

ANGLICAN CHAPLAINCY OF ALL SAINTS' MARSEILLE
WITH AIX-EN-PROVENCE AND THE LUBERON
Sermons – June 2026

1/ First Sunday after Trinity 7th June 2026 All Saints' Marseille

Canon David Pickering

2/ Second Sunday after Trinity 14th June 2026 Oppède

Jane Quarmby, Licensed Lay Minister

3/ Third Sunday after Trinity 21st June 2026 All Saints' Marseille

Canon Alan Amos

4/ Third Sunday after Trinity 21st June 2026 Manosque

Jane Quarmby, Licensed Lay Reader

5/ Fourth Sunday after Trinity 28th June 2026

All Saints' Marseille

The Revd Roxana Tenea Teleman, Assistant Chaplain

1/ First Sunday after Trinity 7th June 2026

All Saints' Marseille *Canon David Pickering*

Two verses from this morning's Gospel reading:

It began: he (Jesus) said to him, (Matthew) 'Follow me.' And he got up and followed him.

And from last verse; he (again Jesus) went in and took her by the hand, and the girl got up.

Today we come to the 1st Sunday after Trinity, the season that will take us through the next 21 Sundays up to the end of October. There'll be a short break in September or October to celebrate Harvest

Thanksgiving, and on the penultimate Sunday, a celebration of St Luke. From now on it's green Sundays all the way.

The great seasons and festivities of our faith are all behind us. The Easter celebrations came to an end a couple of weeks ago at Pentecost, when at the end of the Eucharist the Pascal Candle was extinguished and now is placed in the baptistry. Last Sunday, we summed up the whole of the festive seasons, from Advent and Christmas to Easter and Pentecost, by bringing them together in the celebration of the Holy Trinity.

But is the resurrection behind us? When I first read through all this morning's appointed readings, I was constantly met with the resurrection.

The first obvious one is the gospel. Jesus goes to the house of the leader of the local synagogue, whose daughter has died. As the text says, *he went in and took her by the hand, and the girl got up*. A true resurrection story. For the woman healed of her constant haemorrhages, as with all Jesus's healing miracles, it was, for her, a resurrection and a new life. Then for Matthew, sitting alone at his tax booth, ostracised by every passer-by, to be befriended by Jesus, and called to follow him, must have been a resurrection experience. And the dinner that follows probably felt like a resurrection party for the tax collectors and sinners who were accepted there.

Then if we go back to our Old Testament reading, and set it in its historical context, it seems that there's something of a resurrection here too. In a way it's confirmed by a key verse we link with the resurrection of Jesus. Hosea was writing at a time of political turmoil and disaster. The Assyrian King Tiglath-Pileser is on the rampage down through Syria and Palestine. The kings of Damascus, the northern kingdom of Israel, and Judah try to make an alliance, but fail and they

all become a vassal of Tiglath-Pileser. But at the beginning of today's reading, God declares, *I will return again to my place*. In the next verse, beginning chapter 6, Hosea gives a resurrection call, *Come, let us return to the Lord; for it is he who has torn, and he will heal us; he has struck down, and he will bind us up*. Then comes a clear resurrection reference. In the Creed this morning, we will declare, *On the third day he rose again in accordance with the scriptures*. And Hosea 6.2, in the only Old Testament reference to the *third day*, we read: *After two days he will revive us; on the third day he will raise us up, that we may live before him*.

This morning's Psalm calls us not to rely too much on our rituals. God has everything we may wish to offer. To quote verses, 10 to 12, *For every wild animal of the forest is mine, the cattle on a thousand hills. I know all the birds of the air, and all that moves in the field is mine. If I were hungry, I would not tell you, for the world and all that is in it is mine*.

But as the final verse says, *Call on me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify me*. A promise of resurrection in which we can give the glory due to God.

And we mustn't leave out Paul. In his letter to the Romans this morning, the apostle gives a detailed exposition of the faith and justification of Abraham. He then concludes that everything previously said about the patriarch is applied to the faith of Christian believers. To quote the final verse: *It will be reckoned to us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead, who was handed over to death for our trespasses and was raised for our justification*.

