

January 17, 2010 – The Second Sunday after the Trinity

The Rev'd Joye Q. Cantrell

“Now on the third day, there was a wedding at Cana in Galilee. The mother of Jesus was there, and Jesus himself and his disciples had also been invited to the celebration.”

For almost 2000 years the feelings and images associated with Cana, in the Galilean hills, have been joyful and festive. The town itself makes most of its money selling wine bottled in Cana. I have had some of the wine and I can tell you that the symbolism is wonderful but the wine itself, well, not so much.

In the Lutheran Book of Worship there is a prayer at the Book of worship there is a prayer at the beginning of the order for marriage. It says “eternal God, our creator and redeemer, as you gladdened the wedding at Cana in Galilee by the presence of your son, so by his presence now bring joy to this wedding.” In our own prayer book we find the following in the marriage service. “The bond and covenant of marriage was established by God in creation, and our Lord Jesus Christ adorned this manner of life by his presence and first miracle at a wedding in Cana of Galilee.”

Today’s gospel reading is one which conjures up a happy and wonderful occasion at which Jesus manifest who he was by the first of his miracles. The mention of the place Cana at Galilee brings to mind this wonderful story of such a joyous occasion.

The naming of a place can illicit deeply felt emotions that sometimes surprise us. Unfortunately many of these are not happy emotions like we experience when we think of Cana.

For example: the mere mention of Gettysburg brings to mind not just a town in central Pennsylvania but the turning point of the War between the States and a river of blood and death. Auschwitz might still be a town but it is seared in our minds as a concentration camp and I immediately conjure up images of rail thin men on bunk beds and prisoners lined up to go into the gas chambers. Unfortunately, this week we added another place to our list of places that conjure up deep emotions and pain. Even the ones of us who have seen Port-au-Prince now think first not of the town we saw but of the town so destroyed and of the piles of bodies we have seen on the TV and in the newspaper.

Unlike a well known radio evangelist, I do not believe that God sits in heaven zapping those of us who are good and rewarding those who are bad. I do not believe that God caused the earthquake but indeed I believe that God cried along with the world at the hurt and pain inflicted on the Haitian people this week. God's will is for all of his children to have life and to have it abundantly.

They have said it so often this week that I know you know it but I NEED to say it again. Haiti is the poorest of poor nations. There is no industry in Haiti. There are very, very few jobs. There is very little agricultural land because so much of Haiti is mountainous and rocky. All of the beautiful mahogany trees that once graced Haiti were cut down by British, French and American companies who did not bother the reforest but simply left when the timber was gone. There is plenty of blame to go around for why Haiti is so poor but none of that will do any good today.

I have never been so proud to be part of the Episcopal Church as when I am in Cange, Haiti. For thirty years we have been associated with Father LaFontant and our diocese has helped build schools, bring water to towns, build hospitals and curb the number of deaths from malnutrition. It was Pierce Williams', Taylor Williams' father who along with two others engineered and built the pump system which brought fresh water up the side of a mountain to Cange. That very same system is being updated since what was built to serve 800 people now serves 8000 and a hospital as well. Our diocese has been raising money with the Bread and Water Campaign in part to upgrade the 25 year old system before it breaks down completely. Now the problems that we hoped to solve with this campaign become even more critical.

The problems of Haiti and are overwhelming but in the central plateau we have made a difference---we have changed lives. We have saved lives. It was our very own Dr. James who wrote a recommendation for a young Duke student named Paul Farmer to go to Harvard Medical School. Paul Farmer, who would be embarrassed and hate it if he heard me say it, is for me a modern day saint. Paul Farmer's story is written about in the book *Mountains Beyond Mountains* and if you have not read it, than I encourage you to get it and read it.

Today, as we worship, Paul Farmer's organization: Partners in Health founded in Haiti and based in Boston is in Cange turning the school and the church into hospitals. Cange which was not affected by the earthquake is beginning to be flooded with refugees. Many are injured and all are traumatized; many more will come to a place that has a hospital, clean water, and food to eat. It is three hours up rough mountain roads, to Cange from Port-a Prince. But many

more will find their way there and it is imperative that we be part of the solution to the problems that will come with the influx of needy men, women and children.

It seemed to me to be so appropriate that today's epistle reading was from Paul's first letter to the Corinthians. In Paul's time Corinth was a huge metropolitan, multicultural, city much like Washington, Los Angeles, New York and Las Vegas all rolled into one. It was so cosmopolitan that folks flocked there from all regions of Rome's empire. Corinth was the center of government, commerce, sports, wealth, and sin. Their patron saint was Aphrodite, the goddess of love; her temple was served by a thousand prostitutes.

Paul carried the gospel to this city in the year 51, and within 18 months he had formed an exciting community of converts. Five years later, he wrote them a letter. He had to write to them because he was upset with them He had received reports that cliques and factions were tearing this Christian community apart.

As gifted as they were, they had little sense of being a part of the whole community of faith. They ran around trying to impress each other with their displays of intellect or spiritual power. The problem was that they failed miserably at working together. They had lost the fact that spiritual gifts all come from the Holy Spirit and all are for the building up of the community. The specific community of faith Paul writes to is the one at Corinth but symbolically for us the community of faith is not only a particular individual community but is also the church universal.

Paul reminds the Corinthians that they may come from many separate traditions-Jew, Greek, slave, free-but the power of God has

broken down the dividing walls to make them one. In spite of their grumbling, they all belong to one body. This unity does not come from their own wills, but God has proclaimed them one. In 12:27, Paul states the lesson: “you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.”

At the close of this lesson, Paul speaks of the diversity of talents in the church. He says some are apostles, prophets, teachers, and others have the gifts of healing, leadership or speaking in tongues. The church is blessed with all these gifts, but their single purpose is to live out God’s love in the world. The gifts without love are nothing.

Our brothers and sisters in Haiti are clearly in great need, of immediate relief and of long term opportunity to live life and live it abundantly as God wills for them. I invite you to let the “epiphany” of the problems in Haiti lead you to make a commitment. To live out our diocesan motto: To love with the heart of Christ and to live in the world as the body of Christ.

My prayer is that some years from now Haiti may come to mind as a symbol of how the body of Christ throughout the world chose to take chaos and make order. That with God’s help, we may imitate Christ who made wine out of water.