

Glastonbury Pilgrimage

Now this request may be heretical, but I want you to try and imagine something for me. I want you to imagine that you are the Son of God. Yes, you. Here's the scenario. You have just a few months to save the world. You need to reveal yourself as the Messiah such that people will come to faith in you and so find their way to the Father.

So given the hurry, what will be your first sign? What is the first miracle you will perform in order to show people who you are? Give sight to a blind man? Feed a hungry crowd? Make a lame person walk? Cast out a demon? Where will you start?

We've just seen the answer Jesus gives to that question – his first sign at Cana. And what does Jesus do? He organises the most massive booze-up imaginable. That's his first ever miracle. He turns 180 gallons of water into wine. That is 818 litres of wine. That is 1,168 bottles of wine. Or 97 cases of wine or about 18,000 pounds worth of wine. Now last night a few of us went out for dinner, and it was a very jolly occasion in the best traditions of the Catholic movement. But I can tell you now, the wine bill did not come to £18,000. You've got to admit, that is an awful lot of

booze. It makes the Welsh commiseration party when they got dumped out of the Euros by Portugal look tame and underplayed.

In all seriousness it does though seem a bizarrely trivial way to start a ministry. In fact you'd think that turning water into wine compared to turning a stone into bread as a selfish abuse of divine power. I am glad that this pilgrimage is not an overly ecumenical affair because I often wonder what the Methodists make of this boozy miracle. So why did Jesus do it? Because it wasn't just a party stunt. This is a story full of hidden meaning, and what that takes us right to the very heart of the purpose of human existence. As Jesus turns water to wine, he shows us what human life is for.

To see what I mean, all you need to do is listen to Mary. She says two things which for her is positively verbose. The first, is this. 'They have no wine.' In the Old Testament wine is a metaphor for God's kingdom. Heaven is portrayed as a wedding banquet in which the food and wine flow. Here there is no wine because this is a people who have no purpose, no future, no idea what life is for. Their rites are empty, they are separated from the living God. They have no wine.

But then Mary speaks a second time. 'Do whatever he tells you.' She points the servants to Jesus. And he takes the water of purification used in those empty rites and he turns it to wine. Not just any old wine. Wonderful wine. Fine wine. The best wine anyone has ever drunk. The wine of the Kingdom, in absurd and ridiculous abundance. So there is joy, the joy of heaven itself. It's not just a booze up. As Jesus turns water into wine, he shows the goal and purpose of humanity. We are made for joy in relationship with God in Christ.

Today Mary speaks into the world the same words of prophecy. They have no wine. For we live in a culture which has forgotten what human life is for. We are in a deeply vulnerable and unpredictable place as a nation following the vote to leave the European Union. I have no doubt that in the congregation there are those who think it's a disaster and others who think it's the best thing ever. But whatever side of the debate you lie on, surely we must all worry about the mood of anger that the vote reveals. People are angry with the establishment, angry with politicians, angry about immigration, angry about the austerity, angry about what they fear their nation is becoming. And behind that anger lies a deep disappointment, a sense that life is not offering them what they hoped for. People long for reassurance, for hope, for

joy, for some sense that their lives are worth living. But they can find none. People have forgotten what they are for. There is no wine.

As those who gather here to honour Mary, our task is to imitate Mary. Like her we must point the world to Jesus and say, 'Do whatever he tells you.' Without Jesus human life is pointless and thin, like those stone jars filled with water for empty rites. But Jesus makes sense of it all. Jesus transforms the frail and broken stuff of our humanity and makes it beautiful. In him we see what we are and why we were born. In him we see the purpose of it all. For we are a people made for joy, made for him, made for the banquet of heaven where we will delight in Christ for ever and he will delight in us. Our purpose is joy.

It is really good to see that after many decades of struggle and anxiety the catholic movement is once again finding its mission mojo. At a Diocesan mission I went on in Sheffield last year it was the Catholics who led the way. In Spring we held a conference of young Catholic clergy to set a mission agenda for the movement and it was fantastic to sense the excitement in that room and the genuine feeling that we could make a difference in Christ's name. There is a fresh mood in our movement, a fresh confidence in a

distinctively Catholic evangelism, a genuine desire to draw people to Jesus in the Eucharist.

But why? What lies behind it? What is it that motivates our evangelism? We don't share our faith just for the institution. It's not simply to ensure that we survive or that our buildings see us through. No one is going to start coming to Mass in order to join the stewardship scheme or the flower rota. We do it for joy. We share our faith because we long for people to find the joy that can be found only in Jesus. We share our faith so that those who have forgotten what life is for can find themselves in Jesus. We share our faith so that those who are angry and frustrated can find peace of mind and reassurance in him who loves them for all eternity. We share our faith so that those who rail against injustice can see that God is in charge of his world and the victory has already been won. We share our faith because we want people to know what their lives are for, because their purpose and their vocation is joy.

And we long for people to know that joy because we know it ourselves. Here as we gather at this altar, we are in Cana. This is our wedding banquet where we, the Church, are joined with Christ in an unbreakable union. Here we feast on the very food of heaven, the bread which gives life, the wine that brings joy. Here

we see our purpose which is to delight in God as he delights in us. We are a people born for joy.

It is a delight to be here this afternoon and to see the revival of this pilgrimage. Glastonbury is a crucial place for Christians to gather, for here we see both the problem and the solution. With its witchcraft shops and its occult practices and its drugs this town powerfully symbolises a culture that is looking for joy in all the wrong places. 'They have no wine.' And yet this is ground that, by tradition, Jesus himself once walked. 'And did those feet in ancient times walk upon England's mountains green?' Whatever the truth of that tradition, today Jesus *can* walk the streets of this town. Today Jesus *will* walk the streets of this town. And he will do so through you. Today as we process through its streets we claim this town for Jesus Christ. And in the joy of our worship we point to him who is the only source of lasting joy. We are a people born for joy. Our purpose is joy, a joy in which we delight, a joy which we share. 'They have no wine.' 'Do whatever he tells you.'