We must never get away from the Resurrection. It is at the very centre of our faith. The whole of the New Testament is written in the light of the Resurrection. And it gives meaning to the Old Testament. Our faith

would be nothing without the Resurrection. The story of Jesus would be quite different; just another historical figure, or perhaps not even that.

We're gathered together this morning because of the resurrection. Every Sunday's worship is a weekly celebration of our Lord Jesus Christ's rising from the dead. In the Eucharist we celebrate the death and resurrection of Christ and at the heart of the Eucharistic Prayer we have those wonderful words of praise and acclamation: *Christ has died ! Christ is risen! Christ will come again!* This is followed by what we are all about; *And so , Father, calling to mind his death on the cross, his perfect sacrifice made once for the sins of the whole world; rejoicing in his mighty resurrection and glorious ascension, and looking for his glory, we celebrate this memorial of our redemption.* None of these words would have meaning or effect without *his mighty resurrection.*

So, as we receive the Risen Lord when we make our communion this morning, or receive a blessing, we take Christ's resurrection home with us, out into the ordinariness of our daily lives.

The Resurrection is taking place when love replaces hatred and animosity.

The Resurrection is there when joy brings an end to sadness and sorrow.

The Resurrection brings peace where there has been violence and division

The Resurrection replaces selfishness with kindness and a sharing of the common good.

The Resurrection is alive in us when we're still and patient in times of turmoil and distress.

The Resurrection is present where there's gentleness in times of tension and anger.

The Resurrection lives when faithfulness replaces dishonesty and deceit.

The Resurrection is known when our self-control recognises that God is in charge of all that is.

As we sing our final hymn today, let's notice how it's filled with the promise of new life. The words of *Through all the changing scenes of life* will send us out to begin a new week filled with the promise and power of the Resurrection:

When in distress to him I called, he to my rescue came.

How blest are they, and only they, who in his truth confide.

Deliv'rance he affords to all who in his succour trust.

*Fear him, ye saints, and you will then
have nothing else to fear;*

*make you his service your delight,
your want shall be his care.*

Amen.

2/ Second Sunday after Trinity 14th June 2026 Oppède

Jane Quarmby, Licensed Lay Minister

Every month, our chaplaincy holds a service of prayers for healing, on zoom. Anyone and everyone can ask for prayers for some-one they know and the list is long – over 100 names. Those of us who meet on the first Friday evening of every month rarely learn the outcome of our prayers, but occasionally we do – some-one has recovered, which is the best news we can have. Or sadly someone has succumbed to their illness or injuries and died, a healing of a different sort, of release from pain, in which case we pray for their soul and their families and friends. It can be dispiriting, reading out that list every month, and so often I am sure that all of us who take part, would love to have the power of direct healing - imagine just touching someone and they are healed.

Some people do indeed have that gift and use it in church settings and elsewhere. Our evangelist in our previous benefice in England, had just such a experience once when a healer came to a service and called out that he could sense that there was some-one in the congregation who was in pain from his knee – and that it was cured. And it was. That man was so delighted and amazed he went on to study and found his vocation in evangelising God's word to anyone and everyone.

When we read about Jesus healing in so many different stories it is perhaps tempting to think that it was easy for him – after all, he was God's only Son. He could just sit there and anyone who approached him could be cured couldn't he? But that's not the case is it? Jesus worked hard at this, as we heard just now in Matthew's gospel, he went out and travelled to all the cities. He must have walked so far every day – not for him a car or even a bicycle. It took real determination and stamina to do what he did, driven by pity and compassion in a world

where if you became ill or injured, there was little help but herbal concoctions.

He gave his healing freely – no need for health insurance or a health service – he expected nothing in return. He could have made a fortune from grateful patients but that wasn't what he wanted. His was a holistic healing – he understood clearly that to heal a person physically also demanded healing mentally and spiritually. We now understand better that someone with a positive mindset will heal faster than someone who has given up. Someone with a strong faith in God will accept their lot more sanguinely, as Paul points out in his letter: “suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.” Jesus really was passionate about bringing the people he saw in droves back to God. He was sad to see them lost and tossed about by life with no anchor to steady them, like sheep let loose with no shepherd or protector and no idea how to live their lives.

