

The History and Theology of Marriage

Wednesday 15th

The Synod began with the Eucharist – President and Preacher The Venerable Ian Naylor, Archdeacon.

Synod Session 1

Most of the chaplaincy reps, clergy, guest speakers and observers having gathered, we moved to the first session of our Synod, chaired by The Archdeacon who spoke to our theme and reminded us that delegates from all of the dioceses of The Church of England, including the Diocese in Europe, are taking part this year in facilitated conversations around the issue of same sex relationships following the publication and recommendations of the Pilling Report of November 2013. The two papers to be given to Synod by Dr Charlotte Methuen on the History And Theology of Marriage are intended to help us contextualise the discussions that are taking place in the wider church at present about same sex relationships and about the institution of marriage in general.

New Synod representatives and clergy were introduced and welcomed, followed by announcements of 'arrivals and departures' within the Archdeaconry.

Treasurer David Bean gave his finance report, which as always was vigorously discussed. St Michael's Archdeaconry Quota this year is increased to €410. This amount, and the CME Fund (Continuing Ministerial Education) contribution are calculated and fixed in the same way as Diocesan ones and are based on two figures taken over a three year period - namely the number on the electoral role and the income of the Chaplaincy. In the case of an 'underspend' of the CME fund the balance will be transferred to General Fund reserves. Last years Archdeaconry 'budget to actual' came in slightly to the Archdeaconry's benefit. David reminded us that his aim is to ensure that the General Fund remains in credit, but by not too large a sum.

There followed an update on safeguarding which was given by the Archdeacon – A report on the feedback forms given out at last years synod – Notice that elections to archdeaconry's various councils and committee's would be voted on later in the synod, and finally a letter to the chaplaincies from Bishop Robert was read (this can be found on the diocesan website).

Thursday 16th

Morning Prayer at 7.30 am.

Bible Study

Reverend Canon Dr Simon Taylor (Canon Chancellor of Derby Cathedral) led Bible Study around the subject of sex and holiness contrasting Leviticus chapters 18 to 20, with Song of Songs chapter 5. At the heart of the Bible the love poetry of Song of Songs contains the deepest and most passionate declarations of love and fear of parting. But God is not mentioned and Dr Taylor tells us that it's inclusion in the Bible was argued over, but the texts came to be seen as the love of God for Israel, and then the Christians for their church. Sex is clearly good in the Song of Songs and comes to represent an image of God's love for us. Dr Taylor went on to pose the question – can sex be holy? Leviticus chapter 19 was highlighted - one of the high points of old testament ethics and no distinction was made between justice and holiness – they are inseparable.

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Jesus is recognised as holy most often by the unclean, and it is his very holiness that is healing. His unholy death leads to the ultimate contagious power of holiness. Leviticus plainly finds sex harder to describe as holy than Songs and it maintains that same sex sex is unholy. See also Paul – 1 Corinthians 6:9,10 and 1 Timothy 1:9,10, but Dr Taylor reminded us that Biblical writers had no concept of sexual orientation, as we know it today. Most telling of goodness is Jesus's statement about what comes out, and not what goes in, makes us unholy.

2nd Session – The History and Theology of Marriage - was chaired by The Reverend Dr Paul Vrolijk and introduced The Reverend Dr Charlotte Methuen, Lecturer in Church History in the University of Glasgow.

DR Methuen tells us that equality is everything in Genesis and that Marriage receives the blessing of God even though the word marriage is not mentioned. (Genesis 1:26-28. Deuteronomy 22:28-29)

Old Testament marriage is not always monogamous – David and Solomon had their many wives and concubines. Paul raises more questions and rules and purity. (1 Corinthians 7:8-16).

Augustine, on the literal meaning of Genesis 9.7 : Marriage is threefold - faithfulness, offspring, sacrament. Sacrament means no dividing of marriage and that neither husband nor wife be remarried to someone else, even for the sake of offspring. This is the 'rule' of marriage: it either regulates our natural fruitfulness, or curbs our immoral lack of self-control.

On the good of marriage: In either sex, there might exist, even without intercourse, a friendly and full union, the one ruling and the other obeying. We must ask why it is good. It is not just because of the procreation of children but because of that very, even natural, social bond between the two sexes ...

