

St Paul's Cathedral, Dunedin
30 June 2019
Priesting of Tony Martin

Isaiah 61:1-4,10-11; Colossians 3:12-17; John 2:1-12

On National Radio the other day I heard Catherine Ryan talking to a high achieving, successful Australian woman who was on a marathon and got caught in a bush fire. She suffered 65% burns.

Having made an incredible recovery, she says she begins each day with gratitude – the light, the coffee, her little son, her mother...

When the Lord woke you this morning, what was your response?

"This is the day that the Lord has made.

We will rejoice and be glad in it!"

It's Sunday afternoon again.

Thank you Lord!

We've had another day to be alive in your glorious world.

Sooner or later, we won't have any more Sundays, so thank you for this one.

And what do you think happened for Jesus that morning?

He wakes, he rises and embraces the day as it embraces him.

"This is the day that the Lord has made."

"Hey fellas. We're off to the wedding.

Nathaniel and Deborah (or whoever) are getting married and we're invited.

It's only about 7 kilometres from Nazareth to Cana, but we don't want to be late."

Why is Jesus going?

Well, mother Mary was invited.

We can agonise over guest lists can't we.

No problem here,

In village communities, everyone is invited; everyone belongs.

"Yeah, Mary' coming, but her boy Jesus is in town, so he can come too."

"But he's got all those other guys with him."

"Them too."

And there's a wedding in full swing.

The bride looks gorgeous, the groom so handsome,

the ceremony so moving,
the food so good.
Then catering crisis.
The wine runs out!
What a botch up, or did the guests drink too much?
Whatever, it's an incredibly humiliating,
and shaming experience for the family.

Mother Mary is totally aware and sotto voce says to her son,
"They have no more wine."
And response?
Well Jesus may think they are resourceful people who can deal with it,
and some of the guests might surely go home and get some.
"What's that to you or me mother?
Besides, this isn't my moment. I'm low profile here."
But you can hear Mary.
"That's what you think boy!"
Mother knows. Mother knows best.

Can you hear Mary?
"I know you can do something;
You are my Son, my Beloved, with you I am well pleased."
She's not bossy, or parental.
She just knows.
Mother knows his hour has come.
So she just tells the servants, "Do whatever he tells you."

After mother's initiative, he is required to do something.
Does he back off?
Not at all. He begins his ministry by dealing with a catering problem.
They had no wine.
Then in the astonishing, bountiful goodness of God,
he produces 682 litres of gold medal wine.
Surely a couple of dozen bottles would have been enough Jesus.
But here is God's abundance.

There was no wine.
No wine.
It is such powerful metaphor.
It echoes in our world.
There are so many situations in front of us where the wine's run out.

Around 683,000 New Zealanders live in poverty,

including about 220,000 children.
That's 1 in 7 households.
They are beneficiaries, Maori, Pacific Islanders, solo parents and all.
The results are food insecurity, poor health, reduced life expectancy,
debt, poor housing.
Nelson Mandela says, "Poverty is not natural.
It is man-made and can be overcome
and eradicated by the actions of human beings."
Everyone is imago dei – image of God – and deserving.
Jesus, winemaker, we need you!
Show us how to make the wine of food, housing, health!

The wine has run out.
There were nearly 400 road deaths last year,
but the suicide rate was 668.
And NZ has the highest youth suicide rate in the developed world.
What's happening here in happy land
that people want to kill themselves?
Jesus, winemaker, come in your transforming power with the wine of life.
We need you, desperately!

There is human trafficking in NZ.
Over 1,000 people are held in slavery in this country.
It's appalling, but true.
Many of them are immigrants who came here for a better life.
But there is no wine; no freedom, no joy.

And closer to home, between the last two national censuses,
Anglican affiliation dropped over 17% - Catholics down only 3%.
Quoting Joel, Peter says it is the young who will see visions
while the old dream dreams.
How many key decisions are being made in the Anglican Church
by young people with vision, values, and fresh thinking?
Where are they?
We need the wine of youthful visioning.

Numbers down, we are looking at closing churches,
churches that our ancestors build at great cost,
and with great hope.
What happens in a community
when there is not a centre of worship anymore?
Has the wine of the gospel gone sour? No!
Last Sunday we were in St John's Feilding.

Vicar Wendy said they are not shutting churches;
they let them lie fallow for a year while they do intensive
community networking and communication.

“Do you want a church in your community?”

“Yes, but not Sunday morning.”

Noted. And people are coming.

Jesus, come with your gold medal touch
that our communities may get a taste of your goodness!

We just heard Ondine read the Isaiah passage on which Jesus based
his manifesto sermon in Nazareth.

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me...”

And as we look at his unfolding ministry,
we see he wasn't about pastoral care at all.

His healing, his deliverance was prophetically bringing the wine of life –
good news to the oppressed,
liberty to captives,
release to prisoners.

Come Jesus, winemaker, we need you here!

Like your disciples at Pentecost,
call us out of hiding, out of our quarantined sanctuaries
and into the public square,
and give us fiery new tongues;
new tongues to proclaim that you are the wine of life;
the wine that 'maketh glad the heart of man.'

This is the day that the Lord has made:

we are about to ordain Tony to the priesthood;
we're not turning him into something he wasn't already,
but calling him, commissioning him to stand with Jesus,
stand with us, and be a gospel wine maker;
to speak among us with the new tongue
that challenges us to proclaim Jesus;
the transforming power, and the passionate values of Jesus;
to work for an eradication of poverty,
to speak hope to the suicidal,
to demand liberty for the economic and sexual captives.

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.
And they had no more wine.

So Jesus actions God's profound 'nevertheless'.
No wine; nevertheless, Jesus transformed water into wine,
and in the process,
with mother's prompting,
was transformed from village carpenter to proclaimer
and bearer of the Kingdom of God.

This cathedral stands in solid stone in the heart of this city,
and we stand throughout the diocese
as centres of transformation;
reminders that the water of any common circumstance
can extravagantly become wine at the touch of Jesus.
We know the old wines skins parable,
but here Jesus makes new wine in old jars.
New wine can be made in old jars like ours!
We can get locked into the data of despair,
but Jesus stands among us saying 'nevertheless'.
Jesus stands with us to be a 'nevertheless' wine-making people.

We welcome you Tony.
In your day time job,
you remind us that the mountains will fall – as Isaiah 54:10 says
and the seas will rise,
but you are here to remind us of what in the world we are here for
– agents of Jesus the wine maker,
Jesus the Transforming One;
One who turning water to wine can transform lives
– which may be the bigger task.
You are with us to remind us of God's 'nevertheless' Tony.
And we welcome you.

Come Lord Jesus, and make your quality life-giving wine here.
Grace us to risk something impossible for something good.
Grace us to remember that the world is now too dangerous
for anything but your 'nevertheless', and too small for anything but your
love.
Wine maker, take our minds and think through them,
take our lips and speak through them,
take our hands and work through them.
Take our hearts and fill them with the life-giving wine of your love
that, with Tony, we may share your super-abundant life with our
communities, and see your glory.