In the year 2026 perhaps not many of us now are familiar with sheep and their ways, but in the time of Jesus, it was very much a society based on herding and so everyone who listened to Jesus would know all about sheep and shepherds. It’s an analogy made throughout the Bible, in the Psalm today we had the line “we are his people and the sheep of his pasture.” It’s true that they can be some of the most disorganised, helpless and down-right daft of animals without a shepherd – or an efficient sheep dog - to give them direction and keep them safe. Many farmers vow that if a sheep can possibly die it will. And yet with someone to care for them they are docile, trusting and form caring family groups. Mine will feed from your hand once they know you, and as soon as they hear our Beardie Collie barking at them in the evening, trot smartly into their barn for their supper. However,

when our niece with experience of sheep was looking after them for us once and the shearer arrived, the 10 sheep in our mini flock scattered to the 4 winds not to be seen again close up until I came home. They really do know and trust their shepherd. But like humans with no anchor, no protector or guide, they slip into bad habits, bad behaviours. Just as the people Jesus came across, had done.

The religious leaders at the time were so hidebound by their own man-made rules and regulations they had lost sight of their role as shepherds, lost sight of what they were meant to be doing – bringing the people to God, turning their backs on corruption, nepotism, self-righteous boasting, doing nothing to alleviate poverty, misery and ill health. Because they themselves had turned so far from God, they were incapable of leading the people back to Him. Hence Jesus made it his mission to travel, and to preach and teach in every synagogue at every opportunity. He knew that without understanding and knowledge of God, the people were lost and suffering. They had no hope. In order to heal their bodies, they also had to be healed spiritually.

I am sure this day and age we are in a similar position – fewer people going to church, fewer people with any faith to sustain them. How for instance do they deal with the death of a loved one if they have no hope of eternal life of God's love just a breath away? How many thousands gathered in Spain to hear the Pope speak – longing for a shepherd.

So Jesus preached and taught, travelling long distances. He didn't expect people to come to him, he went out to them. He got his sleeves rolled up and went out to the people. Who wouldn't believe in his words if they saw him bring a child back to life, give sight to a blind man, cure a leper, or cast out demons? You could say well that's all very well for the son of the Creator God, but we are just humans. We

don't have that power. But it was given to the 12 disciples (12 echoing the 12 tribes of Israel), who were sent out to do exactly what Jesus has been doing. They were equipped for their task, called by name, ordinary men, given incredible powers of healing. If one of our ministry team or congregation could do that, we would need to keep the church doors open every day.

Interestingly the apostles at this stage were told just to go to their own people, not the Gentiles or Samaritans. That widening of their work would come later, with other missionary journeys. It was important to Jesus that they began with the chosen people of God, his treasured possession, his priestly nation.

The other analogy Jesus used was that of the harvest, the harvest of so much but with so few workers to collect it in – people willing to come out of their comfy nooks and commit their time and energy to be moved by the same compassion as Jesus felt for the plight of the people he encountered. The apostles had no particular gifts until Jesus arrived and each had their failings, but Jesus took them and taught them, and shook their lives up to the extent that they were given the power to go out into the world, show God's compassion through their actions and with that, found that they too could do extraordinary things.

Perhaps all of us who profess to be Christians would do well to emulate them, to get out into the world, to teach others about the better world available through faith, to be active members of the church. Every kind deed, every offer of support or shoulder to cry on, every small errand for someone counts, forms a ripple of comfort and hope in a harsh world of fear, despair, loneliness. We too are called to be apostles, taking God's word to a suffering world calling out for justice and healing. It isn't just the job of priests and chaplains to visit the sick, the lonely, the people struggling with life. This is an active calling to all of

us, one that needs energy, effort and commitment, but with God's help, we too will find, perhaps much to our surprise, that we can do it.

3/ Third Sunday after Trinity 21st June 2026 All Saints' Marseille

Canon Alan Amos

Jeremiah is in a fix, a “laughing stock” but loved and rescued by God. Paul tells us to claim our “new selves” in Christ, given to us through his passion and resurrection.

Matthew has a difficult message for us but let us hang on to the sparrows!

