he's been unable to see his family this year. However, he has kept in touch with some from St Francis', including Florence.

Florence's gift from Terry was a very ordinary set of colouring pencils and some sheets of pictures to colour. I think that her joy is a revelation of God's love, or Jesus' glory, in what might otherwise be very ordinary events. This is a picture of Epiphany, which is all about the revelation of Jesus' glory. It's as much a revelation of Christ's glory as was the glory that was revealed in the wine at the wedding feast. And the thing about this glory is the more it's shared, the more it grows. It overflowed in the form of wine at the wedding in Cana and it has overflowed in pure joy at Burrell Mead and now here, on this printed and videoed sermon.

Maybe my telling of this story enables Christ's glory to be revealed to you. Maybe you'll be open to something happening in your life as being Christ's glory revealed, and maybe you'll share that with others, so that they can also see the extraordinary revelation of Christ's glory in the ordinary things of life.

Mary knew about the power that Jesus has to bring about an abundance in life. It's only if we recognise his power, that we too will see new life given to a situation. Not all those in our community see what's happening. It's like they're the other guests at the wedding feast, drunk on the wine that they've had. And, yes, if you're so caught up in the things of this world, it can be difficult to see Christ's glory in the seemingly ordinary things that are happening. It's only when the abundance and the glory created out of ordinary things is pointed out that it becomes visible and someone might begin to believe in our testimony. No one is going to recognise Christ in the world if we don't tell them about what we see.

So, I am pleased that Florence called me to tell me about her overflowing joy. And I'm so pleased to have been able to pass on the story of that joy to you. Please do likewise with your own stories of things that happen to you or things you see which reveal Christ's glory.

To believe in Jesus as the Christ is to live a life within a life. A life knowing that Jesus' glory can be revealed in ordinary events and recognising those moments. And then we need to share those moments with others. This is what Epiphany is all about.

**Amen**

### **Prayer Pointers**

Pray that we may have the vision to see the extraordinary in the ordinary – that we may see the glory of Christ in everyday acts of love and kindness. Help us to be open to the possibilities of showing how Jesus illuminates our lives with hope and joy even in the dark times of our lives.

Pray for all couples who are planning to get married – especially for those whose weddings have been postponed because of Covid restrictions. Thank God for the gift of love that conquers all things. Pray for those whose marriages have run into difficulties especially those where there is unemployment and mounting debt. Pray for all organisations that seek to support marriage and family life.

Continue to pray for peace in our world – especially this week for peace and harmony in the USA and for your blessing on their new President and Vice-President. Pray for that truth and honour may triumph over pride and misinformation. Pray for wisdom for our Government and advisers as they face rising deaths through Covid and have to make difficult decisions about vaccinations and lockdown policies.

Pray for all those who are ill and for those who have had surgery or treatment recently – especially for John Godfrey and Geoff Smith. Pray for all the emergency services as they have to deal with the challenges posed by the pandemic – especially for ambulance crews and paramedics in their difficult and stressful work.

We give thanks for all those who now see face to face the glory of the Kingdom of Heaven. Pray for those whose earthly life has come to an end – especially for Ann Dale and for her husband Harry and her best friend Bridget Adams and for Ivy Sheen and her family - Joan, Margaret and Martin. May they now experience your greater glory.

Father of all, you call us to be generous to one another, and to recognise in their faces the true image of your Son. Give us grace that as individuals, and as a whole society, that in this time of great need we may minister friendship and support in ways that are safe to all those who are in need of the service of others this day, through Jesus Christ our Lord.