

Second Sunday after Epiphany 14th January 2007

Rob Lamerton

Readings:

- Isaiah 62:1-5
- Psalm 36:5-10
- 1Corinthians 12:1-11
- John 2:1-11

Well! It's good to be back! I finally moved back to Canberra and to the Rectory on Friday — the day it reached 40°C.

The last nine months have been an interesting journey. I was pondering as I returned how the England and UK part of the trip seems so long ago! Then I was asked about the most significant and meaningful parts of our Journey.

Experiencing the life in the parts of Birmingham where John is working; (Kings Norton and Cotteridge; Bourneville and Selly Oak.)

Enjoying the very different style of the Church in which he works and worships 8212; and other churches as well. — (Martin Robinson will be talking at a conference here in Canberra on the 14th February.)

Seeing again the very different life of the English;

Discovering something of the history which saw our relatives in the 1800's move or be moved (as convicts) to Australia;

Learning a little more about those distant relatives;

Encountering again the stunning vibrancy of life in London and Piccadilly Circus where there's more happening at 1am than in Canberra at midday;

Going to Frankfurt, Paris, Edinburgh, Dublin, Bath, Brighton, York, Whitby, Manchester, Winchester... many chesters...

Meeting distant cousins and enjoying the wider family — going to Windsor Castle;

Seeing the Trooping of the colour and the Queen;

Seeing the *real* queen: — Helen Mirren in the movie…

Being with our three children, as diverse as they are, in September for a joint birthday for John and Jane in a wonderful Indian restaurant;

Doing lots of walking/buses/trains...

And Just spending time!

And we have been acclimatised by spending time with family — Sandy in Bathurst, Beverly Vale and Foster; Gareth and I in Adelaide. Finally, I was re-introduced to parish life in Goulburn. Last Sunday there were 119 at 9.30, about 85 communicants, BUT the Church and Hall are locked up Monday to Friday.

On my first Sunday there I met a long time acquaintance back from Africa — in town only a couple of days. I met also Chris Smith, a father of four who was a six year old in the congregation at Batlow in 1980. plus other renewed acquaintances.

In Adelaide I walked, ran and swam at the beach each day and then on the Indian Pacific back to Bathurst was bowled over by the red earth, stunted trees and absolute openness of the country side near Broken Hill

and I realized that Australia is where I belong! This was confirmed when I walked along country tracks and saw brown paddocks or beautiful tall flowering eucalypts in the midst of drought near Goulburn.

And now of course, we are back in Canberra which has been special for many years.

We love England and all the cultural heritage of Europe,

but Australia is home. As I walked I was grateful to God that the aboriginal people did NOT drive our forebears into the sea — as they had every right to do!

maybe they were/are the godly ones!?

Well, we are back! I am grateful to Rebecca for her caring and wise leadership in my absence and to David who in this time has taken a change of direction! Mind you, Rebecca was top of a very short list of [one] of all those who I would let loose among you! But next month she begins her parish ministry in earnest as Rector of St Alban's Woden. I encourage as many as possible to attend Rebecca's induction on 17th February. Thanks to the wardens and Parish Council and all who kept things going.

We are back! After Christmas and Epiphany to this series of Sundays of Epiphany and each Sunday tells us more of who Jesus is — each Sunday is an Epiphany — a making known of something new.

Today it is Jesus the one who replaces Jewish tradition with celebratory joy!

The whole concept of Bride and Bridegroom was strong in Palestine; it was what happened year in and year out as couples were married — but in scriptural terms it came to represent the relationship between God and the people. The ordinary celebration of a new relationship became a living parable of God's love for and desire for the people. As far back as Isaiah, the relationship was symbolic of God's love for the people.

In that story, God rejoices over the city as a bridegroom rejoices over the bride. (It is a nice thought to hold onto, especially those of us who have been married for a while!)

It is rejoicing at restoration — the restoration of God's people! and it raises the question HOW do we go about restoring God's people?

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In the gospel reading the wedding is in full swing — so the husband and wife, bride and bridegroom must BOTH be there, BUT they are out of wine! Now the discussion about "the hour not yet come" is aimed at the readers/hearers to get them thinking about what Jesus' "hour" might be — of course but the time of its writing they would have known the events of the cross and resurrection.

But the point of the story for me is that there are six stone water jars "each holding twenty or thirty gallons"!!

This is a huge volume of water turned to wine and indicates a party to end all parties! I wonder if the point of the story is to point to the renewing force of the party — Jesus, the one who comes from God to be the cause of great celebration — and the long expected Bridegroom! Come to unite God and humanity in a great bond of **LOVE!**

Christian believers were being expelled from the synagogue —

So some were hiding their new Christian faith! Is the story of the event a reminder to them that Jesus *is* the true bridegroom — **the one from God** the one who calls us, them and us, to celebrate mightily the new relationship with God which is on offer.

Water = the Jewish law

Wine = the Joy of Christian experience of Grace.

The silence of the Jewish convert reminds us that we too can be frightened into submission and *uncertain what to say* — it is an issue which has been raised in discussions about the proposed "Come and See" programme.

I think we have developed the local community's good faith through Pandora's / Northbourne Community Centre / St Philip's CAMRA productions and the Twilight Fair. — We now need the ability to tell our faith story which is made up of many faith stories!

Paul wrote to the Corinthians, many of whom were filled with an arrogance about spiritual things — BUT Paul points out that they are NOT things generated from within! Instead they are gifts of **grace**. The times in the life of the Christian and others when God seems to intervene giving strength and direction, hope and comfort, wisdom beyond knowledge. It is those times which we need to reflect on and talk about as ways of putting a human framework to the gift/the blessing/the grace of God.

Well, it is good to be back! — and I look forward to discovering anew the grace of God among us and making it known!