Well, let us begin with those sparrows and work backwards!

I love sparrows. There is a large bush at the entrance to our house in Dorset UK, and it is full of sparrows. You get to know the rhythms of their life; morning hunger, out and about during daylight hours, gathering together in the bush as evening approaches and having a passion for conversation! Except that they all seem to be chirping at the same time.

And in Geneva where one of my favourite places is the Botanical Gardens, there is a café where sparrows feel confident at approaching the tables; on the whole they are well-mannered and quickly pick up if someone is their friend. And before you know where you are, they come close to take out of your hand anything you offer them.

Clever birds, sparrows, to know a place and people they can feel safe with. And yet who numbers them - they are hardly in the “nearly extinct” category - and who even stops to think about them. Except God. They may not be worth much in human eyes, but God loves them for his creatures that they are.

And I think that a sparrow must have flown down and poked its way into that hard sermon of Jesus which is our Gospel for today. “Just a

minute, Lord, don't forget about us!" And so, Jesus takes them as his example for the loving care of God over all that he has made. And then looks at those hairy disciples of his, and says - "Yes, you! Every one of your hairs is numbered!"

Which is just as well, as it seems he is promising them plenty of gloom and doom, opposition from their families, persecution from their community. But in case we miss the point and get stuck in that picture of the world at its worst, in the end all shall be well, for this world is passing away, but the eternal world in which we are safe in God's hands will never pass away.

We jump over Paul and go back to Jeremiah. He comes to us today as an example of the one who suffers but never gives up hoping and calling out to God. Sometimes people have identified him with the suffering servant of Isaiah's prophecies; certainly, there is something Christ-like about him.

And so, I want to tell you about a very dear friend of mine whom I count as Christ-like.

I met him in Beirut many years ago, back in 1973 when he was a young priest studying at the Near East School of Theology. John Malou Ater came from South Sudan and came from the Dinka people; like many of them he was exceedingly tall; when he and I stayed together at a convent one Christmas, the sisters had to put two beds together head to foot in order to accommodate him. He was writing a thesis about the native religion of his people in Sudan, and I was asked to help him with the English of it. It was fascinating; his approach was to recognise goodness and beauty wherever he found it, and to praise God for it. Some of the missionaries in Sudan took a different view and wanted to forbid dancing. But John said, "if we can't dance, we can't live."

He shared with me in many services at All Saints' Church in Beirut; then he returned home, and in due time he became a bishop of a new diocese, the diocese of Wau.

Travel was never easy from Sudan; some students from Sudan who studied to Beirut had to wait at the roadside for days in the hope that a lorry would stop and help them on their way to Juba and the airport. And even then, air travel was risky with poorly maintained runways and aircraft that were not very reliable. So unfortunately, it was not a surprise when John got badly injured in a plane crash in 1978 and had to come to London to receive treatment. He then returned home and continued in his ministry.

John was a man of peace and a lover of peace with a mission to make peace in Sudan. He had been in the Sudanese army, and unlike many others he managed to get along with most of his fellow soldiers and officers who were largely from the Muslim community. And when the political upheaval gathered pace, and the talk was of splitting Sudan between North and South, John did not think it was a good idea. He foresaw that once the South split off from the North a whole set of new problems would arise with civil war caused by tribal disagreements and rivalries. And so, at that time he tried to help those who wanted to reach out and keep unity between North and South. And so, he and some influential companions went on a flight from Khartoum to Juba in the hope of strengthening those who were against rebellion. That was in 1986. The plane crashed on approach to Juba, and John and his companions were killed. Maybe it was an accident, maybe not. There is no way now of knowing. But South Sudan lost one of its most faithful and courageous bishops.

I am glad to see that in his home diocese of Wau a school has been named in his memory. John - he fell from the sky like a sparrow; some of his people did not count him for much or thought of him as an

enemy; but he is safe in the life of God. And that is what Matthew is telling us about today. Life is not comfortable and plain sailing; it is full of challenges and problems; if Christ took up his cross, can we avoid taking up ours, whatever it may be?

