



**The Benefice of
St Mary's Bocking &
Panfield Church**
Sunday 21st January 2024
The Third Sunday of Epiphany
Staying in Contact



The Very Revd Rod Reid - Incumbent (*usual rest day Monday*)

Email: bockingchurch@gmail.com Call: (01376) 324887 www.stmarys-bocking.com
or on Facebook, search for 'St Mary's Church, Bocking', or 'Panfield Church'

Forthcoming Services

Hymns

St Mary's, Bocking

Sunday 21st January	8am	Said Mass
	10am	Sung Mass
Wednesday 24th January	9.30am	Said Mass
Sunday 28th January	8am	Said Mass
	10am	Sung Mass

431

598

324

42

Panfield Church

Sunday 21st January	6pm	BCP Evensong
Tuesday 23rd January	5pm	Office Hour/Evening Prayer
Sunday 28th January	11am	Holy Communion

Gospel Acclamation

*Jesus proclaimed the good news
of the Kingdom, and cured all kinds
of sickness amongst the people.*

NOTICES

Save the Date! - On Friday February 9th at 7pm in The Retreat, there will a parish meal, you are warmly invited to join us. More details on the set menu and cost will be available next week. Please speak to Graham Shaw for more details and to book your place.

Choral Evensong - On Sunday February 4th at 5pm there will be Choral Evensong at St Mary's, Bocking, led by the Senior Chapel Choir of Felsted School. All are welcome.

Sunday Coffee - Charity of the Month - Throughout January, the monies donated at tea and coffee following the main service at St Mary's will be going towards 'The Dean Rogers Million Penny Fund'.

Stepping Stones - Our next sessions of Stepping Stones will run in Lent, beginning on February 20th at 7pm. The remaining sessions will be February 27th, March 5th, March 19th and March 26th. More details will follow in a few weeks time, but we wanted to give you the dates as soon as possible. All welcome.

Friendly Friday Cafe - We are pleased to say that the Friendly Friday Café is back in the Church Hall from 12noon onwards, and now running each Friday up to and including Friday March 22nd.

RSPB Birdwatch - We are looking for volunteers to take part in the RSPB Big Garden Birdwatch (in the Church Yard) on the Sunday 28th January 11:30 -12:30. No promises, but last year we saw the Red Kite in all its glory, whatever happens it will be a real TWEET!

Online Donations - At present, the card reader in St Mary's is out of action, but you are still very welcome to give online. You could do this by scanning the QR code at the end of this Notice Sheet or you'll find it in church, you scan the code using the camera on your phones. On most phones it will then ask you to 'open the link', from there you can give via the website. Some older phone models may need an additional app to scan the QR code. Alternatively you can go straight to the following website <http://givealittle.co/campaigns/8e6670a3-8911-43d2-bcc3-4b29613d6573>

Prayers - We keep in our prayers Barry and Janice Goody, Jean Goodwin, Sue, Roger, Frances, Jo Meech, and Tony & Ann. We remember our care homes Millard House, Larchwood, Fern Lodge, Aspen Grange, Braintree Mews, St Mary's Court and The New Deanery, and the following, whose anniversary of their passing falls this week Florence Barnard, Rita Hutchins, Gillford Mills, Harold Griffiths, Louie Richardson, Irene Bell, Gordon How, Robert Sawyer, Brian Hart and Monica Copley.

The Collect for The Third Sunday of Epiphany

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 for ever.
Amen.

Epistle Reading - Revelation 19:6-10

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. 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; 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. 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.' 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 Reading - John 2:1-11

On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. When the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to him, 'They have no wine.' And Jesus said to her, 'Woman, what concern is that to you and to me? My hour has not yet come.' His mother said to the servants, 'Do whatever he tells you.' Now standing there were six stone water-jars for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. Jesus said to them, 'Fill the jars with water.' And they filled them up to the brim. He said to them, 'Now draw some out, and take it to the chief steward.' So they took it. 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 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.' Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee, and revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.

Address

Did you know that last Monday was referred to as Blue Monday?

Apparently, according to scientists who have run all sorts of tests, and conducted all sorts of surveys, the third Monday of January is statistically our lowest point of happiness in the year. Now, I imagine, those calculations will be based on a so-called normal year. The problem is I am not sure such a thing exists! You only need to look back at the last few years with a pandemic and the consequences of it, to see that. These are uncertain, challenging and often worrying times, nothing is normal. However they got there though, last Monday was supposedly our lowest point. I wonder, did you feel particularly blue last Monday?

