

TRINITY 5 (Year A)

I always try to see and hear the **link** between our two readings, separated of course, by centuries of change, rather than continuity. And yet, the story of how Rebekah hitched up with Isaac is very much a part of what we now call the Judaeo-Christian tradition. It is a tale which begins with the mysterious woman by the spring of water - the same person who is then carrying the water jars over her shoulder. She is also the one eager to please Abraham's servant, to quench his thirst and his camel-train as well. She is then whisked way to the Negeb desert and there, walking towards her in the parched field, is the man she will marry, and we are told 'he loved her.' It is a fairy-tale ending with descendants to follow on, 'sealed, signed and delivered' by the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Continuity is important in the best genre of storytelling. Continuity is also important in the re-telling of history and how we can learn so much from it. I think the link between our Genesis story and our Gospel story is actually summed up best by the words of Jesus:

"Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

These words have been immortalised in the Book of Common Prayer under the heading, 'The Comfortable Words.' Jesus' words and actions echo back in time to those of Rebekah, bringing water, refreshment, and the gift of new life - as if to say that their 'joint' servanthood teaches us how to be servants, each to the other.

Those who have no particular affiliation to the Jewish or Christian faith, may just call this 'wellbeing'...it has certainly become something of a new 'industry' in the 'service sector'. Whether it is the temptation of exotic health Spas' alongside cool mountain streams, and drinking volumes of Perrier water in between massages

and some holistic medicine or fancy potions, it remains something we are being 'sold' or, 'told' to consume.

No, I think that our biblical narratives delve deeper into our souls than that. I also think our generation is not so easily fooled by the hype and false promises of a 'healthier life'. Just look how many of us are so passionate now to keep our rivers and streams and seas cleaner. The tide is turning on those water companies who have neglected their responsibilities and become wealthier as a result. It is even a matter of social, as well as environmental justice, and it is urgent. But I digress...

Water is a key component of our Christian heritage. Our personal faith stories began in the sacrament of Baptism – whether we remember that joyous life event or not. You probably have photographic evidence of being held awkwardly by some strange priest and water being poured over you. At a recent Baptism in Great Bealings, the baby screamed so loudly at that point that I wondered how someone so young and vulnerable could have lungs so large! I thought she sounded like she was going to end up as a famous soprano one day, who knows?!

Water is a key component at the wedding of Cana in Galilee, as it is on the hill at Calvary; blood and water, water and wine, belong to our own Christian stories, heritage, and worship. So we have all the imagery and symbolism we need. We have our font and we have our altar. "Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest." That's what Rebekah did in her own practical, sacrificial way. That's what Christ died for.

I want to close with a poem: 'To Matthew Arnold' as a response to his famous one called, 'On Dover Beach':

"There is no sadness in the sea....

The tide recedes far out, but it will turn, softly at first, no doubt."