I want to conclude with some words of Pope Francis, from a sermon he gave during his visit to troubled South Sudan in 2023. The gospel tells us : “And do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul.” Francis reaches out to people knowing the experience and fear of war in South Sudan:

“I gather here with you in the name of Jesus Christ, the God of love, the God who achieved peace through his cross; Jesus, the God crucified for us all; Jesus, crucified in those who suffer; Jesus, crucified in the lives of so many of you, in so many people in this country. ... Jesus knows your anguish and the hope you bear in your hearts, the joys and struggles that mark your lives, the darkness that assails you and the faith that, like a song in the night, you raise to heaven. Jesus knows you and loves you. If we remain in him, we must never fear, because for us too, every cross will turn into a resurrection, every sadness into hope, and every lament into dancing.” - Pope Francis homily at Mass in South Sudan, Feb. 5, 2023

Rt. Revd John Malou Ater



4/ Third Sunday after Trinity 21st June 2026 Manosque

Jane Quarmby, Licensed Lay Reader

The UK is introducing a ban on social media for under 16's soon. Reaction seems to be mixed – youngsters despairing how they are going to exist without it and parents rejoicing that it is one less harmful influence to worry about. Other countries have already put bans in place or are thinking about it. In a recent trial, the youngsters involved took a while to get used to not being glued to their devices and sending each other messages whilst sitting a metre apart but then many found it unexpectedly liberating, giving them time back, allowing them to focus on hobbies and homework, on interacting face to face with their friends, on becoming part of their families.

There are many concerns about social media – like most technology it can be our servant or our master. People are uncomfortable with what they perceive as Big Brother, where there is nowhere to hide from prying eyes, no way to keep a secret just that – secret. We are filmed walking down the street, drones hover in the sky, information is easily accessed. It isn't comfortable, being under the spotlight shone by anonymous people and organisations.

It's all too easy to forget that God has always been able to see us for what we are, who can see into our minds, souls and hearts. There is no escaping His all-seeing gaze. Which is why Jesus was keen to explain that with God, there is nowhere to hide, no secrets that won't be made known. But this isn't something to fear – God loves us even though He knows us inside and out.

Few of us would want our private and innermost thoughts exposed to all and sundry. It is also easier to tell yourself or your loved ones not to be afraid than to make that actually happen. If a child is afraid of the

dark than the only thing that will reassure them, after you have both checked under the bed and in the wardrobe for monsters, will be a light. Or a patient Golden Retriever by the bed which was all that worked with our grandson when he came to stay when he was young. And if you have just told your team that everyone is out to get them, then telling them not be afraid, seems extremely optimistic. But that is what Jesus tells his disciples. He has just been called Beelzebub (Prince of Darkness) by the religious leaders, who can't accept that what he is doing is God's work, so they say all his miracles are sponsored by the Devil, that he is evil and that is where he gets his power from. The absolute opposite of the truth about Jesus. He knows that his followers will also be subject to name calling, abuse, even death, for spreading his message from the roof tops, shining light into the dark corners of the human world. Which isn't an easy sell – follow me and horrible things will happen to you. Not the most attractive message.

But he goes on to explain that when the time comes for the light to shine on everything, every emotion, every act, then truth will out. The disciples' trust, their loyalty to Jesus, their faith in him, will come to light, as will their patience and perseverance. They may not understand fully, but they will be vindicated, justice will prevail.

However, going through danger and persecution with no end in sight isn't, and so Jesus also reassures them that just as God sees everything that happens to Christ's followers, we also need to know how highly He values us. Every hair on their (and our) heads is counted – and every sparrow. Little brown birds, bustling about in hedgerows, disregarded by humans who consider them worthless, but not by God. How much more are we worth then to God, if he cares about each little bird that comes to harm? And God is stronger than the strongest opponent we will ever meet. We matter, each and everyone of us to God.

