

Anam Cara Community



Waterholes: 19 August 2017



Flooding Creek, Sale. Photo Jane Macqueen

Welcome

Welcome to Waterholes, the Anam Cara Community newsletter for the week beginning 20th August 2017.

Why this newsletter? This newsletter is one of the ways by which we hope to promote community. The Anam Cara Community is intended to be much more than simply a group of likeminded people. We hope it will continue to grow into a community that is a sign of God's presence in and love for the world, a dispersed community of contemplatives whose lives and action bring peace and healing to all of God's children. We are a Community of Prayer, and believe that as we pray together, God calls us deeper into fellowship with one another.

Who is welcome? The Anam Cara Community is proud to welcome anyone, from any background or faith community (or none!). We are an open and inclusive community that affirms the dignity and worth of all humans, the value of the environment, and seeks to model a way of living with one another and the world that points to the love and care of God for everyone. Individuals who wish to formally join the Community are welcome to become associates.

For your prayers

Part of the joy of the Anam Cara Community is the gift of being called to pray for others. If you would like the Community to pray for you, or for someone else, please email or call Jane ([0411 316 346](tel:0411316346) or jemacqueen@gmail.com) who will add them to the prayer list, and ensure they are included in our roster of prayers.

At present, your prayers are asked for:

- Bishop Kay in her ministry and leadership.
- The registry staff, Brian, Annette, Kellie, Sue and David.
- Associates and Friends who have asked for our prayers:
- Joan Smith, thanks for a lessening of sciatic pain on walking and standing, and prayer for the improvement to continue.
- Norma and June.
- For all those suffering and grieving as a result of terrorist acts particularly remembering those in Barcelona. Prayers for missing 7 year old Julian Cadman and his family.
- For peacemakers in our world. For political leaders in their discussions and decision making.
- For all refugees and asylum seekers across the globe.

Prayer of the day.

God of freedom,
you have broken the tyranny of sin
and sent the Spirit of your Son into our hearts:
give us grace to dedicate our freedom to your service,
that all people may know the glorious liberty of the children of God;
through Jesus Christ our Lord,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

Amen.

Reflection

Pentecost 11 - The Rev'd Chris Venning

Matthew 15.21-28

A woman's persistent faith

Have you ever noticed how many of the people Jesus dealt with, or who featured in his parables, were unlikely examples of faith? Jesus himself said he had come to 'the lost sheep of the people of Israel' (Mt 15.24, GNB). He ministered so often among the outcasts of society. These included Levi the tax collector, who we know better as Matthew, traditional source of today's Gospel. Others had been driven out of society like the lepers, or were frowned on like the prostitutes. But many did not even fit Jesus' self-proclaimed mission of coming for Israel. Think of the Samaritan woman at the well in John 4, or the Roman centurion whose servant Jesus healed and whose faith he commended. Then there is the parable Jesus told of the Good Samaritan. Jews viewed Samaritans as half-breeds and heretics, and Romans as the hated occupying army.

In today's Gospel, we meet a Canaanite woman (the parallel passage in Mark describes her as Syrophenician). If the Romans were relatively recent enemies of the Jews, the Canaanites – referring to many nationalities surrounding ancient Israel - were enemies from the nation's beginnings in the land of Israel. Our reading refers to the territory through which Jesus was travelling as 'near the cities of Tyre and Sidon' (v 21) and the woman as living 'in that region' (v 22). These cities on the Mediterranean coast had been important since ancient times. Today they lie in southern Lebanon, below the capital Beirut, and are respectively Lebanon's fourth and third largest cities.

Like the Samaritan woman at the well, this Canaanite had a double strike against her – gender as well as race. Just as Jews looked down on other races and religions, women were viewed condescendingly by Jewish males, especially the religious leaders who saw them as unclean. In this sense, the Gospels are counter-cultural in featuring women as prominently as they do in Jesus' ministry. It is a sign of the Canaanite woman's desperation that she addresses Jesus, a Jewish male, directly – and an expression of her faith that she believes he can help her. Clearly, word has spread of Jesus' ministry of healing and exorcism, and she cries out: 'Son of David! ...Have mercy on me, sir! My daughter has a demon and is in a terrible condition' (v 22). How should we read this? Various, Christians interpret it as a literal example of demon possession (and her ultimate healing as exorcism); or as a primitive diagnosis of ailments that were not understood at that time; or as a mythic metaphor emphasising Jesus' power. In whichever of these ways we may understand the passage, we are confronted with mystery! In my own faith journey, I have noticed that the more marked certainty and dogma of my youth has gradually given way to a greater willingness to sit with questions – and with mystery!

Initially Jesus does not speak. His disciples beg him to send the woman away, but Jesus addresses her, emphasising his mission as being to Israel. She approaches Jesus, falls at his feet, and repeats her plea: 'Help me, sir!' (v 25) There follows a fascinating dialogue. Jesus seems provocatively racist, expressing the attitude of contemporary Jews toward other races and religions (he may have been quoting a known saying): 'It isn't right to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs' (v 26). Rather than taking offense at Jesus' statement, the woman (seemingly playfully) adapts the metaphor to underline her plea: 'That's true, sir ...but even the dogs eat the leftovers that fall from their masters' table' (v 27). It's even possible that she, too, was quoting a familiar proverb. Now Jesus commends her: 'You are a woman of great faith! What you want will be done for you'. The passage concludes: 'And at that very moment her daughter was healed' (v 28).