Moreover in marriage, spouses in turn pay a debt to each other; even if they demand it rather forcefully and without restraint, yet they owe each other an equal debt of fidelity.

Jerome, to Eustochium (letter 22), 2.: 'I write to you thus Eustochium ... to show you by my opening words that my object is not to praise the virginity which you follow, and of which you have proved the value, or yet to recount the drawbacks of marriage, such as pregnancy, the crying of infants, the torture caused by a rival, the cares of household management, and all those fancied blessings which death at last cuts short. Not that married women are as such outside the pale: they have their own place, the marriage that is honourable and the bed undefiled. My purpose is to show you that you are fleeing from Sodom and should take warning by Lot's wife'.

We are also directed to Aquinas, Summa theologica, 1.92.1 and Margery Kempe.

Dr Methuen: Matrimony was instituted for the begetting of children. But the begetting of children was necessary to man before sin. Therefore it behoved Matrimony to be instituted before sin. Does matrimony convey grace? Since in matrimony man receives by Divine institution the faculty to use his wife for the begetting of children, he also receives the grace without which he cannot becomingly do so ... And thus this grace which is given is the last thing contained in this sacrament.

11.45 am. The Eucharist was presided over by the Reverend Canon Alyson Lamb.

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Meeting by Houses. The House of Laity – Chairperson Mrs Kate Giry-Deloison.

The four Lay members of the Archdeaconry Standing Committee, Secretary Sarah Hardenberg, Treasurer David Bean, Diane Murray and Kate Giry-Deloison, along with the Clergy members meet twice a year, outside of Synod to organise the Archdeaconry events at Synod. Reps were reminded that chaplaincies must inform the Diocese of any officers elected or re-elected including Synod reps.

Synod Session 3. Chairperson: The Reverend Canon Mathew Harrison.

The Presentation of a document proposing ecumenical sharing of Morning and Evening Prayer.

Mgr Robert Le Gall OSB, Archbishop of Toulouse and the Reverend Canon Mathew Harrison, are co-presidents of French ARC (French Anglican - Roman Catholic Committee) which has existed since the 1970, and here launched a document around the sharing of morning and evening prayer – a common tradition of offices. We heard from the French Archbishop of the dilemmas of this understanding, but also the determination of the Catholic Church and ARC. 'The transmission of the word is uppermost in the consciousness of the Roman Catholic church as well as the commitment to family services, particularly in Toulouse, and it is hoped that these services will be adopted throughout the whole communion encourage the confirmation of the young and marriage'. He also stressed the urgency of inclusion of young people and the need also for understanding and encouragement of dialogue with the Jewish and Muslim communities. The task of French ARC is to keep Anglican-Catholic relation in France under review and to consider the relationship between our situation in France and the work of the international Anglican-Catholic bodies (ARCIC and IARCCUM).

Evening Prayer was presided over by Mrs Sheila Marshall

Friday 17th April. 07.30am. Morning Prayer: Mrs Susan Blomley.

Bishop Robert was welcomed and thanked for making time for Synod in the middle of the busy first year of his episcopate.

Bible Study: The Reverend Canon Dr Simon Taylor.

Marriage – Famine – Feast.

The church is interested firstly in marriage because of the feast – a celebration of God. The marriage of God to his people: Isaiah 62.

Jesus celebrates the marriage in Cana. Genesis 2: Man shall not be alone.

God's image is seen in all human beings – there is no gender.

See also Commandments 7 and 10.

Dr Taylor reminds us that sadly the Bible is short of monogamous marriages but polygamy was the preserve of the rich. Does the Bible's lack of good marriages resonate and influence pastoral relations today?

St Paul is not a fan of marriage, and the early church made much of celibacy. The official line of the Church of England is that gay Christians must remain celibate.

On divorce: The Old Testament supports divorce but the passages found are an attempt to regulate divorce and often makes women subordinate to men, unlike the contemporary view, but Malachi (2:16) abhors divorce, as did Jesus.

1 John: 4, Everyone who loves is born of God.

Of course, two people of the same gender love. No doubt love exists very strongly in same sex relationships. How should the Church recognise that? How the Anglican Church resolves that remains to be seen.

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Session 4: Chairperson Ms Sonia Taylor.

The History and Theology of Marriage: The Reverend Dr Charlotte Methuen.