There's a tendency by some to think of Jesus as someone soft and loving, which he is, but there is also the Jesus who sees clearly the reality of our lives as his followers. He isn't offering an easy route, this isn't going to be a spa break, following him. He is clear that his disciples through the ages will face temptations, will be faced with choices, hardship and danger. There will be forces wishing to do us harm and lead us in the wrong direction, evil is ever present. He is also very clear, that he is changing how people behave. And his way is often counter intuitive – but it works. For example, if someone shouts at you, the immediate response is often to shout right back. It becomes a shouting match. The situation escalates, and can develop into violence, or at least, a breaking down of a relationship. If however you resist the temptation to yell back and speak very softly, the one shouting has to become quieter in order to hear what you are saying. We would have fewer wars if nations negotiated rather than rush headlong into conflict. It's not easy, it needs a lot of self control and truth telling, but you cannot fight darkness with more darkness, violence with more violence.

He recognised that we would sometimes have to make sacrifices and hard choices. Hence he talks about conflict within families where one member follows Jesus and the rest don't. He's not saying that it's OK to abandon your family or neglect them, to leave them behind, but to make him our priority. We still need to care for our families and friends. When God does something new, which is what He was doing through Jesus, there will always be people who are much happier with the old way of doing things. Some people are arrogant and convinced their way of doing things is the only way – anyone who disagrees isn't welcome in their household. It isn't easy to stand up to someone you love and be firm about your faith. It can cause divisions, arguments, and the break up of families in extreme cases.

When Jesus says he is bringing a sword, he isn't bringing an actual sword. He means he is coming to bring divisions – you might say that's an odd way of bringing peace, to a world beset by the very opposite. It takes a different mindset to achieve that, and that mindset is often mistaken for weakness. It isn't, it takes real strength of character to say no to violence, to corruption, to bullying, and to aggression, to counter-attack. That is what Jesus wants from his disciples – that strength to stand up to all that is bad and wrong and evil in the world around us, and defeat it with calmness and love. Others may well think that is the road to madness as they did on D Day when Bill Millin, Lord Lovatt's piper, landed at the forefront of his regiment armed only with his bagpipes, and played on as troops all around him fell, but he marched on up the beach, giving courage and hope. He was unharmed – largely because the Germans thought he was mad.

It takes perseverance and courage, but by living the way Jesus wants us to live, we can influence others. Often it's the little insignificant things that do the hardest work. Give a glass of water on a hot day to a stranger and you give it to Jesus. Give a hot coffee to someone living on the street, and you give it to Jesus. Sponsor a child in the Third World and you hold that child for Jesus.

Sometimes we need to stand up for what we believe in. I read this yesterday in the New York Times – it's a quote from Remelya Jackalope, founder of the Transcendence Care Network, which helps trans people relocate in the United States. "Authoritarianism is about how we can do less for each other and still feel OK about it. A key piece of fighting against authoritarianism is asking the question "What more can we do for each other?"

As true now when we look around us at our world today, as it was in Jesus' time.

5/ Fourth Sunday after Trinity 28th June 2026

All Saints' Marseille

The Revd Roxana Tenea Teleman, Assistant Chaplain

What a little thing to give: a drink of water.

Public drinking fountains were a familiar feature of my childhood in Romania. They stood in parks, on street corners, in public squares. So when we moved to Marseille more than twenty-five years ago, I was surprised to find so few of them. Two years ago, in preparation for the Olympic Games, new drinking fountains were installed in Paris and, happily for us, in Marseille as well. That summer, tourists and locals alike made good use of them. Since then, they have become part of the landscape, so familiar that most of us scarcely notice them.

Last week, however, as the heat began to intensify, I saw a homeless man hurrying towards one of these fountains. He drank deeply, then splashed water on his face. There was relief in his expression, and perhaps even a little joy.

Watching him, I found myself thinking: what a little thing to give, a drink of water. Yet it can become a source of life and refreshment.

In today's Gospel, Jesus says: "Whoever gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones ..., none of these will lose their reward."

What does he mean? Perhaps that we can become aware of the coming of God's kingdom, not through grand gestures or spectacular achievements, but through something as simple as a cup of water offered to someone in need. In the eyes of Christ, even the smallest act of kindness can become a sign of God's presence among us.

It brings to mind the image often called the “butterfly effect”: the suggestion that the tiny movement of a butterfly's wings may, in ways we cannot trace, contribute to great changes far away. Whether the science is exact is beside the point. The image reminds us that the smallest actions may have consequences beyond anything we imagine.

