

The parish of St Nicholas, Mordialloc is looking for a new priest. The boundaries of the parish stretch south and east. The parish is part of the Kingston Council which includes other parishes to the north.

The population includes professionals in health, education, technology, law and order. Trades people are usually in abundance, until you want one. The elderly, who perhaps helped make some of the changes they have seen; the newly retired; young families who hope Mordialloc and surrounds will be a good foundation for their children.

There are groups of people who share in fellowship, that is participate together. Sport groups, community centres for different age activities, come to mind. There are people who profess a religious faith and those who were connected with a church, but have gone astray for some reason. Church buildings, essentially for their own communities of faith, are still used by community groups. That's true for St Nicholas. The faith community is a witness for Christ to the whole community.

The word 'fellowship' helps us to think of the King's Fellowship. as we come in this Lenten series of The King in Holy Week. In particular the fellowship, participation in Jesus' last meal.

Jesus gathered twelve disciples. The first three gospels list twelve men Jesus called to be with him. However, the lists in Mark and Luke give us thirteen names which we smooth out to twelve. Luke tells us Jesus sent out seventy other disciples. John's gospel adds Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea, who kept their association secret because of their position in the Jewish hierarchy.

In the Acts of the Apostles Luke records one hundred and twenty people were in the Upper Room waiting for the power of the Holy Spirit. Among those were a number of women who ministered to Jesus out of their means; Mary and Martha, the sisters of Lazarus, Mary Magdalene, and others including Mary, the Mother of Jesus. So, 'fellowship' with Jesus is larger than twelve.

Although we know some were fishermen, and one a tax collector, we assume, like our community, they came from different walks of life. Jesus was their Rabbi. They listened to him teach about the Kingdom of God. He sent them to preach, to heal and cast out demons. They returned with a sense of joy at what had happened in the name of Jesus. On occasions he rebuked them, especially when they were concerned about their status; a human failing. They shared in God's love as Jesus lived it and brought the kingdom near to them by his deeds.

Jesus had opposition from the Jewish leadership. When Jesus went to heal Lazarus, the disciples sensed trouble. Thomas said, 'let us go with him that we might die with him'. Remember the woman anointing Jesus? That occurred after the raising of Lazarus. Jesus said that she had anointed him before his burial.

Throughout his years of ministry, Jesus shared meals with his disciples. A meal is always a way to share fellowship. It is an opportunity to teach, share ideas and to serve others. Meals might be celebrations for special occasions or have religious significance.

On the Thursday of Holy Week, we say Maundy Thursday, Jesus had a last meal with the Twelve in an Upper room. This last meal had religious significance. It was the Passover meal which made memory, made alive God's act of bringing the people of Israel out of Egypt.

Jesus gave a new important significance to this meal for his Fellowship. During the meal Jesus took bread blessed and broke it; he took wine and shared it with a command. 'Do this in remembrance of me.' That is to say, 'Make living memory of my sacrifice and presence.' As the disciples shared the meal at that moment in time it was the way they could remember him and what he did. They would have fellowship, participation, with him in the future.

After the meal, as we know, Jesus was arrested in Gethsemane. Over the next few days the disciples became dispirited and fearful. Then, as he had said, they rejoiced.

First, he appeared to them alive. An experience of the Spirit of God filled them with power and purpose. They began to preach, pray and broke bread together. They called people to be sorry for sin, to turn to God. By baptism people joined this fellowship. They shared in the meal understood to be a participation with Jesus. New leadership travelled and extended the fellowship which came to be called, "The Church."

The Church is more than clergy and religious or at the local level, parish councillors, and sanctuary people. They are only part of the people of God in Christ. Everyone who is baptized belongs to the Church. Throughout her life the Church has seen highs and lows. Events caused divisions. corrected excesses in teaching or actions. We are all part of the people of God; part of an unknown number in the fellowship of Jesus.

In our country people may be confused by the different groups that call themselves 'church.' Yet we are all part of the King's fellowship and we are, as Tom Wright puts it, "to be his feet, his hands...his healing touch, his tears, yes, and his laughter too, within the midst of his world. We are to be ourselves, yes, with all our background, all the lives that our lives touch, all the ambiguities that we carry about with us; but with all those strangely transformed and taken up into the purposes of his love". (N.Tom Wright The Crown and the Fire p.77f). (Cf Prayer of Theresa of Avila)

That is where the people, the congregation, of St Nicholas fit into the wider community. We are to be as yeast in the community. We share the task of being yeast with other Christian communities, even though our tradition is Anglican. Once the wider culture of society may have assured our survival. It is no longer the case. We are to be active and seize opportunities to be a true expression of Jesus within the Anglican tradition.

We share in the fellowship of Christ to become a sign of the presence of the living God and his love to the wider community. As we deepen our fellowship with him through participating, sharing his meal, our King uses us for people to know what God has done for the salvation of the world.

Let us hope out of all the possibilities, we will have someone who helps us to be yeast.