We look at Genesis 1; 27 and 1 Peter 3:7

We were asked to find examples of good marriages in the Bible. Few, such as Ruth and Boaz or Elizabeth and Zechariah could be found.

Clergy once paid an annual tax to the Catholic Church for condoning the practise of having relationships outside of their celibacy. Dr Methuen tells us that the reformation rejects the idea that celibacy is the perfect path to God. Luther declared not every priest can do without a woman – not only as a wife but also for keeping house. For Luther the household is the proper place for piety, not monastic life and he recommended measures against clandestine marriages, but then it had to be decided if marriage is a matter of civic or canon law.

The Luther texts cited included *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church* (1520). *To the Christian nobility of the German nation* (1520). *Sermon on Marriage* (1519). *The estate of marriage* (1525). *Lectures on Galatians* (1531).

We looked at the legal context in England from the 12th century to today.

The Forme of Solemnization of Matrimony: - *The Book of Common Prayer* (1549; 1552; 1662; 1928)

Firstly marriage was ordained for the procreation of children. Secondly, for a remedy against sin and thirdly for the mutual society, help, and comfort, that the one ought to have of the other, both in prosperity and adversity.

See also the *Alternative Service Book* (1980) and *Common Worship* (2000)

Changes in the legal and social context of marriage / distinctions between marriage and holy matrimony: -

An act for the Better Preventing of Clandestine Marriage (1753) – required a public ceremony of marriage; effect was to move legal definition of marriage from the Canon Law of the Church of England to civic law (different situation in Scotland)

Married woman's property acts (1872,1880).

Deceased wife sister marriage act (1907)

Changes in divorce law – developments in contraception, IVF, fertility treatments. 1908 Lambeth Conference says national and local churches are at liberty to adopt native forms of marriage (see resolution 25).

2003 A discussion document from the House of Bishops' Group on Issues On Human Sexuality.

The Pilling Report 2013.

From a lecture by The Revd. Dr Malcolm Brown: "Whatever your view on the Church's policy in sexuality issues – and there are many views, it isn't simply binary – whatever your view, we face a missiological challenge because not only is the weight of public opinion, as expressed in the Lords and in the media, strongly against where the Church is, there is a very radical youth element in that; an age element. The younger you are, the more likely you are to be entirely relaxed and accepting of people with different sexual orientations; different sexual practises".

It was agreed that The Church needs to fully discuss the questions of heterosexuality, such as sex before marriage, IVF etc before it can begin to discuss homosexual relationships.

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Friday Eucharist: President and Preacher Bishop Robert Innes.

Synod Session 5: The Appointing Process.

There was a talk by the Archdeacon and the Revd. Deacon Frances Hiller with questions and answers about the appointment process (not unfamiliar territory for the St Michael's Chaplaincy Church Council). Most pertinent information can be found on line in the Diocesan Handbook.

One little known option that is available but not included in the Diocesan Handbook, is of ICS as a patron. ICS (The Intercontinental Church Society) has an excellent website with all info. They will do all the legwork and advertising, present a candidate to the Bishop, and manage the interview.

Synod Session 6: Chairperson: Archdeacon Ian Naylor

The observer from the French Protestant Federation at the Synod greeted us and thanked us, and directed us to the Reuilly Declaration and the Reuilly Common Statement concerning the unity of Churches in Europe. These texts can be found easily online.

Bishop Robert then addressed the Synod.

In 2014 Bishop Robert (The Bishop of Gibraltar-in-Europe) was installed in three different places, Gibraltar, Brussels and Malta.

He tells us he has three duties: 1. Sharing the governance of the national Church 2. Maintaining Ecumenical relationships and 3. Looking after the Diocese of Europe. The Diocese of Europe is made up of churches and congregations spread across forty-two countries on three continents, and covering one sixth of the earth's land surface.

He reminded us of the Programme of Renewal and Reform announced by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York earlier this year.

Members of the Diocese are working on a strategy of the way forward that will be announced in June this year.

He asked each chaplaincy to work on, and establish a mission plan for growing the church in each area of our Archdeaconry.

The Reverend Peter Massey led evening prayer.

The Archdeaconry Synod 2016 will be from the 18th to the 21st of May at the Abbaye de Saint Jacut de la Mer

J. Hayward

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