Yet Jesus is saying something even deeper. The cup of cold water is not simply an act of generosity; it is an act of welcome.

Six times in in this short Gospel passage, Jesus speaks of receiving others: “Whoever welcomes you welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me.”

The question is not simply whether we are hospitable. It is whom we recognise in the person standing before us.

Throughout the Scriptures, hospitality is rarely about entertaining family or close friends. More often, it is about receiving the stranger whose identity is not yet known. Abraham welcomes three travellers beneath the oaks of Mamre and discovers that God has visited him. In times of famine, the widow of Zarephath opens her home to Elijah. The disciples on the road to Emmaus invite a stranger to stay the night, only to recognise the risen Christ in the breaking of the bread.

The Letter to the Hebrews draws these stories together, saying: “Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing so some have entertained angels without knowing it.” Angels, that is, God’s messengers.

Hospitality, then, is far more than good manners. It is an openness to God's surprising presence.

That is why the Rule of St Benedict instructs monks to receive every guest as though they were receiving Christ himself.

Of course, that kind of welcome costs something. It asks for more than a glass of water or a place at the table. It asks us to make room in our lives, to allow another person's needs, hopes and even interruptions to become part of our own story.

Perhaps the greatest challenge of hospitality is this: not whether we are willing to welcome Christ if he appeared in glory, but whether we are willing to welcome him when he comes to us thirsty, unnoticed, or unexpected.

One modern writer imagines the Benedictine welcome: "Come right in and disturb our perfectly ordered lives. You are the Christ for us today."

If welcoming teaches us how to receive Christ, another phrase in today's Gospel tells us where we are most likely to find him. Jesus speaks of "these little ones."

In Matthew's Gospel, the "little ones" are all those who are easily overlooked: the vulnerable, the insignificant in the eyes of the world, those whose names are rarely remembered and whose voices are seldom heard.

Our world has a way of looking upwards. We admire success, influence and achievement. We notice the powerful. Jesus invites us to look in the opposite direction. The true measure of discipleship is not how we treat those who can advance our interests, but how we treat those who have little to offer us in return.

That is why even the smallest gesture matters so much. It says to another human being, "I see you. Your life matters. Your dignity matters." In every act of genuine welcome, Christ himself is present.

This is wonderfully liberating. Discipleship does not have to be heroic. Most of us will never perform spectacular deeds or become famous for our faith. Instead, the Christian life is woven from countless small acts of devotion, tenderness, forgiveness and generosity—the quiet things that often pass unnoticed.

In the kingdom of God there is no such thing as a small act of love. A kind word, a listening ear, an unexpected visit, a helping hand, a gesture of forgiveness, a cup of cold water - each becomes part of the quiet work by which God is healing the world.

None of these acts may ever make the headlines. But none of them is ever lost.

There is a small still-life by the seventeenth-century Spanish painter Francisco de Zurbarán that has stayed with me. There is very little in it. A cup of water. A shining metal plate. A single rose. Behind them, only darkness. There is no extravagance. And yet the longer you look, the more beautiful these ordinary things become. The light catches the water, glimmers on the metal, rests gently on the rose. What at first seemed so simple gradually reveals an extraordinary depth and quiet beauty.

I wonder whether that is how Jesus invites us to see the world.

A cup of cold water seems such a little thing. And yet, in Christ's eyes, it shines with a beauty we might otherwise miss. It becomes a sign of welcome, of compassion, of God's own love made visible.

Every one of us can offer such gifts. And every one of them has an importance that reaches far beyond what we can measure.

The good news is that I see these “cups of cold water” every week at All Saints’. I see them in those who quietly prepare the church before others arrive. In those who notice a newcomer standing alone. In those who visit the sick, make a phone call, offer a lift, write a card, prepare a meal, listen without hurrying, pray faithfully for others, or simply sit beside someone who needs not answers but companionship.

Most of these acts will never be recognised publicly. But they are not unnoticed by the One who said, “Whoever gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones... none of these will lose their reward.”

May God give us eyes to recognise Christ in those we meet, hearts ready to welcome him in them, and hands always willing to offer, in his name, even a cup of cold water.