This Gospel reading can teach us much about our faith journey. There is the example of the Canaanite woman's persistent faith. She refuses to be distracted by issues of race or gender, and places her faith firmly in Jesus' ability to help her and heal her daughter. We, too, do well to place our faith in Jesus as we face life's challenges.

We can learn from Jesus' gender and race 'blindness'. Although his mission was primarily to Israel, when Jesus encountered need he responded to the person, regardless of issues of gender, race or religion. We will often meet need in faces unlike our own - people of other cultural background, colour, gender, race, religion, sexual preference. We are called to love others as God has loved us in Christ, to reach out and help others as God has reached out in Christ to help us.

We can learn, too, from the Canaanite woman's sense of herself. When she responded with her comment about dogs eating the leftovers that fall from their masters' table, she may have been partly motivated by her desperation for her daughter's health, but I suspect that if she was not secure in herself she would have been distracted by the condescension implicit in non-Jews being likened to dogs. As it was, her remark about 'their masters' table' sounds ironic to me rather than toadying to the Jews. I remember how, beginning in about the 1960s, emphasis came to be placed on the 'as yourself' part of the command to 'love your neighbour as yourself'. The argument was that unless we love ourselves in a healthy way we are unable to love our neighbour!

Fourth, and finally, we can learn from Jesus' example in commending the Canaanite woman for her faith. Our culture has not been strong on encouraging and praising others. If we often imitate the Americans in unhelpful ways, this is an area in which it would be healthy to imitate them. They seem more ready and willing to praise others for their achievements or attitudes than Australians, who in this respect appear to take more after our Anglo-Celtic ancestors. Persistent faith, race and colour-blindness, a healthy sense of self, and a willingness to praise

others for positive achievements or attitudes. These are some of the lessons we can learn from today's Gospel reading.

Let's pray!

Lord, help us to learn from the Canaanite woman's persistent faith in Jesus, and from her healthy sense of herself. And teach us to imitate Jesus' readiness to look past people's gender, race or religion to their needs – so we can love them as God in Christ has loved us. Help us, too, to learn from Jesus' example in commending the woman's faith, so we may encourage and praise others in a healthy and helpful way. We offer these prayers through Jesus your Son, our Lord, Amen.

Photo Reflection



Time and the elements shape us all. Boardwalk, Sale. Photo Jane Macqueen.

Further opportunities for Spiritual Nurture

1. St Paul's Cathedral, Sale.

Christian Meditation 7.45am - 8.15am every Wednesday

Christian Meditation is a spiritual wisdom and a practice leading from the mind to the heart. It is a way of simplicity, silence, stillness and openness to God. It can be practised by anyone, wherever you are on your life's journey. It is only necessary to begin – and to keep on beginning.

Contact: Susanna Pain susanna.pain@gmail.com

This practice is in the tradition of the World Community for Christian Meditation <http://www.wccm.org/>

Evening Prayer with focus on intercession 5.15pm Mondays

AWAKEN Spring Festival - Speakers with ideas to stretch stimulate and nourish

Saturday 16th September 2pm-5pm

Robyn and Alan Cadwallader

Body and Soul - the conflicts and the gifts of the past

Saturday 21st October 1.30pm - 5pm

The Earth is the Lord's - Listening to God in Scripture and Creation

Graeme Garrett and Jan Morgan

Alice Springs desert retreat for body and soul 24th - 29th September 2017

Details from Susanna Pain

Phone: [5156 6580](tel:51566580) Email: info@theabbey.org.au. www.theabbey.org.au

2. Meditation - the chapel of St James, Traralgon

A group of people who are exploring the inner journey regularly meet for prayer and meditation together. We meet twice a month on the 2nd and 4th Monday mornings [at 10 am](#). During the hour we spend together we share the reading of scripture, prayer and music. There is a long period of silent meditation. To sit in silence together before God helps us to recognise God in the complexities of our lives. In the depth of our being there is always a sanctuary filled with God's presence. We can go there in silence to be and to listen. All are welcome.

3. Bass Hill Hermitage

Thinking about making a silent Retreat?

Bass Hill Hermitage is on the Bass Coast, near Phillip Island. The Hermitage has its roots in the traditions of Christian Spirituality. It is a perfect place to reflect, pray and deepen your relationship with God. Beginners, as well as experienced retreatants are welcome. They offer **directed and self-guided retreats as well as on-going Spiritual Direction and Supervision.** The Hermitage can also be booked for a 'Quiet break' or some 'Time Out'. Visit the informative website:

www.basshillhermitage.com.au for more information.

Support on the journey

The Anam Cara Community's ministry is to be a support to those who are on the inner journey into God. Each person's journey is different, and we recognise that there are some for whom the Christian tradition is difficult or not supportive. We're committed to finding ways to hear the needs of each Associate, and support them as we can.

Contacts:

- Website: www.anamcaragippsland.org
 - To subscribe to or unsubscribe from the mailing list contact Jane
 - Soul carer (Community Leader): Jane ([0411 316 346](tel:0411316346) or jemacqueen@gmail.com)
 - Secretary / Librarian: Sue [03 5182 5542](tel:0351825542)
 - Treasurer: Kate
 - Postal mail: Anam Cara Community c/o PO Box 928, Sale, VIC 3850
 - Diocesan Director of Professional Standards (to make complaints or express concerns about our ministries): Ms Cheryl Russell [0407 563 313](tel:0407563313), cherylr@gippsanglican.org.au
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Love and prayers

Jane Macqueen

On behalf of the Servant Leaders

APBA & NRSV portions, TIS hymns 'Reprinted with permission.

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