I am not sure I would say I was particularly blue, but the extreme cold and grey skies haven't helped. What did lift that gloom though was going into a local primary school for an assembly, and as it happens, an assembly where I was sharing this particularly gospel story.

It's not the first time I have done it, and it is usually interactive too. Alongside the passage, to really do it justice, I knew I needed some additional props. A glass jar of water, a ladle, wine glass and 'spoiler alert' some food colouring! Well, could I find the food colouring anywhere! In the end I panic bought some food colouring gel, which I haven't used before, so it felt risky! However, in setting up beforehand I went for it, and added the gel to my ladle and let it dry.

At the school, I was all set up and started by asking the children if they knew what miracles were? They could tell me about feeding the 5000, and about Jesus making people better. We then talked about this miracle, and what Jesus did, turning water into wine. I then said to them, do you think I could do this? Please! Please! they cried. I said, well I am not sure I can offer a miracle, but I could offer a magic trick.

I proceeded to show them my jug of water, and the empty wine glass. I poured in some water, and then drank it. It was just that, ordinary water. I then introduced the ladle which as the gel had dried, I could wave about without the risk of giving the game away. I gently filled the ladle, waited for just a short time and then added it once again to the wine glass. This time, it was wine! The children couldn't see how it was done, and neither could the adults. It was a great moment!

It is that story that sits at the heart of this wonderful passage from John, and it is incredibly familiar to us, the wedding at Cana. The reading certainly does have many layers, and John our gospel writer sought to do just that. In fact, the more you read it, the more that is often revealed. However, for me there is a simple truth, a simple equation lying at the heart of it.

We could choose to look at the imagery. We could look at what Mary says to Jesus and his rather sharp response. We could look at the symbolism of the wedding, and the roles of our characters, those servants who knew what had happened, the bridegroom who was oblivious, and the affect on each of them. We are also told that this is the first of Jesus' miracles, so we could question why this one and why now? All of these layers enrich the scene and it's meaning for us, but our simple equation remains at the heart of it.

Jesus is attending a wedding. A joyful celebration. Jesus notices that the wine is running out, never a good thing for a wedding. Is he teaching when he performs this miracle? Or, is he simply trying to keep the party going, to maintain the joy, caught up in the celebrations. There is glory revealed at the heart of this passage, God's glory.

In this season of Epiphany, of revelation, we see through the appearance of the Wise Men, the baptism

of Christ, and Jesus' presentation in the temple which we mark in a few weeks, each of the readings set, reveals God's glory. Epiphany is our chance to re-connect with that glory, that despite Blue Monday, the cold, the grey, the challenges that will last long past January, God's glory is there. For me then, one way to look at this is to see the constant truth, the way Jesus lives, and the way he calls us to live. A life of faithfulness, of joy and generosity.

The equation at the heart of it? $\text{God} + \text{Us} = \text{Miracles and the impossible}$.

Back at the school assembly I shared with the children that although it looked amazing, I wasn't a miracle maker, but a magician. We know this for sure because after the gasps and amazement that water had turned to wine, I asked one of the teachers to test the 'wine'. She was clear that it certainly wasn't wine. A brilliant trick, but not a miracle, God does those.

Neither is Jesus a magician. He doesn't conjure up something from nowhere but as we read, and as we heard, he takes what we have, blesses it and it becomes something incredible. At this wedding, for this first miracle, he blesses the water, and it becomes the very best wine for the celebrations. And not just a little water into wine but more than enough wine for the party, even if it did go on until the wee small hours.

So, amongst all the layers of the reading, let's not miss the joy of this passage, nor the generosity of God. We are reminded that we have a joyous and forever generous God who will be with us always, whether we are feeling that January Joy or something more akin to the Monday Blues.

Today, we are invited to recognise that we can't do this alone, but that we can achieve so much more with God. That we don't need to find all the strength ourselves but hand in hand with God, together, nothing is impossible.

He will take what we have. Simple, ordinary day to day things like water and transform them. He can take us, who we are and who we can be, and transform them. With our joyful, loving and generous God we can do anything, that is the simple equation, and that is Maths even I can understand.

The challenge, our challenge, is not just to know it, but to live by it. Amen.

Post Communion Prayer

Almighty Father,
whose Son our Saviour Jesus Christ is the light of the world:
may your people,
illuminated 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. Amen.

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